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Standing with Farm Workers Against Gender Based Violence

Harvest of Justice 2019

Healing on the Sabbath:

A REFLECTION about how people of faith could respond to the pain of farm workers who experience gender based violence, with a particular focus on women who experience this in greater number and frequency

-from Luke 13:1-17 (*The Message*)

Group Discussion Guide

Preparing: The nature of this conversation may bring up personal issues for people, especially survivors of violence or people currently in situations of difficulty. Designate a

pastor or counselor or compassionate listener who will be available to individuals - not for counseling - simply to hear and perhaps refer to those qualified to assist.

Identify three persons to help in reading and leading the discussions. Two persons to read- one reads the italicized parts from the Message and one the other parts. The third person reads the bold parts and serves as a moderator.

Introductions & Guidelines: Offer time for brief introductions so everyone knows who is in the room. Establish guidelines for sharing with each other such as keeping the confidentiality of the sharing; listening to hear and not to respond; speaking from a personal point of view and not generalizing; etc.

Sing: "There Is A Balm in Gilead"

Reading & Discussion: Readers begin the reading from the message. For the first bolded question, take quick answers and do not linger. This same question is repeated next and followed by the invitation to explore systems. Whenever asking a question, follow with a moment of silence before repeating the question and inviting sharing. When the question is asked again, allow time for response and then move to the second bolded question to do the same. During that response time, be prepared to offer suggestions from the NFWM website. After that sharing, ask the third question, hear response and then move them to the closing litany.



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Healing on the Sabbath

Luke 13: 1-17 The Message

(Scripture from The Message is italicized; Bolded sections are to be used for group discussion.)

He was teaching in one of the meeting places on the Sabbath.

The demands of farm workers means that they often work in the fields seven days a week, have little or no time for rest. Farm worker women cannot expect relief from harassment and abuse. For them there may be no “Sabbath” day of rest.

There was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years.

Farm worker women say: “There is no where we can go where there is not abuse.”

Where is the *Balm in Gilead* for farm worker women?

Jesus critics said: *“Six days have been defined as work days. Come on one of the six if you want to be healed, but not on the seventh, the Sabbath.”*

Naming the systems: The farm owner says they are not responsible for the behavior of supervisors and overseers. It is their land. The government, the inspectors, say they don't have time to visit every farm and investigate every complaint. There are rules that cannot be broken. Many would say: “We are not responsible for undocumented women. We cannot believe their stories.”

“But when Jesus saw her, he called her over. “Woman, you're free!” He laid hands on her and suddenly she was standing straight and tall, giving glory to God.”

Where is the *Balm in Gilead* for farm worker women?

What “Sabbath” rules need to be broken?

Be prepared to include areas for action from the NFWM website: farm worker contracts, violence against women act, proposed legislation, path to citizenship.

What can we do to help farm worker women stand up straight and tall?

After hearing the response, close with the following affirmation of faith:

One/Leader: *“The meeting-place president, furious because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the congregation, “ Six days have been defined as work days, come on one of the six if you want to be healed, but not on the seventh, the Sabbath.” But Jesus shot back, “You frauds! Each Sabbath every one of you regularly unties your cow or donkey from its stall, leads it out for water, and thinks nothing of it. So why isn’t it all right for me to untie this daughter of Abraham and lead her from the stall where Satan has had her tied these eighteen years?”*

Many/Congregation: When he put it that way, his critics were left looking quite silly and red-faced. The congregation was delighted and cheered him on.

Celebrate this truth and sing together *There is a Balm in Gilead* as we seek to “make the wounded whole.”

Amen.