

Farm Worker Awareness Week Proclamation
Gainesville City Commission – March 20, 2014
Remarks after Mayor’s Presentation

Mr. Mayor, Members of the Commission – thank you.

I’m Samuel Trickey, member of the Board of Directors of National Farm Worker Ministry and past President of that Board. With me are Fran Ricardo of Rural Women’s Health Project and Marihelen Wheeler, Immigration Coordinator for Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice, the local farm worker support group.

We’re here – and farm workers are not – because for the most part they’re invisible, as the Proclamation says. Those who bring us the food we enjoy are exploited and abused because they are mostly invisible. So the Awareness Week is more than just symbolism. It helps make the farm worker struggle real, visible.

People of faith, people of social conscience have learned that such visibility is important. Only by sharing our buying power as consumers have farm workers made progress.

Sometimes farm workers do show up – in Gainesville, in Lakeland. On their recent visits they and we have called on an otherwise pretty-good corporate citizen – Publix – to join the Fair Food Program. So far Publix has said “no” to helping the CIW tomato pickers mentioned in the proclamation. So we keep on, making people aware of our common humanity. Similar struggles are going on between Farm Labor Organizing Committee and Reynolds Tobacco in North Carolina and between United Farm Workers and multiple growers in California. People of faith and social conscience are engaged there as here. That too is what the Proclamation is about.

If you talk with farm workers – as I have many, many times – you quickly learn that they feel alone, forgotten, at the edges of society. And when we tell them about this Proclamation I can guarantee what their response will be: “Wow! They noticed! We’re not alone!”

Thank you.