

# News & Views

2026



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## A New Chapter for NFWM Leadership



Julie Taylor

After more than a decade of leadership as Executive Director, and many additional years of service alongside NFWM through the board and broader movement, **Julie Taylor** is preparing to transition out of her role with National Farm Worker Ministry.

For over 11 years as Executive Director, Julie helped guide NFWM through seasons of advocacy, relationship-building, and continued solidarity with farm worker communities across the country.

Her leadership reflected a deep commitment to accompanying farm workers, strengthening partnerships with faith communities, and helping supporters better understand both the challenges farm workers face and the powerful leadership of farm worker-led organizations.

As NFWM enters this next chapter, we are pleased to welcome **Kathleen Wood** as NFWM's next Executive Director.

Kathleen brings almost 20 years of experience in farm worker justice, faith-based organizing, nonprofit leadership, and community-centered food systems work. Her introduction to farm worker organizing began while working alongside Sisters of Charity near her hometown of Pueblo, Colorado.

She later trained as an allied organizer with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, supporting farm worker-led campaigns through faith-based organizing and community engagement efforts connected to the early Fair Food movement.

Over the years, Kathleen has organized alongside farm workers and faith communities through national agricultural policy campaigns, community-based food justice work, nonprofit leadership, and agricultural systems advocacy. Most recently, she helped develop and manage North Carolina's first statewide registered agricultural apprenticeship program for sustainable agriculture.



Kathleen Wood

Reflecting on her work, Kathleen shared:

***"My experience in farm worker advocacy and organizing has deepened my commitment to collective action led by those most affected, and that the role of allies and faith communities is to accompany, amplify, and remain accountable to that leadership."***

As we prepare for this leadership transition, we hold both gratitude and hope. We are deeply grateful for Julie's years of faithful leadership and know she will remain a cherished friend of NFWM and the farm worker movement. At the same time, we look ahead with hope as Kathleen steps into this role and as our staff, board, partners, and supporters move forward together in this next chapter of NFWM's work for farm worker justice.

# Rooted in Purpose This Winter

## NFWM Board Meets in January 2026

Earlier this year, NFWM's Board of Directors gathered virtually for our Winter Board Meeting — a time to reflect on what we accomplished together in 2025 and help shape the path ahead for 2026.



**NFWM's Staff & Board at our Virtual Board Meeting in January 2026**

The meeting opened with a reflection from Duke Divinity student intern Ali Kelso, who invited the board to consider compassion as a call to action. Drawing from Matthew 20, Ali reminded us that true compassion listens, responds, and moves toward those too often ignored.

Board members also reflected on the impact made possible through your support since they last gathered in the summer of 2025. In just six months, NFWM hosted 26 educational opportunities, participated in 13 advocacy actions and mobilizations, and secured 38 media engagements that helped amplify farm worker voices across the country. We were also grateful to welcome more than 100 new supporters into our growing community of solidarity in 2025.

As part of continuing that work, board members took action in support of the Boycott Wendy's Campaign. We move into 2026 grounded in faith, recommitted to our mission, and grateful for all who make this ministry possible.

## Standing with Immigrant Farm Worker Communities



**Board Member, Rev. Joy Warren at the Nashville Palm Sunday Witness of Remembrance.**

During NFWM's Winter Board Meeting, board members received painful news of renewed immigration enforcement actions in Minnesota and across the country. Together, they paused for a moment of silence to honor lives lost, families harmed, and communities carrying fear and grief in the wake of these actions.

For farm worker communities, immigration enforcement is not an abstract issue. Many of the people who plant, harvest, pack, and prepare our food live with the daily threat of detention, deportation, family separation, and workplace disruption.

According to the most recent USDA data, 42 percent of farmworkers lack legal work authorization.

This reality affects whether families feel safe driving to work, taking children to school, seeking medical care, or reporting wage theft, unsafe housing, harassment, or dangerous working conditions.

# National Farm Worker Ministry in Action!

Across the country, farm worker organizations are responding through rapid-response networks, bilingual Know Your Rights trainings, red card distribution, family preparedness planning, and connections to legal and emergency support. NFWM staff, board members, and supporters continue to join rallies, protests, boycotts, prayerful witness, and other public actions standing with immigrant farm worker communities, including actions in Texas calling attention to detention practices.

