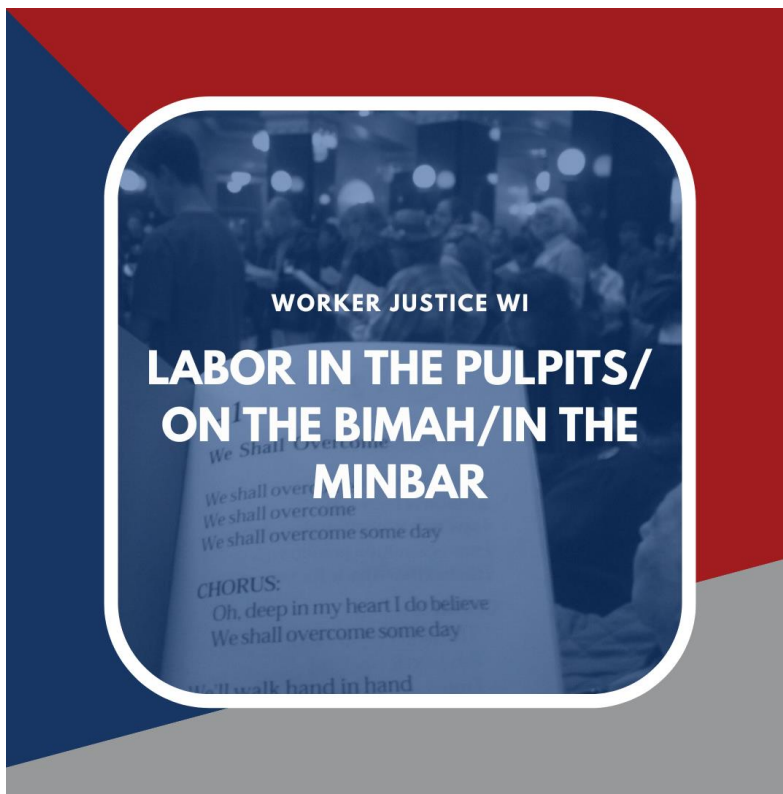




Worker Justice Wisconsin advances justice in our community by building collective worker power together with Faith and Labor allies.

~ WJW Mission Statement



2023 Toolkit

[Worker Justice Wisconsin](https://www.workerjustice.org)
1602 S. Park St. #115, Madison, WI 53715
(608) 255-0376
faithoutreach@workerjustice.org

Greetings from Rebecca Meier-Rao, Executive Director of Worker Justice Wisconsin

We at Worker Justice Wisconsin (WJW) recognize the many commitments our faith allies make to immigrant justice, addressing systemic racism, safeguarding lives of those most vulnerable, and providing mutual aid/services to those in need. As part of your commitment to justice, we invite you to participate in our **Labor in the Pulpits/On the Bimah/In the Minbar program** this year. During Labor Day weekend (or the month of September), faith leaders participate by sharing a reflection or sermon on worker justice with their respective communities during a worship service or education session. In this toolkit, we provide interfaith resources about worker justice. But first, I want to begin by sharing a bit about what we're doing at WJW and why our faith allies are so important to us.

Experience has taught us that the most effective way to create just working conditions is by empowering workers to collectively advocate for themselves. We partner with workers who are primarily immigrant, Latinx and BIPOC because they are among the most vulnerable in Madison and Dane County, and because we believe in the power of their collective voice to raise working conditions once and for all. In the past year we have done a number of things to move this vision forward, including:

- organized two workplaces, one which led to an across-the-board pay raise and three additional paid holidays, and the other which became unionized;
- partnered with four construction workers to recover \$22,000 in unpaid wages;
- trained 423 workers/community members and 35 service providers on workers' rights, collective organizing and worker cooperatives in 2023 alone;
- had over 150 workers participate in our membership meetings;
- increased one part-time staff to full-time and added a fourth full-time position to our worker center;
- created a worker justice study guide for churches that will soon be published in the Wisconsin Council of Churches website.

