

## **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF FLORIDA FARMWORKERS**

*Whereas*, for decades, Florida farmworkers worked for sub-poverty wages, have been excluded from fundamental labor rights like the right to overtime pay and benefits, and have faced sexual harassment, verbal and physical abuse, and in the most extreme cases, modern-day slavery in order to harvest the food on our plates; and

*Whereas*, since 1997, federal officials have successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations in Florida's fields, involving over 1,200 workers; and

*Whereas*, after more than a decade of education, outreach, and action in its Campaign for Fair Food, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) — an internationally recognized farmworker organization based in Southwest Florida — has developed the Fair Food Program, a creative and historic partnership among farmworkers, the vast majority of Florida tomato growers, and thirteen major food corporations; and

*Whereas*, through their commitment to the Fair Food Program, these corporations — among them Taco Bell, McDonald's, Subway, Whole Foods, The Fresh Market and Walmart — commit to:

- pay a Fair Food Premium for the tomatoes they buy from Florida which is paid to farmworkers in the form of a bonus;
- buy only from suppliers who comply with the Fair Food code of conduct, which includes the provision of time clocks, shade, water and bathrooms, the right to form participatory health and safety committees, and a zero tolerance policy for sexual harassment and slavery, and
- respect farmworkers as equal partners in monitoring and administering the agreement.

*Whereas*, through the Fair Food Program, far-reaching reforms have spread across the \$650 million Florida tomato industry affecting tens of thousands of workers, including nearly \$15 million in Fair Food Premium paid by participating buyers to improve workers' wages; industry-wide implementation of a 24-hours worker complaint hotline and a rapid, effective complaint investigation and resolution process; a worker-to-worker education process conducted by CIW on the farms and in company time to ensure that workers understand their new rights and responsibilities; a human rights-based Code of Conduct with enforceable zero-tolerance policies for forced labor, child labor, violence and sexual assault; and industry-wide monitoring by the third party organization, the Fair Food Standards Council;<sup>1</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://fairfoodstandards.org/reports/14SOTP-Web.pdf>

Whereas, the Fair Food Program has been honored varies times by the White House for its success in eliminating modern-day slavery, and was praised on the front page of the *New York Times* as “the best workplace monitoring program in the US”<sup>2</sup> and in the *Washington Post* as “one of the great human rights success stories of our day;”<sup>3</sup> and

Whereas, participation of more major buyers of tomatoes in the Fair Food Program is essential to eliminate the alternative market in which traditional abuses continue and enable the expansion of the Program into other states and crops; and

Whereas, the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church holds that:

- “Every person has the right to a job at a living wage... We believe that persons come before profits... We support policies that encourage the sharing of ideas in the workplace, cooperative and collective work arrangements...”<sup>4</sup>
- “Workers from other countries are in many societies an important resource to fill the society’s need of workers. But foreign workers too often meet exploitation, absence of protecting laws, and unreasonable wages and working conditions. We call upon governments and all employers to ensure for foreign workers the same economic, educational, and social benefits enjoyed by other citizens.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Corporations are responsible not only to their stockholders, but also to other stakeholders: their workers, suppliers, vendors, customers, the communities in which they do business, and for the earth, which supports them. We support the public’s right to know what impact corporations have in these various arenas, so that people can make informed choices about which corporations to support. We applaud corporations that voluntarily comply with standards that promote human well-being and protect the environment;”<sup>6</sup> and

Whereas, Publix, Florida’s largest privately-owned company, has declined to even meet with farmworkers of the CIW to discuss joining the Fair Food Program for over five years, despite calls from farmworkers and consumers of faith and conscience through thousands of letters and prayers, a six-day fast, and peaceful marches of up to 200 miles; and

Whereas, United Methodists from across Florida have stood with the CIW for decades in echoing calls for justice, giving rise to the transformational changes in the fields ensuring dignity and respect for tens of thousands of farmworkers; and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/25/business/in-florida-tomato-fields-a-penny-buys-progress.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fair-food-program-helps-end-the-use-of-slavery-in-the-tomato-fields/2012/09/02/788f1a1a-f39c-11e1-892d-bc92fee603a7\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fair-food-program-helps-end-the-use-of-slavery-in-the-tomato-fields/2012/09/02/788f1a1a-f39c-11e1-892d-bc92fee603a7_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> "Paragraph 163 F)." *Book of Discipline, United Methodist Church 2012*. N.p.: Abingdon Pr, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> "Paragraph 163 F)." *Book of Discipline, United Methodist Church 2012*. N.p.: Abingdon Pr, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> "Paragraph 163 I)." *Book of Discipline, United Methodist Church 2012*. N.p.: Abingdon Pr, 2013.

Whereas, the 2005 General Conference passed a resolution in support of the CIW's efforts to call on Taco Bell to sign a Fair Food Agreement, after which they became the first corporation to do so;<sup>7</sup>

**Therefore be it resolved**, that the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church supports the groundbreaking changes in Florida agriculture ushered in by the Fair Food Program.

**Be it further resolved**, that the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church calls on Publix Supermarkets to uphold farmworkers' human rights by joining the Fair Food Program.

Approval of this resolution would not require any financial obligation of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Upon approval of this resolution, the Conference Secretary will compose and send a letter on behalf of The Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, to corporations the Coalition of Immokalee Workers is presently inviting to join the Fair Food Program, such as Publix Supermarkets and Wendy's. Continual correspondence and conversation by United Methodists throughout The Florida Conference will be encouraged until said corporations become full participants in the Fair Food Program."

Submitted by:

Rev. Roy Terry IV, Cornerstone United Methodist Church, Naples, FL; Rev. Audrey Warren, Branches United Methodist Mission, Florida City, FL; Rev. Lisa Lefkow, Cornerstone United Methodist Church, Naples, FL; Rev. Stephanie Campbell, Cornerstone United Methodist Church, Naples, FL

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<sup>7</sup> <http://umc-gbcs.org/resolutions/taco-bell-boycott-196-2004-bor>