As people of faith and conscience, our role is clear: listen to and follow the leadership of those most impacted, show up when communities call for support, and use our voices, relationships, and resources to defend the dignity, safety, and rights of immigrant farm workers and their families.

## NFWM In Florida: Renewing Partnerships, Strengthening Solidarity



Julie Taylor & Elizabeth Rodriguez w/ Planting Justice team.

Last November, NFWM Executive Director Julie Taylor and Director of Farm Worker Advocacy Elizabeth Rodriguez traveled across Florida to visit long-time farm worker partners and allied organizations, including the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Farmworker Association of Florida, Beth-El Farmworker Ministry, WeCount!, and others.

From Immokalee to Apopka, conversations centered on housing, worker protections, environmental health, and the daily realities farm worker families continue to navigate. The visit was a powerful reminder that this movement is sustained through relationships, trust, and the leadership of farm worker communities.

## Farm Workers Bring Their Voices to Olympia

In January, NFWM's Director of Farm Worker Advocacy Elizabeth Rodriguez joined farm workers and allies in Olympia, Washington, for the 13th Annual Farm Worker Tribunal hosted by Familias Unidas por la Justicia.

Workers gathered at the state capitol to advocate for collective bargaining protections and the right to organize without retaliation. The day included a people's tribunal, where workers shared experiences of unsafe conditions, retaliation, and exposure to harmful chemicals, and NFWM was honored to stand in solidarity as they raised their voices for dignity and justice.



Farm workers and community allies gather in Olympia, WA.

## NFWM at the North Carolina Farm Worker Institute

From March 17-19, Elizabeth Rodriguez and Administrative Assistant Isabella Legra represented NFWM at the North Carolina Farm Worker Institute, a gathering of outreach workers, advocates, and partner organizations committed to supporting farm worker communities.

The institute created space for learning, collaboration, and conversations around worker wellbeing, changing policies, and practical outreach strategies.

During the event, Elizabeth presented From Fields to Foundations: Farm Worker Housing Realities, highlighting the connection between housing, health, and dignity for farm worker families.

# National Farm Worker Ministry in Action!



Elizabeth Rodriguez presents at the N.C. Farm Worker Institute.



Elizabeth Rodriguez and Isabella Legra representing NFWM.

## Farm Worker Voices at the 2026 Eco Institute Food Summit

In Edinburg, Texas, NFWM's Director of Farm Worker Advocacy, Elizabeth Rodriguez, helped coordinate and facilitate a panel at the 3rd Annual Food Summit, hosted by the Institute for Ecology Scholarship and Health in partnership with the Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Advancement.

The summit brought together farmers, growers, ranchers, food distributors, advocates, and community leaders to strengthen local food systems and partnerships.

Elizabeth's panel, Farm Worker Rights: The Role of the Farm Worker in the Food System, centered the voices of farm workers and small farmers whose labor and lived experience are too often made invisible in conversations about agriculture and food systems.



Elizabeth facilitates a panel featuring Andrea Casares from Sol & Roots Ranchito & farm worker, Maria Arias.

## May Day Actions Across the Country



Board Member, Connie Yost, speaks to a large crowd at PCUN May Day Rally in Salem, OR.

This May Day, NFWM members, partners, and allies joined workers and immigrant communities across the country in actions calling for dignity, justice, and labor protections.

In Salem, Oregon, Rev. Connie Yost, NFWM Board Member and President of Farm Worker Ministry Northwest, joined thousands at a May Day rally with PCUN.

In Sunnyside, Washington, longtime NFWM supporters, Roger and Marilyn Yockey were joined by Jose Martinez, to stand alongside United Farm Workers and mushroom workers.

In Texas, NFWM Director of Farm Worker Advocacy Elizabeth Rodriguez helped participants take action for the Boycott Wendy's Campaign at a May Day Solidarity Fest.

# National Farm Worker Ministry in Action!



Long-time supporters, Roger & Marilyn Yokey with former Windmill Worker, Jose Martinez.



NFWM Director of Advocacy helps Solidarity Fest Attendees support CIW's Wendy's Boycott in Texas.



Supporters in Sunnysidem, WA join UFW's Windmill Mishroom Boycott.

Together, these actions remind us that farm worker justice is part of the broader movement for worker dignity and immigrant justice.

