

Responsive Reading

Inspired by Exodus Chapter 5 and 6- NRSV

Leader: We think about families that struggle each day, worrying about how to make ends meet.

All: These are God's families, who know what hard work is and look forward to time at home with loved ones.

Leader: We first learn of the struggle for a safe working environment from the Israelites in Exodus. When Moses and Aaron first approached Pharaoh, the people of Israel were made to find their own straw.

All: The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw." (Exodus 5:13)

Leader: Supervisors of the Israelites were even beaten for not completing their quota of bricks. (Exodus 5:14)

All: Then the Israelite supervisors came to Pharaoh and cried, "Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!'"

(Exodus 5:15-16)

Leader: We remember the farm workers in Immokalee, Florida, who struggled under conditions most would call slavery. It is these workers who have shown us great courage.

All: It is their courage to keep fighting in the face of intimidation that reminds us of how much it takes to challenge power. We praise God for the victory of farm workers in Immokalee who

struggled to win better conditions.

Leader: So often poultry workers, risking injuries on the job as well as major health problems, go to work each day without a voice at work.

All: Just as the Israelites cried out to Pharaoh, we too cry out for justice in the poultry plants. No one should have to go to work in fear. We pray that workers would have courage to speak out when unsafe conditions exist.

Leader: In recent years, in hotels across the country, housekeepers have been asked to lift heavy comforters, deemed "heavenly beds," and yet they are expected to complete the same room quotas.

All: The "heavenly beds" with down comforters are not so heavenly. Workers in the hotel industry are consistently given increased workloads, much like the Israelites.

Leader: Faith communities cry out in support of workers who are seeking to form a union.

All: We stand with brothers and sisters in faith who support the right to organize for better working conditions.

Leader: Stories of struggle that we first find in Exodus are still true today. So often workers in this country face discrimination when trying to improve working conditions.

All: As a matter of faith, we call on our elected leaders to develop and adopt fair policies that improve the lives of our brothers and sisters. Amen.

