

Spring 2024

NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY NEWS & VIEWS

In this issue:

**P. 1: FROM THE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

P. 3: HARVEST OF JUSTICE 24

**P. 4: WINTER 2024 BOARD
MEETING REFLECTIONS**

P. 6: NFWM NEWS

P. 7: NFWM REMEMBERS

**P. 8: SHOW YOUR SUPPORT
FOR THE WORK OF NFWM**



Message from the Executive Director

At the core of NFWM history is this simple word, "Welcome!" It was on the lips of the long ago visitors to farm worker labor camps in the mostly rural agricultural areas of this county. "Welcome!" It is the seed of



NFWM at an immigration vigil in Brownsville, TX.

hospitality in the hearts and minds of people of faith and conscience down through the ages. It is the value that drives Migrant Ministries, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services, and it is the root of NFWM's value of respect. It is embedded in the faiths of religions and the teachings of sacred texts - "Welcome the Stranger." "Aid the Sojourner."

Unfortunately, that practice is in peril today. NFWM's board meeting this past January took us to the Southern Border of Texas to show us how far we have come from providing the hospitality our faith and our conscience demands. While we visited border ministries, people offering hope and support and refuge to those whose struggle led them to a crossing in Brownsville, we saw orderliness and compassion and cooperation between city officials, volunteers and a community committed to following the rule of law in a humane way. It was a stark contrast to the regular news coverage of the border chaos in Eagle Pass where hate and fear and political blame are on constant display. All borders are not the same.

Continued on next page...

We also saw, in the shadow of the Matamoros bridge crossing, the signs of terrible struggle. Even as we paused there to offer prayers, we could witness pieces of clothing caught in the barbed wire fencing. Small bright patches of cloth signifying the entrapment of those who flee terrible violence, extreme poverty, victims of climate change and displacement. The stories of these migrants are not simple.

The movement of people as caravans, through coyotes, as families or alone are a testament to our own government's complicity in their misery - a story never told with any depth or recognition. In somewhat recent years, we do not tell the story of trade devastation via the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which summarily put 1 million Mexican farmers out of business. They migrated north to do what they knew best, farm work, but with no control of how they were treated, no value placed on their own practical knowledge, just "cogs in the wheels" of US agribusiness.

Today, soundbytes for "our" side of the story are the burden the undocumented people bring to our country, the resentment that they will take our jobs, the fear that they are criminals. These are myths of a politically motivated marketing campaign to create manufactured panic that will drive people to singular solutions, but these myths are just that, myths. The side of the story that we are not hearing, not seeing on a regular basis is how much immigrants bring to our country that enriches us. We are not hearing about our own complicity in the mass movement of people from the south to seek refuge here. Not only are we not hearing about this, we are not remembering our own country's heritage as immigrants and natives, one that we should learn from so that the culture and humanity of the souls residing within the borders of the land do not disappear.

Even as this newsletter is being written, there is a lawsuit in Texas that is attempting to revoke tax exempt status for a ministry of aid that has been in operation in a border community for decades. It is now being investigated and accused of human trafficking. Offering services and assistance to those crossing our border is being prosecuted, something not unfamiliar to people of faith over the centuries... a new form of persecution ala political pressure.

NFWM has been and will continue to be a beacon of welcome and hospitality and justice. Even as we stood on the border in TX earlier this year to offer prayers of remembrance for those dying to cross into our country, we will continue to carry their memory into the work of advocating for comprehensive immigration reform in the US. Our nation depends on the dignified labor of farm workers to feed us. They deserve fair wages. They deserve decent living and working conditions. They deserve to be welcomed. They deserve to be treated humanely. This year's Harvest of Justice topic is immigration. It will give voice to farm worker realities. Join us in amplifying that voice in your communities. We still say, "Welcome!"



NFWM and members of the La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) staff in front of one of LUPE's many murals.

Harvest of Justice 2024: Farm Workers & The Struggle For Immigration Reform

Immigration is a complex issue that can impact almost every facet of an immigrant's life. For farm worker communities, immigration status varies greatly, but many in the community are undocumented. Being undocumented or having family members who are undocumented brings a plethora of problems, including being more vulnerable to exploitation. Additionally, there is currently no path to citizenship for undocumented farm workers.

What is the process of entry for immigrants? Does immigration hurt the US economy? What do most faith traditions say about welcoming immigrants? These are just a few of the questions you will be able to answer through this year's Harvest of Justice (HOJ) program available now on our website. You will also hear directly from farm workers and advocates on what needs to be done for lasting change. This year's HOJ educational materials were created through collaboration with our farm worker partners Migrant Justice and LUPE.

Utilize our HOJ resources with your faith community, or on your own, to learn how people of faith and conscience can stand in solidarity with farm worker communities as they demand comprehensive immigration reform. Follow the 6-week program or modify as needed:

- Introduction to Immigration & Farm Workers
- Immigration & Agricultural Timeline
- Combatting Immigration Myths
- H-2A Program Overview
- Faith Stances on Immigration
- Immigration's Greater Impact

Resources include two bilingual videos, lesson plans, immigration myth busters, a social media toolkit, and more. If you need help planning a HOJ event or would like someone from NFWM to speak at your event, contact us at communications@nfwm.org.