## NFWM Educates for Justice

Education is one of the ways NFWM helps people of faith and conscience deepen their understanding of farm worker realities and respond with meaningful solidarity. Through webinars and conversations with trusted partners, we create space for supporters to learn directly from advocates, organizers, and community leaders working alongside farm workers every day.

### Learning through the Winter

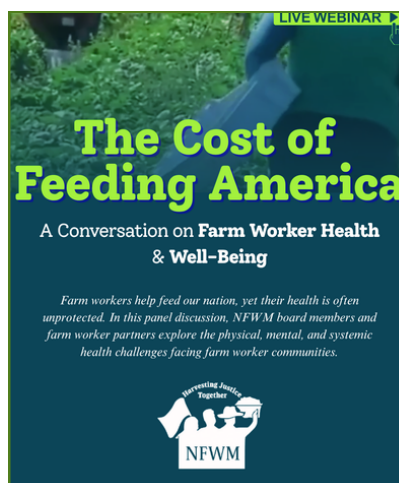
Since our last newsletter, these conversations have explored farm worker housing, immigrant care, and farm worker health—each offering important insight into the conditions, policies, and systems shaping the lives of those who help feed our communities.

#### Supporting Immigrants



In December, NFWM welcomed leaders from ILRC, St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church, and The Sidewalk School to discuss how communities are responding to fear, instability, and immigration challenges with compassion, trust, and practical support.

#### Farm Worker Health



In January, NFWM convened farm worker leaders and advocates for an important conversation on pesticide exposure, heat stress, injury, isolation, and mental health. Speakers highlighted urgent needs while lifting up worker-led pathways toward healthier futures.

#### Farm Worker Housing



In March, during National Farmworker Awareness Week, NFWM joined partners from Farmworker Justice and ALAS to explore how policy advocacy and community partnerships are helping create safer, more stable housing for farm worker families.

# NFWM Educates for Justice

## More Learning Ahead

Farm worker health is NFWM's 2026 education focus, and these conversations will continue throughout the year. In July, during BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month, we will host a webinar focused on farm worker mental health. In October, near World Food Day, we will continue exploring the connection between farm worker health, workplace conditions, and the food system we all depend on.

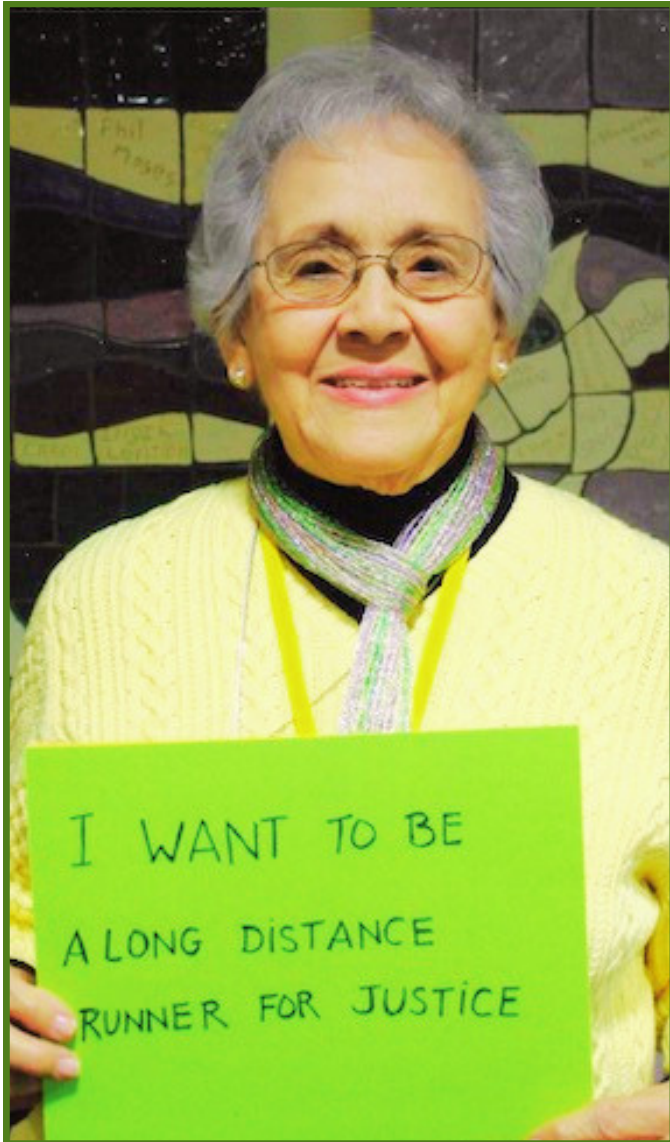
To learn more about our 2025 focus on farm worker housing, scan the QR code to visit our Housing Justice resource page, where you'll find webinar replays, videos, and additional resources.

