

# United Church of Christ, Massachusetts Conference

## Resolution Calling for the United Church of Christ, Massachusetts Conference to be a Fair Trade Conference

*Approved by the 205th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ, June 14, 2004*

**WHEREAS** teachings on “global economic theory” are scarce in the Bible, the more basic story of God standing with the powerless against the powerful is common. Isaiah, for example, attacked the rich for their wasteful opulence: “Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasurers” (2:7a). Hosea mocked the way they boasted in their wealth: “Ah, I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself; In all of my gain, No offense has been found in me” (12:8). Jeremiah claimed that they “have become great and rich, they have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness” (2:8). Amos said that unchecked, the wealthy would “trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land” (Amos 8:4, cf. Amos 2:7, 4:1; Isaiah 3:15; Prov. 22:22). “They covet fields, and seize them; [they covet] houses, and take them” (Micah 2:2; cf. Jeremiah 5:26).

**WHEREAS** the fair trade movement pledges to:

- Pay prices which establish a living wage for producers;
- Work with democratically run cooperatives, governed by the farmers themselves, and dedicated to equitable distribution of income and services;
- Develop producer capacity, which means working with farmers to enhance their management skills and marketing independence.
- Buy direct, meaning that benefits and profits go to the farmers and their communities;
- Promote gender equality, meaning valuing and rewarding the work of women;
- Encourage ecologically sustainable farming practices; and
- Promote decent working conditions, meaning (among other things) that if children are involved, their working conditions conform to UN Conventions on the rights of the Child; and

**WHEREAS** several colleges (including Brown, Yale, Georgetown and Dartmouth) have voted to become Fair Trade institutions, many faith groups (including Catholics, Lutherans and Presbyterians) have established partnerships with the Fair Trade organization, Equal Exchange, and several major grocery chains and coffee companies now offer a line of Fair Trade coffee.

**WHEREAS** many UCC congregations in Massachusetts have already joined with over 9,000 places of worship and faith-based organizations who support small coffee farmers in developing nations by using fair trade, coffee and have developed programs to foster purchase of fair trade coffee by their committees and members to help impoverished family farmers in the developing world provide for their families; and

**WHEREAS** the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries partnered in March 2004 with Equal Exchange to launch a denomination-wide coffee program (the “UCC Coffee Project”) through which Equal Exchange, in addition to the benefits of Fair Trade, will make a donation to the “UCC Small Farmer Fund” each time a UCC church or member buys coffee through the project; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the 205th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ covenants together to become a “Fair Trade Conference,” meaning that we will strive to offer Fair Trade Coffee at official functions and thereby become a moral example for other conferences, denominations, and faith groups, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the 205th Annual Meeting encourages the churches in the Massachusetts Conference to offer Fair Trade coffee, purchased through the new UCC partnership with Equal Exchange, as the standard coffee served during fellowship hour, and for sale in their churches; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that our churches be called upon to dedicate themselves to take on this program as a mission project to educate their members about how small economic choices affect peoples’ lives in other countries.



**UCC COFFEE PROJECT**  
1-866-822-8224  
[www.ucc.org/justice](http://www.ucc.org/justice)

*Equal Exchange's Interfaith Program works in partnership with communities of faith and faith-based relief, development and human rights organizations to make a difference in the lives of small farmers and their families through Fair Trade.*



**EQUAL EXCHANGE**  
774-776-7366  
[www.equalexchange.com/interfaith](http://www.equalexchange.com/interfaith)