We need your help! Please share our HOJ 2024 resources with your community so even more people learn about this important issue. Learn more at nfwm.org/immigration.

Reflections From NFWM's January Board Meeting



From Nathan Hosler, NFWM Board President & Representative of Church of the Brethren: We gathered at the border. Tall, slated fence at our backs. Beyond that a dirt road flanked by razor wire. In the razor wire, clothing. Pulled from people struggling across. And beyond that, the Rio Grande. We gathered to pray, recount stories, to bear public witness and remembrance. The stories were of people, whose names we didn't know. People with children and families who risked everything for safety—from violence and collapsed economies. After each story of someone who had died risking it all, the group responded, "Presente!"

From Hector Rodriguez, Board Representative of The Episcopal Church: Unlike the taxpayer-funded, expensive congressional juggernauts put on for show on the border, which accomplish nothing other than worsen our political divides and make life infinitely more difficult for both border residents and newcomers, the board of the National Farm Worker Ministry got an up-close look at how migrants are received on our southern border. We traveled to Brownsville, Texas, where the ecumenical community has for years done a masterful job of welcoming the countless children, women and men who manage to cross the border into this nation of immigrants. Thanks to the efforts of Andrea Rudnik and Cynthia Andrade Johnson and many others at the Welcome Center, Mari and her staff at Immaculate Conception Cathedral and Pastor Carlos Navarro at the West Brownsville Baptist Church, our sisters and brothers from points south, arriving in desperate physical and psychological conditions, receive loving care and kindness and assistance in travelling on to their various destinations.



From Rosie Shahar, NFWM Staff: The most powerful stories are ones of people conquering great obstacles: Rocky, Saving Private Ryan... the list is endless. It's easy to think that these are unique cases of bravery and perseverance. However, these tropes are present, and extreme, within the stories of over the millions of people who have crossed the border into the U.S. Just hearing a handful of stories and catching the smallest glimpse of what people experience was overwhelming. It was evident that enduring the dangers before and during people's journey to the U.S. takes the highest levels of intellect, strength, and resilience imaginable. Such intellect, strength, and resilience were clearly present within the people we met from La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE), The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Team Brownsville, Iglesia Bautista West Brownsville, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church who work endlessly to provide those who have just migrated with peace, dignity, and justice. I want to be a citizen of a country where all people are given respect, opportunity, and peace, regardless of their legal status. Such a vision requires the work done by LUPE and local churches, but it also requires our work, support, and solidarity.



Read more reflections and other news stories at nfwm.org/news.

Three Ways To Support Farm Workers This Summer



1. Deliver a letter to Wendy's: Show Wendy's that consumers around the nation are boycotting until they prioritize farm worker rights and join The Fair Food Program. Learn more about this campaign and explore our map of Wendy's locations that have received a letter at bit.ly/wendysboycott.

2. Tell Congress Farm Workers Need Federal Heat Standards: Contact your legislator telling them Occupational Safety and Health Administration must continue creating a standard that requires employers to implement certain measures for protecting workers from heat stress and related illnesses or injuries. Additionally, the standards must include the need for employers to create emergency response procedures for employees suffering from heat illness and put into place acclimatization plans to ensure workers can adjust to their working conditions.



3. Support other farm worker-focused legislation: One of the best ways you can stand in solidarity with farm workers is by advocating for legislation that improves their working and living conditions. Current farm worker-led legislation includes The Ban OPs Act, comprehensive immigration reform, and more, Visit nfwm.org/take-action to learn more.



RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT FARM WORKER JUSTICE!

NFWM needs your help to educate, equip, and mobilize people of faith and conscience to support farm worker led campaigns. We are looking for events and opportunities to speak in-person and virtually about farm worker issues. Know somewhere we can share our mission? Or are you willing to lead an event or presentation in your community? Let us know more by contacting us at communications@nfwm.org.

Thank you, Payton Price!



Payton was NFWM's Duke Divinity Intern from June 2023 to April 2024. Payton will graduate with a Master of Divinity this May with a discovered passion for working in the nonprofit sector. Though they had considered church ministry as a career interest, Payton has felt more drawn towards public ministry and negotiating the relationship between ecclesial/religious organizations and society more broadly. Payton hopes to work in creating insightful, digestible resources and communications for bringing about legislation which promotes positive social attitudes towards and impacts the material needs of oft-disinherited communities (farm workers, migrants, refugees, etc.). Payton helped expand the use of NFWM's social media and attempted to reach a broader audience. They also contributed to the research and creation of educational resources, as well as their promotion on NFWM's platforms. Payton traveled to two NFWM board meetings, and felt honored to be welcomed into the homes of migrant farm workers on two occasions in 2023. Payton hopes to carry these experiences with them to ground their future work.

Welcome, Rosie Shahr!



