Our Faith Calls Us to Stand with Farm Workers

Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. --James 5:4

Just as in New Testament times, farm workers in the U.S. today face injustices in the fields. They labor under difficult, unhealthy, and even dangerous conditions. Wages are low. Fringe benefits like health insurance or paid time off are rare. Workplace protections are weak and poorly enforced, and penalties for employers’ violations are pitifully small. Farm workers are not covered by the standard federal laws that protect most other workers. Housing, whether provided by growers or available for rent by farm workers, is frequently substandard. Child labor laws (already weaker in agriculture than in other sectors of the economy) are often ignored.

Farm workers feed all of us but, too often, they cannot afford to feed themselves or their families.

As disciples of Christ, we seek to show God’s love to all people. And we know that to share God’s love is to act. We stand with and support the struggles of our sisters and brothers who live in poverty or exist on the margins of society. We seek to change the laws, practices, and institutions that unfairly burden some of our neighbors. We witness to faith when we join a rally, lobby our elected representatives, or use our purchasing power to encourage companies to treat workers fairly. Investors bear witness to their faith when they call a company to account for unethical practices.

God envisions a world where all God’s children have everything they need to thrive, live lives of wholeness, and be the people they were created to be. To make God’s vision a reality, God calls the Church to action, to “loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6). Let us answer God’s call to be co-creators with God of a world of justice, a place “where justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

The reign of God does not stop at the door of the factory, entrance to the store, or edge of the field. Our witness, our ministry for justice, must also extend past those barriers to encircle all God’s children, especially those on the margins, especially farm workers.