



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY COUNCIL

For Immediate Release

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When seeking a comment from Governor Charlie Crist on the pervasiveness of prosecutions of modern-day slavery in the Florida agricultural industry, the Ft. Myers News Press was referred to Mr. Terence McElroy, a spokesperson from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Mr. McElroy replied, "Of course, I say any instance is too many, and any legitimate grower certainly does not engage in that activity (slavery) but you're talking about maybe a case a year."

This statement is in response to those specific comments published on December 14, 2008 in "Specter of Slavery Persists in Fields" by the Ft. Myers News Press and to the inaction of the Florida Governor to this human rights crisis.

Statement

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

In the spirit of exhortations by the prophet Isaiah and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to "proclaim liberty to the captives," the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has publicly affirmed its commitment to working with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and others for the eradication of modern-day slavery in all its forms.

The implication that *some* modern-day slavery is tolerable is not only morally offensive it actually encourages those who are currently engaging in these horrific practices to continue. It further exhibits a gross disregard for the extreme suffering and incredible courage of farmworkers who labor in and struggle against these brutal circumstances.

I call upon Governor Crist and Mr. McElroy to repent from this position of inaction and defense and to dedicate the power and resources of Florida government toward ending the epidemic of modern-day slavery in the fields. ##END##

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation.