

Fall 2022

# NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY NEWS & VIEWS

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## Message from the Executive Director

On August 26th, I joined Kimberly Emery and Sylvia Campbell to march with the UFW for the last leg of their 335-mile journey from Delano to Sacramento. The day was a triumph of farm worker visibility, determination, faith, and resolve. It did not result in what we had



Julie Taylor, Kimberly Emery, holding Joyce's flag, and Sylvia Campbell at the UFW March

all hoped for – Governor Newsom signing the Voting Choice Act in CA to make it easier for farm workers to hold union elections – but it did result in a demonstration of farm workers showing that they are still here and still seeking justice.

During the march, Kimberly carried a small UFW flag, a symbol that NFWM is still here and still seeking justice with farm workers. The UFW flag was one that had been carried by Joyce Harmon in 1973 when she came to the Coachella Valley to stand with farm workers on the picket line. Joyce was one of many delegates of the United Church of Christ Synod meeting in St. Louis, MO whose story is included in our online history exhibit. She kept the flag all these years. After Joyce passed last fall, her daughter, Bethany sent it to me, just in time for the march.

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It is what NFWM has been about all these years, showing up for farm workers, hearing their stories, and making their issues known. As NFWM hears farm worker stories in labor camps, at meetings, and through our connection to unions, coalitions, committees, and associations, we are entrusted with those stories. I am humbled by farm workers' requests that we share their stories. They understand that after visiting them, we will be with people they will never see. Often, farm workers want us to be sure that other people know what they do, their commitment to do a good job harvesting the country's produce, and the realities they experience with threats of deportation, wage theft, sexual harassment, pesticide exposure, extreme heat, substandard housing, inadequate meals, limited access to bathrooms, intimidation, and treatment that makes them feel less than human. We know the dignity of the people who work in our fields, packing houses, and dairies.

I think what astounds me even more than their willingness to share is how disconnected many people in this country are from their food. Many consumers remain unaware of the exploitation inflicted upon farm workers in the process of getting food to the grocery stores. Our educational work is as important now as it ever was. What we share through our Harvest of Justice resources, the farm worker stories we convey through our social media, our ongoing support of farm worker campaigns to improve their living and working conditions, these are vital to helping the wider public understand and participate in farm worker solidarity. We must continue to show up where farm workers are and stand or march with them.

As you celebrate the harvest this fall, remember the people, the farm workers, who pick the fruits and vegetables. It is our heritage and it is our calling to continue in solidarity with farm workers. We are still here.

Julie Taylor, Executive Director of NFWM

### Harvest of Justice 2021 Prayer

God of Land and Earth and Field and Farm - We thank you for the gracious gifts of fruits and vegetables and nuts and grain. These give us health and energy and a wholesome life. Help us to remember the hard work of farm workers who bring us these gifts. May we show our gratitude as consumers and advocates and citizens by standing in solidarity with farm workers as they campaign for fair wages, decent living and working conditions and a path to citizenship. Give us voice and presence so our faith will have an impact for them in the public square.

Because we all eat, because we are all human beings deserving of dignity, because we are created by You and loved by You and necessary to each other for health and well-being, we pray. Amen. (from HOJ 2021)



### Harvest of Justice 2022 Prayer

For the farm worker families who bear the exploitation of our country's agricultural system and their children who must work in the fields to help their parents survive, we pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

# Harvest of Justice 2022: Child Labor in Agriculture

Harvest of Justice 2022: Child Labor in Agriculture focuses on the estimated 300,000 to 500,000 children who labor to put food on America's tables. This educational program explores the double standard for farm work. Labor laws protect and prevent children from working in factories or offices, but allow children as young as 12 to legally work unlimited hours on farms outside of school with parental permission. Child farm workers face extreme working conditions and lack many basic child labor protections. Every day, around 33 children are injured doing farm work. And a child working in agriculture dies about every three days.



Photo Credit: David Bacon

Child labor is prevalent in agriculture because families have no other option but to ask their children to work in the fields to help pay necessary expenses. When parents make poverty wages, they need their children to work too. Child farm workers are at a higher risk of developing mental and physical health issues. They also experience many educational challenges, which is why migrant students have one of the highest dropout rates in the United States.

Child labor in agriculture is a complex problem, but this exploitative practice can be stopped. Consumers can help by joining farm worker-led efforts to improve their working and living conditions. One way to help is by supporting the Children's Act for Responsible Employment and Farm Safety (CARE Act), which provides basic child labor protections to U.S. child farm workers that all other working children have access to. In addition to helping pass the CARE Act, consumers can support the "Fairness For Farmworkers Act" and other legislation efforts that provide labor and safety protections for farm workers.



Photo Credit: Human Rights Watch

Harvest of Justice is an annual educational program that begins on Labor Day. It is an opportunity for NFWM's supporters to raise consciousness, commitment, and contributions. Resources for this year's Harvest of Justice include multiple informational sheets and videos in English and Spanish, as well as a social media toolkit and a recorded webinar. Next year's Harvest of Justice will cover how racism impacts farm workers.

We urge people of faith and conscience to help reduce child labor in agriculture. This Harvest of Justice take action alongside farm workers and their families. Learn more at [nfwf.org/harvestofjustice](https://nfwf.org/harvestofjustice).



# NFWM Summer Board Meeting Report

**By Rev. Sophia DeWitt, representative of California Church Impact**

The National Farm Worker Ministry held its Summer 2022 Board Meeting on July 29-30 in Raleigh, NC on the campus of North Carolina State University. Because of the COVID pandemic, it was my first in-person Board meeting in three years, and it was lovely to see people in person again. COVID safety remained a priority, however, and the virus continued to force changes to our meeting.

Because someone on the Board tested positive for COVID during the meeting, the decision was made not to visit farm workers at a nearby labor camp. Often, this direct engagement with workers is a highlight of the meetings. However, being aware that farm workers often do not have access to PPE, not to mention time off or healthcare, the decision was made not to risk a potential exposure. One of the core values of the ministry, historically and up to the present, is solidarity. This was one way that we enacted solidarity with farm workers at this meeting.

We received reports from our farm worker partners about their latest campaigns and support needs via videoconference. These included hearing about the UFW's August march up the Central Valley from Delano to Sacramento to convince Governor Newsom to sign mail-in ballot protections for farm workers in union elections. We also heard about an organizing campaign among mushroom farm workers in WA, as well as the latest news on the Wendy's campaign from the CIW and Farmworker Justice's Milk With Dignity campaign targeting Hannaford Supermarkets in VT and ME. The Milk with Dignity campaign was holding an action that very day to pressure Hannaford, and several of us participated and showed solidarity online.

NFWM Summer Intern Kaleb Graves provided us with a presentation about emerging trends and crops in the agriculture industry, and the effect they have on farm workers. The growing popularity of vegetarian meat replacements has greatly increased the production of both mushrooms and peas. This may be good for the planet and reduce carbon emissions, but it has some negative consequences for farm workers, as the piece rate for both crops is small, and harvesting requires significant time on one's knees. As we continue to follow long-standing issues, it is also important to follow emerging trends as well, and this presentation was informative.

Internally, the Board adopted revised values for the organization, recommitting to long-standing values like solidarity and respect, as well as explicitly stating our dedication to racial justice work. We also previewed materials for Harvest of Justice 2022, which focuses on child labor in the fields. Amidst the challenges of today's world NFWM continues its mission, always seeking to be harvesting justice with farm workers.



# Legislation Work and Updates



This fall, NFWM will be focused on several legislative initiatives. You can help us by contacting your congressional representatives to urge their support. Send an email, sign a petition, call the office but consider putting a face and a voice on your request. Set up a visit in their home office and speak to an aide. Even better, find a time when Congress is in recess for the holidays and set up a meeting with your congress person in-person. Consider taking someone with you, or a small delegation. That will demonstrate more voices, more faces, to request farm worker solidarity.

Support the “Children’s Act for Responsible Employment and Farm Safety (CARE Act).” This bill provides basic child labor protections to U.S child farm workers – protections provided to all other working children. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous forms of employment.

The BAN OPs from Our Food Act was introduced in late August and would ban all neurotoxic organophosphate pesticides. This bill would also prohibit foods from having any residue from organophosphates, without exception and regardless of tolerances set forth by the Food and Drug Administration. Studies show that even low levels of exposure in children have resulted in learning disabilities, negative cognitive outcomes, attention deficit disorders, and loss of working memory. Farm workers and those living close to fields using organophosphate pesticides are most at risk of exposure.

Contact your legislators and ask them to support the “Protect America’s Children from Toxic Pesticides Act.” The bill amends the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act to fully protect the safety of children and the environment and to remove dangerous pesticides from use. This is a more comprehensive bill than the Ban Ops, and it provides wider protections for farm worker children.

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## Legislation Continued

Support the “Asuncion Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act”, which requires the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to implement a national heat stress standard. Regulations for this are being discussed on a state-by-state basis with California already enacting them but most are passed only for heat emergencies and only in the northwest. These regulations need to be federal so that they can help farm workers around the country.

Farm workers should be paid overtime as all other workers in the US are required to be paid. If parents are paid livable wages, their children are less likely to need to work. Support the “Fairness for Farm Workers Act,” which would amend the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to include agricultural workers in its overtime provisions and remove most of the remaining exclusions of farm workers from the minimum wage.

Contact your congressional representatives and press for immigration reform that includes a reasonable path to citizenship for farm workers and their families. Immigration remains a challenging issue in many of our communities, but farm workers who provide food in the US deserve not to be intimidated by threats of deportation. They should not have to fear if they speak out or worry that they might go to work one day and not come home to their children.

On a state by state basis, show your support for the Migrant Education Program by ensuring your state or local community has ample funding for this program and migrant youth have the quality educational resources they deserve from preschool all the way to college.

Continue to follow updates about legislative work at [nfwf.org/news](https://nfwf.org/news).

The graphic features a green leafy background with three stylized figures of farm workers sitting on red and white striped barrels. The text 'NATIONAL FARMWORKER AWARENESS WEEK' is prominently displayed in white on the left. Below this, a red box contains the text 'Save The Date! NFAW 2023 is March 25-31.' To the right of the red box, white text explains that NFAW is an opportunity for supporters to honor farm workers' contributions and raise awareness about their issues. It also mentions a variety of events, including a webinar from NFWM, and directs viewers to [nfwf.org](https://nfwf.org) for more information.

**NATIONAL FARMWORKER AWARENESS WEEK**

**Save The Date!**  
**NFAW 2023 is March 25-31.**

NFAW is an opportunity for farm worker supporters across the country to honor farm workers' important contributions and to raise awareness about the issues they face.

There will be a variety of events this week, including a webinar from NFWM. Stay tuned for more information at [nfwf.org](https://nfwf.org).

## Welcome, Amanda Bell, NFWM Bookkeeper

Amanda grew up in Colorado with parents who were both pastors for The United Methodist Church. In the summers she would go to Ohio to make lemonade at county fairs for her family's business. After high school, Amanda went to California and got a BFA in Graphic Design. Upon graduating, she traveled to New Zealand to be a nanny and see what living in another country was like. Amanda liked it so much that in 2009 she moved to Canada where she got a BA in Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies (SMF) and used education visas to stay in the country.

Amanda currently lives in Ohio with her sweet Torti cat, who found her when she was volunteering at a cat shelter. Amanda is grateful to be working with NFWM, even though she isn't involved in the frontend of the organization she is happy to be supporting the work.



## Welcome, Austin Spence, Duke Intern



Austin Spence grew up in Severna Park, Maryland. He earned a degree in Biblical studies, with an emphasis in Faith and Social Justice, as well as Theology and the Arts from Belmont University. It was there during his summers where he figured out his need to work with his hands and with the earth, while simultaneously discovering a desire to advocate for those most in need. Post grad he moved to Raleigh and has been here ever since.

Austin is enrolled in the Masters of Divinity program at Duke Divinity school and is in his second year. He is seeking a certificate in Faith, Food, and Environmental Justice. He is not on an ordination track, but he is interested in impacting the non-profit arena with the skills developed in his time at Duke. At the end of his time with NFWM, he hopes to have developed excellent advocacy skills that are rooted first and foremost in relationships.

## Thank you, Kaleb Graves, Duke Intern



Kaleb Graves was NFWM's Summer 2022 intern. This Fall, he will be entering his third and final year in Duke's Master of Divinity program. Kaleb will be starting a position at Binkley Baptist Church, and he hopes to apply what he has learned at NFWM to his church ministry in the future.

During his time at NFWM, Kaleb researched local and state ecumenical groups with interest in farm worker justice, updated our website, connected churches to NFWM, and presented research and led a reflection at our board meeting.

## National Farm Worker Ministry

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## Be an ambassador for NFWM!

To truly help more farm workers, we need more people to hear about farm worker campaigns and the amazing work NFWM is doing to harvest

justice with farm workers. To truly raise awareness about the mission of NFWM, we need YOU.

Our supporters are the most valuable tool we have to drive people to NFWM. We encourage you to be an **AMBASSADOR for NFWM** and look for opportunities to speak about our work in your community, which includes people of faith and conscience.

There are many opportunities to engage your community in supporting the farm worker movement, and we want to make sure you have the tools you need to make an impact. We have created an Ambassador Kit with a variety of resources, such as email scripts and handouts, to use as you secure speaking engagements at [nfwm.org/resource-center](https://nfwm.org/resource-center).

If you have any questions about the kit or suggestions for items we can add, please contact Rose Green-Flores at [communications@nfwm.org](mailto:communications@nfwm.org). We'd also love to hear about when and where you used the kit!



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