



**We are
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

Team Reflection – Huddle

No. 9 The Pandemic's Impact on Agricultural Workers

Maria Guadalupe fell ill with COVID-19, spent two days in the hospital, and upon her return, found her daughter in the bedroom of their small apartment with worsening symptoms herself. Living in Imperial County, California, where Maria worked for four decades in the farm fields, many of their friends and family had similar stories. Others did not survive. The stark injustices here are explained by the executive director of a food bank, "We are this winter salad bowl for the country, and we grow so much food for the country. Yet, we have one of the highest food insecurity rates." [9.1]

In the season of COVID-19, farm and agriculture workers had reason to worry. The farmers and growers were slow to provide PPE, and workers experienced 20% greater risk, which doubled at the state's reopening. Latino food/agriculture workers experienced a 59% increase in mortality, the largest of any group. [9.2] The excessively high mortality is due to structural inequities, low-wages, and limited housing options. Workers commonly live in crowded multi-generational spaces or temporary housing that perpetuate transmission. As seen throughout the pandemic, where and how we work plays such a critical role in our wellbeing. Striving for health equity requires more just systems in our workplaces. The pandemic has shown us that essential workers, especially those in agriculture and who are responsible for our food supply, are among the most vulnerable. When we are given the privilege of serving and caring for them, may we offer the most loving care to these cherished brothers and sisters.

Consider

What can you do to honor the dignity of food service workers and those who help to feed the residents in your health ministry?

Let us pray,

Creator God,

By the labors of men and women, you guide the work of creation closer to your loving reign. Give all people work that enhances their human dignity and draws them closer to one another in service of their sisters and brothers. We entrust this to your divine love and goodness, which lasts forever and ever,

Amen.

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[9.1]: <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2020/10/21/covid-how-virus-racism-devastated-latino-farmworkers-california/5978494002/>; and <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/us/coronavirus-vaccine-farmworkers-california.html?searchResultPosition=1>

[9.2] Yea-Hung Chen, Maria Glymour, Alicia Riley, John Balmes, Kate Duchowny, Robert Harrison, Ellicott Matthay, Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo. "Excess mortality associated with the COVID-19 pandemic among Californians 18–65 years of age, by occupational sector and occupation: March through October 2020." medRxiv 2021.01.21.21250266; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.01.21.21250266>
<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.01.21.21250266v1.full>