Despite being born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Rosie did not spend much time in the noisy, fast-paced city limits. Instead, as she was enthralled with animals and horseback riding, Rosie invested all of her free time into volunteering at a horse barn located outside of the city. Rosie's experience at the horse barn inspired her to pursue a degree in Sustainable Development at Appalachian State in the hopes of protecting the environment for future generations. Her undergraduate experience taught her the interconnections between environmental and social issues, causing Rosie to become passionate about issues of inequity and injustice in addition to environmental sustainability.

Rosie finished her education by attending a study abroad program that took place in Ghana. The program focused on the relationships between people and the environment, the politics of international development, and methods for pursuing environmental justice in the face of large-scale natural resource extraction. Rosie moved to Raleigh after graduating from Appalachian State in August, 2023. During her free time, Rosie enjoys days in the great outdoors, weightlifting, and feasting on new books, movies, and TV shows.



At NFWM we are happy to take your call! However, we no longer have our landline. The best way to reach us is at 386-801-1232 or via email at nfwm@nfwm.org.

NFWM Remembers



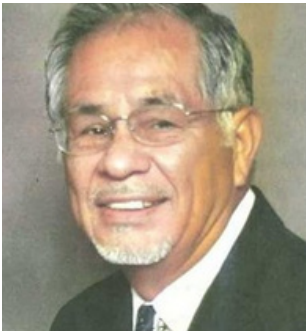
¡Presente! Alicia Alvarado

Sister Alicia Alvarado passed away on September 17, 2022. Alicia ministered with Hispanics most of her religious life and before, including briefly serving as Director of the Hispanic Office for the Cleveland Diocese. In 2005, she was elected to a four-year term as Fourth Councilor for her religious congregation. She received numerous awards for her work in social justice and her ministry among the Hispanics. Alicia served many years on the board of NFWM as a representative from the Dominican Sisters of Peace. We are grateful for Sister Alvarado's service to farm workers and justice for all.



¡Presente! Harriet Ha-Sidi

Harriet Ha-Sidi passed away on August 21, 2023. Harriet was a longtime supporter of Florida farm workers, visiting labor camps to take blankets, food and other supplies. She served as Vice-President of the Pinellas Support Committee for several years and kept her church, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Clearwater, connected to farm worker concerns in the state. We'll miss her challenging and enthusiastic spirit.



¡Presente! David Hernandez

David Hernandez passed away in September 2023. David was a retired clergyman for the Presbyterian Church. While serving in various pastorates of the Presbyterian church, serving the poor and oppressed was his passion. He believed that God had called him to this very special ministry. As an active organizer and social activist, David spent most of his life ministering amongst the under served, and marginalized people. He cared deeply about farm workers and was the first Associate Director of NFWM. David will be dearly missed.



¡Presente! Frank and Pat Helme

NFWM is honoring the legacy of Pat Helme, who passed away in 2016, and Frank Helme, who passed in 2021. For the Helmes, the Christian Church always felt like a loving a member of their family. Frank had a long career as pastor, associate regional minister and then on general ministry staff in Indianapolis. Pat was a former teacher who was also actively engaged in ministry. When the Helmes retired, they set up the Helme Family Endowment Fund through The Christian Church Foundation. It was important to them to have an estate plan in place so they could continue to give to the educational institutions and ministries they supported. Even after their passing, they wanted to leave a legacy of giving to National Farm Worker Ministry and others.

Just like the Helmes, your planned giving can ensure NFWM is able to harvest justice with farm workers for years to come. Planned gifts are often made through bequests, gifts of special assets (real estate, stock, life insurance, retirement accounts, etc.), or through a foundation or trust. To make NFWM part of your planned giving, contact us at nfwm@nfwm.org or at 386-801-1232.

National Farm Worker Ministry

PO Box 10645

112 Cox St., Ste 208

Raleigh, NC 27605

Return Service Requested

Show Your Support!

NFWM is sustained by people across the nation of different backgrounds and beliefs, yet there are key commonalities that connect us. As people of

faith and conscience, we are all guided by a variation of the 'golden rule', the principle of treating others how we want to be treated. This means treating others with respect, dignity, and standing in solidarity with others in their pursuits for justice. At NFWM, we not only stand with farm workers because they play an essential role that often goes unrecognized, but because they are fellow humans.

Amplify the voices of farm workers by supporting their campaigns, and educate the public about the unjust realities of the people who grow our food. Please do what you can to support farm workers, whether that means delivering a letter to your local Wendy's, responding to our action alerts, or donating what you can to our organization. Your investment in our organization helps us spread awareness and mobilize for farm worker rights, allowing us to create an impact that brings us closer to justice and equity for farm workers. **Donate now at nfwm.org.**



NFWM

112 Cox St., Ste 208
PO Box 10645
Raleigh, NC 27605

386-801-1232
nfwm@nfwm.org
www.nfwm.org

Staff Team:
Amanda Bell
Rose Green-Flores
Rosie Shahar
Julie Taylor

Follow Us:

[@nfwministry](#)