SCAN HERE



## Honoring the NFWM Community

### In Loving Memory: Olga Sierra Sandman



Olga Sierra Sandman was present at the very beginning of the National Farm Worker Ministry and remained a faithful part of this work for more than five decades.

Her life helped shape what NFWM is today. From the early days of migrant ministry in the 1950s, Olga built relationships with farm worker families that would become the foundation of a lifelong commitment. What began as seasonal work quickly became something deeper. She returned year after year, listening, learning, and walking alongside farm workers with respect and care.

She was part of the conversations that led to the formation of NFWM in 1970 and served as a steady and trusted presence ever since. Her understanding of this work was clear. It was not about speaking for farm workers, but about accompanying them and supporting their leadership.

Those who knew Olga often described her as authentic, empathetic, prophetic, energetic, and magnetic — a woman whose warmth and strength reflected both her spirit and her commitment. As longtime board member Sam Trickey shared:

***"She welcomed farm worker delegations into her home. She talked gently... Yet she was polite, smilingly fierce in her unwavering commitment."***

That combination of warmth and conviction defined her presence in this movement. Olga formed deep relationships with farm workers and their families.

She carried that sense of relationship into every part of her life and work. Her commitment was not short-term. It was sustained, patient, and faithful. She reminded others of this often:

# Honoring the NFWM Community

## In Loving Memory: Olgha Sierra Sandman (Cont'd)

***"When you work for justice, you can't afford to be a sprinter; you must be a long-distance runner."***

In January, NFWM's Board of Directors voted unanimously to name Olgha our first Distinguished Board Member Emeritus, honoring the lasting impact she had on this Ministry and the broader farm worker movement.

Olgha passed away on January 27, 2026. She will be deeply missed.

We give thanks for her life, her witness, and the path she helped shape. As we continue this work, we do so with gratitude and with a renewed commitment to stand in solidarity with farm workers, just as she did.

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## Celebrating Our Duke Divinity Intern

This year, NFWM had the privilege of welcoming Ali Kelso, a Duke Divinity student, as our academic-year intern. Throughout her time with us, Ali supported farm worker advocacy efforts by helping promote campaigns, engaging peers in action, and contributing thoughtful insights that helped strengthen how we invite others into this work. She also played a meaningful role in our January Board Meeting, where she offered a reflection and led the board in a time of prayer and action. Ali approached each opportunity with care, intentionality, and a deep respect for the communities we serve.

Ali brought a calm and grounded presence to her work, demonstrating cultural awareness, strong collaboration skills, and a commitment to handling sensitive topics with integrity.

As she shared, ***"This experience has deepened my commitment to farm worker justice, which I will carry with me wherever I go."***



Ali Kelso, NFWM's 2025- 2026 Duke Divinity Intern

We are grateful for the time, energy, and heart she shared with NFWM this year, and we give thanks for the ways she will continue to carry this work forward.

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## Moving the Work Forward

Just a few months ago, we marked 30 years since the passing of Sister Pat Drydyk, former Executive Director of NFWM and longtime advocate for farm worker justice. The Pat Drydyk Fund carries her legacy forward by supporting racial and ethnic diversity in leadership and helping volunteers, young adults, and member organization representatives participate in board meetings and movement gatherings.

**To contribute, please designate your gift "Pat Drydyk Fund."**

SCAN TO DONATE



## National Farm Worker Ministry

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## The Farm Worker Movement Needs You

Every action NFWM takes alongside farm workers is strengthened by this community. Your prayers, advocacy, and generosity help sustain the relationships, campaigns, and educational efforts that move this work forward.

One meaningful way to offer steady support is by becoming a Sustainer. Monthly gifts help NFWM plan with care, respond when farm workers call for solidarity, and continue showing up where our partners lead.

We also invite you to stay connected through social media and our monthly eNews, where you'll find updates, action opportunities, and ways to keep amplifying farm worker voices. Together, we can continue building a movement rooted in dignity, justice, and solidarity.



# NFWM

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