



OLD CAMBRIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH

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BAPTISTS SUPPORT FAIR TRADE AGREEMENTS, OPPOSE UNFAIR ONES

Baptists want trade agreements to be fair. At their May 1 annual meeting in West Springfield, MA, delegates to The Association of Baptist Churches of Massachusetts (TABCOM) voted overwhelmingly in support of a “statement of concern” about trade agreements under negotiation by U.S. trade officials. The resolution urges fellow Baptists to work with others in our communities who also are concerned about justice and fairness for all in our country and around the world and encourages all people to purchase fair trade products.

Based on bad experience with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Baptists raise numerous concerns about the negotiations under way on the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The resolution opposes trade agreements that include “regulatory expropriation” or “investor-to-state dispute resolution” clauses like the NAFTA Chapter 11 provisions that corporations have used to challenge legitimate government actions or agreements that would lead to significant losses of family-supporting jobs, and their replacement with low-paying, no-benefit, non-union jobs. Also of concern—agreements that do not protect workers’ right to organize or could be used to force privatization of vital public services like education, healthcare, and water. Some draft agreements appear to give more rights to major corporations while limiting the ability of local communities to pursue goals like environmental protection, public health, and economic development. And finally, it’s offensive and undemocratic that these agreements are essentially negotiated in secret. The Baptist resolution sees that these international agreements would eliminate thousands of manufacturing and service jobs and force communities to compete in a global “race to the bottom.” The resolution foresees that the effect of these international agreements would be to shift power away from communities and small businesses and toward large multinational corporations.

The Old Cambridge Baptist Church in Cambridge, MA brought the resolution of concern to the TABCOM meeting.

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