

## The Alliance of Baptists

### A Statement on Cuba

April 21, 2001

As a partner body of the Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba, the Alliance of Baptists, gathered in Annual Meeting today, reiterates its continuing solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Cuba in their ongoing struggle with the effects of the political and economic isolation imposed on their country by the policies of the United States of America for the past four decades.

At the beginning of a new Administration in Washington, we exercise anew our First Amendment freedom under the Constitution of the United States "to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" with respect to our nation's policies toward Cuba. Beginning nearly a decade ago, our grievance has been and continues to be that the continuation of our outdated policies of diplomatic and economic sanctions impose untold hardship on the people of Cuba in contradiction of our best instincts as a people.

Accordingly, we request President Bush and his national security team to undertake a comprehensive review of U.S. policy toward Cuba. We urge Congress to begin to undo the damage done by the passage of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act by the full and prompt consideration of the "Bridges to the Cuban People Act" of 2001, to be introduced by U.S. Senator Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut and U.S. Representatives Jos E. Serrano of New York and Jim Leach of Iowa, a bill which includes the following components:

- Expansion of humanitarian trade to include (without licensing or shipping restrictions) food, medicine, agricultural equipment, and goods or services intended for the exclusive use of children;
- Restoration of the ability of U.S. banks and other financial institutions to make these sales;
- Importation of certain medical products made in Cuba that are not available in the U.S.;
- An increase of people-to-people contacts by the lifting of restrictions on travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens;
- Provision of scholarships for Cubans to pursue graduate studies in the U.S.;
- Removal of limitations on the amount of remittances that Cuban Americans may send to their families in Cuba; and
- Enhancement of presidential flexibility to waive additional titles of the Helms-Burton Act.

In the continuing effort to effect changes in U.S.-Cuba policy, we commend the work of our partner organization, the Latin America Working Group, and pledge to continue to collaborate with our LAWG colleagues in that effort.

Finally, we assure our sisters and brothers in the churches of the Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba of our fervent prayers for the efficacy of their witness to our common Savior and Sovereign, Jesus

the Christ, in their society, even as we implore them to pray for us in the offering of our witness in this society.