

## No. 0315

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

### IN SUPPORT OF IMMIGRANT FARM WORKERS AND BOYCOTT OF TACO BELL

**ADOPTED** by the General Assembly

#### **Background and Summary**

Thousands of immigrant workers are recruited by agricultural industries for injury prone and backbreaking manual labor jobs unwanted by Americans. Coming from poorer countries, these workers are egregiously exploited by large American corporations. Not only does the agricultural industry benefit from this exploitation, but also restaurant chains that buy their produce, and ultimately the American consumer as well.

Farm workers who pick tomatoes must pick two tons of tomatoes in order to make a meager fifty dollars. This is the same wage they were paid in 1978. They receive no benefits, no Workman's Compensation, and live in inhumane conditions.

Despite the fact that a boycott may initially hurt the workers due to layoffs or reduction from work, it is the workers themselves, through the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida, who have called for a boycott of Taco Bell. Taco Bell is one of the largest purchasers of tomatoes grown in Florida. The Florida tomato suppliers have refused all calls to sit down with their workers, and Taco Bell has refused all calls to put pressure on the suppliers to do so.

The cost to bring justice to these workers is not high. To increase the piece-rate per 32 pound bucket of tomatoes from 40 cents to 73 cents would only increase the price of a taco served at Taco Bell a fraction of a penny. Likewise, by agreeing to pay one cent more per pound for the tomatoes it buys from its Florida tomato suppliers, Taco Bell would need only to increase the price of a Chalupa by less than one-fourth of one cent.

This resolution calls for disciples to demonstrate Christian consumer responsibility by boycotting Taco Bell until such time when Taco Bell demonstrates corporate responsibility by putting pressure on its Florida tomato suppliers to bring justice to the workers who pick their produce. Therefore,

**WHEREAS**, it is part of the vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to have a passion for justice (Micah 6:8); and

**WHEREAS**, Sense-of-the-Assembly resolution No. 0126 was adopted at the 2001 General Assembly calling for express endorsement of the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) and its good and important work with migrant and seasonal farm workers and to provide a Disciples witness and presence in ministry with farm workers and encouragement to all regions and congregations to give support to migrant and seasonal farmers wherever they are throughout the country ; and

**WHEREAS**, an integral part of the concept of justice in the scriptures is not to oppress the foreigner in the land (Exodus 22:21), and not to withhold the laborer his/her wage (Deuteronomy 24:14-15); and

**WHEREAS**, James 5:4 says, Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts ; and

**WHEREAS**, immigrant workers in the state of Florida are crying out for justice and release from their exploitation by calling for a boycott of Taco Bell, who buys the tomatoes these workers harvest for Florida tomato growers for unjust wages and deplorable conditions;

**WHEREAS**, the Florida tomato suppliers refuse to meet with these immigrant workers and Taco Bell refuses to take any responsibility for the injustice from which they benefit; and

**WHEREAS**, our closest ecumenical partner, the United Church of Christ, has already taken up this cause and approved at their 2001 General Synod a boycott of Taco Bell;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, October 17-21, 2003, calls for a boycott of all Taco Bell restaurants and products (taco shells, sauce, refried beans, etc. sold in groceries) until such time when Taco Bell convenes a meaningful, three-part dialogue bringing together representatives of Taco Bell, their Florida tomato suppliers, and representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to discuss solutions to the needs and rights of the immigrant workers and join with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and other tomato industry representatives to draft strict wage and working condition standards to be required of all Taco Bell tomato suppliers; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) signal the boycott by communicating this resolution directly to the president of Taco Bell in Irvine, California, and to the Board of Directors of Yum! Brands (parent company of Taco Bell), along with the denomination's concern for worker rights, and that the Division of Homeland Ministries contact the United Church of Christ's Justice and Witness Ministries to discuss progress they have made on this issue and ways the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) might combine efforts with them; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourage the regional manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) work through its youth programs to bring the issue into their sphere of influence and encourage youth the primary consumers of Taco Bell products to take an active role in the boycott; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourage local congregations to write letters to local Taco Bell establishments, informing franchise owners of the denominational boycott and the congregation's intent to encourage the boycott among its members.