

HARVEST OF JUSTICE 2017

Farm Worker Statistics/Realities/Prayers/Reflections

The National Farm Worker Ministry invites you to utilize some or all of this information/these statistics/prayers/reflections for weekly bulletin announcements and/or social media posts:

Week 1 – post Sept 3 (Labor Day is Sept. 4)

RECOGNIZING THE LABOR OF FARM WORKERS

Farm workers are the men, women and children who work the farms and ranches which are the backbone of the U.S.'s \$200+ billion dollar agricultural industry and whose labor benefits each of us every day. Advocates estimate that there are 2 to 2.5 million farm workers who work in U.S. agriculture annually.

Dear God, on Labor Day, remember those least among us, the usually invisible hands that bring the harvest we enjoy. Let our gratitude hearten farm workers. Amen. (adapted from Dr. Samuel B. Trickey)

Week 2 – post Sept 10

FARM WORKERS DESERVE FAIR WAGES

Farm workers have the lowest average annual family income of any U.S. wage and salary workers - \$16,250. Farm workers get 6 cents of every food dollar income. Growers receive 23 cents and Corporate Food Processors receive 71 cents.

By "*the least of these*," Jesus is not making a statement about relative value. The poor, and the sick, and the hungry, and the imprisoned, are not inferior in any way, and they are certainly not worth less than those who have much, including money, status, and power. In fact, Jesus is saying:

These are members of my family.

Whatever you do for them, you're doing it for me.

(Rev Dr Steve Hyde, Ravensworth Baptist Church, Annandale, VA)

Week 3 – post Sept 17

SOME FARM WORKERS ARE CHILDREN

Federal labor laws exclude child farm workers from protections provided other working children. Children can work for hire at the age of 12, with parental consent. At the age of 16, children can do farm work that the U.S. Department of Labor deems "particularly hazardous." Approximately

500,00 farm workers in the US are under the age of 18 (Child Labor Coalition).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children."

We pray for children who are exploited for their vulnerability, whose bodies are stunted by adult work and overexposure to pesticides, whose minds are distracted from education in order to comply with quotas and whose souls are burdened with abuse and hardship. Deliver them from fear for themselves and their families. Give them joy and affirmation that they are cherished. Let our voices and the voices of advocates everywhere amplify the message that if you PAY PARENTS A LIVING WAGE, THEIR CHILDREN WILL NOT NEED TO WORK! Hear our plea, O God and give us resolve. Amen.

Week 4 – post Sept 24

FARM WORKERS DESERVE TO BE SAFE FROM PESTICIDE EXPOSURE

Until the 2016 EPA's Certification of Pesticide Applicators rule change there was no minimum age to use restricted-use pesticides. Pesticide exposure causes farm workers to suffer more chemical-related injuries and illnesses than any other workforce nationwide. A recent study of acute pesticide poisonings between 1998 and 2005 among agricultural workers in the United States found that an average of 57.6 out of every 100,000 agricultural workers experience acute pesticide poisoning, illness or injury each year (Farmworker Justice).

Let the cries of farm workers be heard here and everywhere, "NO POISON!" Let the pleas of people of faith and conscience be heard here and everywhere, "SAFETY BEFORE PROFIT!" Let the calls of farm workers be heard here and everywhere, "NO EXPOSURE!" Let the shouts of people of faith and conscience be heard here and everywhere, "DO NO HARM!" Let the questions of farm workers and people of faith and conscience be heard here and everywhere, "WHO SUFFERS? WHO BENEFITS? Let the prayers of farm workers and people of faith and conscience be heard here and everywhere, "HEAR US! Amen."

Week 5 – post Oct 2

US AGRIBUSINESS RELIES ON IMMIGRANTS

71% of farm workers are foreign-born workers. 33% of farm workers are US citizens with 18% who are legal permanent residents. About 50 to 70% of farm workers are undocumented. 59% of undocumented farm workers first entered the US more than 10 years ago.

Eli Porrás Carmona is from Mexico State, MX. For ten years, Eli has left his wife and son behind for much of the year to travel to the U.S. to work

the fields through the H2A guestworker program. He is a member of FLOC.

When asked, “Why come to the US to work?” Eli said, “In Mexico, they pay us very little for the work that we do, so we look for a better way to find better paying work in order to give our families a little of the comfort that they deserve, that they need: schooling, food, a home. And that is why we are here.”

Week 6 – post Oct 9 (Columbus Day is Oct 10)

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT SEPARATES FAMILIES AND INCARCERATES HARD WORKING IMMIGRANTS

In the first six months of 2016, according to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), 14,699 of the persons who were deported claimed to have at least one US-born child. That averages almost 2,500 families per month who were separated.

In 2017, DHS reported that arrests of immigrants without documents was up 37% from the same time last year and that it “maintained” an average daily population of 39,102 in “detention.”

O God, immigration enforcement separates families. As people of faith and conscience, we are outraged by this. Families deserve better. A path to citizenship has been impossible although they have reached out for any glimmer of hope that it might be attained.

God, we beg you, please stop this! Intervene! Bring compassion! Bring a change of heart, a change of understanding, a change of policy and let the people go! Let the people go home to their families in our communities where they belong. Amen.

Week 7 – post Oct. 15 (World Food Day is Oct 16)

THOSE WHO PICK OUR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ARE ALSO HUNGRY

Studies completed among farm workers consistently report high levels of food insecurity. Two studies in California reported around 1/2 to 2/3 of participants interviewed were food insecure. (Wirth, Strohlic et al. 2007). Results of a study among migrant and seasonal farm workers in North Carolina showed that 47% of these farm worker households were food insecure including 10% with hunger (Quandt, et al, 2004). A similar study in Texas with 100 migrant and seasonal farm workers revealed that 82% were food insecure with 49% of these having hunger (Weigel, Armijos et al, 2007). In Ohio, 50 migrant farm workers participated in a survey to assess food security among children of farm worker families. Only 22% of these children met the minimum recommended food group servings for their ages (Kilanowski, et al. 2009). Food insecurity represents a lack of access to healthy food but hunger represents a lack of nourishment so as to have physiological consequences.

Anecdotally, farm workers frequently reveal that they lack the money to purchase the produce they harvest.

O God, we seek your help in the struggle for justice for farm workers. For the workers who harvest the food that comes to our tables, may they receive a living wage...Lord, hear our prayer. For the fruits of decent housing, health care, and hope for respect, may the church, filled with the Holy Spirit, be in solidarity with the workers...Lord, hear our prayer. For strength to the organizers who work for the fruits of justice...Lord hear our prayer. O God, bless our hearts and our hands in this harvest of justice. Amen.