



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Office of the Governor
State of Florida
PL-05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

April 1, 2009

Dear Governor Crist:

I am writing on behalf of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to commend you for meeting with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) on Wednesday, March 25th, and committing to working together with the farmworkers to end modern-day slavery and the conditions in which such human rights abuses flourish in the Florida fields.

Modern-day slavery flourishes in sectors, like agriculture, where human rights are systematically deprived. Farmworkers deserve the basic rights and protections enjoyed by workers in other industries. The lack of these safeguards has contributed both to farmworker poverty and the extreme abuse of modern-day slavery.

The CIW's agreements with major food buyers make enormous strides toward realizing these basic rights. Those groundbreaking agreements both guarantee workers a significant wage increase after three decades of stagnant piece rates and establish the first codes of conduct developed with and monitored by farmworkers themselves. However, though the new codes of conduct are now in effect, the workers' wage increase continues to languish in escrow accounts due to obstacles erected by the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE).

For that reason the church is particularly pleased that you have explicitly called upon the FTGE to fully implement the agreements that the CIW has reached with major food buyers. The FTGE's leadership has consistently resisted real reforms, and, in recent years, proposed superficial alternatives that in no way address the grinding poverty and inhumane working conditions farmworkers have endured for generations.

Therefore, be assured that as you champion substantial agricultural reform which will ensure the human rights of farmworkers, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and millions of consumers in Florida and across the country stand with you. Together, and in partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, we can finally lay to rest Florida's "Harvest of Shame."

Sincerely,

The Rev. Noelle Damico
National Coordinator, PC(USA) Campaign for Fair Food

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation.

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