

Church Women United Commitment to National Farm Worker Ministry

Submitted to Church Women United Common Council

November 30 – December 1, 2011

by the CWU State Board of Illinois

Whereas, nearly two million farm workers, men, women and children, labor in our fields, orchards, vineyards, and dairies, providing the food that fills our tables and sustains our agricultural industry;

Whereas, Church Women United (CWU) has a long history of concern for farm workers, has participated in state migrant ministries, was a founding member of the National Farm Worker Ministry and actively supported the work through funding, the provision of office space, letter writing, participation in fasts, prayer vigils, boycotts, etc;

Whereas, in 2011, the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) celebrated 90 years of service and forty years as a national organization working for justice for and empowerment of farm workers;

Whereas, with the help of NFWM thousands of farm workers have won improved wages and working conditions, laws such as those in several states requiring water and shade breaks in the heat; and labor agreements ensuring their right to enforce such laws themselves;

Whereas, much remains to be done as most farm workers today are immigrants, who due to economic and political conditions in their home countries, have come here desperate to survive and hopeful of providing a better life for their families. The majority are undocumented, isolated and vulnerable to abuses such as sexual harassment, exposure to toxic pesticides, underpayment of wages and human trafficking. Facing firing or deportation if they complain, they depend on public support to help end that abuse;

Whereas, National Farm Worker Ministry remains committed to its mission of mobilizing that support, and seeks greater participation from faith communities who can partner with them in meeting the challenges faced by farm workers today on both the national and international level;

Whereas, Church Women United is committed to the health, safety and well being of women, men, girls and boys everywhere; as expressed in numerous national policy statements; as well as to the pursuit of justice, and an end to human trafficking;

Whereas, CWU of Illinois actively participates in NFWM as a member organization through representation on its Board, a financial contribution and informing its units about farm worker issues; and CWU Southern California/Nevada, Florida, North Carolina and elsewhere are supportive of NFWM's work with farm workers;

Whereas, National Church Women United was a founding member of NFWM, but its support has been interrupted for more than ten years;

Therefore be it resolved; that Church Women United renew its commitment on a national level to justice for farm workers, remembering that we are connected to them every time we eat, by partnering with the NFWM as a national member or supporting organization.

Therefore be it further resolved that CWU's national participation in NFWM would benefit them through opportunities for direct involvement in justice issues, for developing close relationships with farm worker organizations and their members whose courage and hope are an inspiration to all; and for engagement in transforming our agricultural system to ensure greater fairness for all participants.

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