As faith allies, we ask you to focus on worker justice because work is where most people spend the majority of their time, and where, regrettably, they often experience the worst forms of discrimination, economic injustice and hazardous conditions. **When faith allies stand with workers, you give moral legitimacy to their efforts and a crucial public voice. Your support gives them courage and the knowledge that they are not alone.**

We look forward to your participation and contributions to the mission of worker justice. We could not do this work without you!

In solidarity,

Rebecca Meier-Rao, Executive Director
Email: rebecca@workerjustice.org

Registration and Participation Information for Labor in the Pulpits/On the Bimah/In the Minbar Program

For this year's program, we invite you to consider the theme, "Faith Partnership," and reflect on this question: As people of faith, how do we partner with workers who are fighting for more just and humane working conditions?

In addition, we at WJW understand that you have many demands on your time as a faith leader, and so, we offer different ways to be involved in this program as outlined below.

Ways Faith Allies Can Participate:

- 1) **Share our WJW resources with your community:**
 - a) Distribute our 2-page WJW handout to your community (see the last two pages of this document; also attached as a separate PDF)
 - b) Post our video to your social media (available on our [YouTube](#) channel on Friday, August 29th)
 - c) Invite a WJW member to speak to your community (the deadline to request a speaker is August 15th)

- 2) **Personally educate your community about worker justice:**
 - a) Create & share a video about worker justice
 - b) Preach or present on worker justice in your community during a service or education session in September
 - c) Utilize this packet and the preview of our upcoming Worker Justice Study Guide to develop your presentation or education session

- 3) **Financially support Worker Justice Wisconsin:**
 - a) Take up a collection to support our work
 - b) Donate specifically to the Worker Solidarity Fund
 - c) Become a WJW sponsor by donating \$500 or more to WJW

To confirm your participation, please complete our [registration form](#).

Statistics on Immigrant and Essential Workers

Did you know...?

In the United States:

- “69% of all immigrants in the labor force, and 74% of unauthorized immigrants are essential workers.”¹
- “Immigrants constitute 22% of food service workers while comprising only 17% of the civilian workforce.”²
- “Immigrants make up as much as 73% of farmworkers in the country.”
 - “Immigrant farmworkers are pillars of the country’s food supply chain and agricultural economic prosperity. They not only allow the United States to maintain a self-sufficient food supply, assuring a level of food security, but they also help our nation to be the largest exporter of food in the world.”³
- “Seventy percent of refugees and 78 percent of Black refugees are essential workers.”⁴

In Wisconsin:

- “Immigrants comprise 5% of the state population and 6% of the Wisconsin labor force.”⁵
- “Immigrants in Wisconsin have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.
 - Immigrant-led households in the state paid \$1.7 billion in federal taxes and \$968.3 million in state and local taxes in 2018.
 - Undocumented immigrants in Wisconsin paid an estimated \$156.9 million in federal taxes and \$101.1 million in state and local taxes in 2018.
 - Wisconsin DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$15.9 million in state and local taxes in 2018.”⁶

¹“Immigrant Essential Workers and COVID-19,” Xavier Roberts and Christian Burks, July 27, 2021, National Conference of State Legislatures, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/immigrant-essential-workers-and-covid-19.aspx>

² Ibid.

³ “Why Businesses Should Support Immigration Reform,” March 10, 2022, <https://immigrationforum.org/article/why-businesses-should-support-immigration-reform/>.

⁴ “US Foreign-Born Workers in the Global Pandemic: Essential and Marginalized,” Center for Migration Studies, <https://cmsny.org/data-on-essential-workers-recent-publications-and-tables/>

⁵ “Immigrants in Wisconsin,” Fact Sheet, August 2020, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-wisconsin>

⁶ Ibid.

Links to Planning Resources

Theme: "Faith Partnership"

Reflection Question: As people of faith, how do we partner with workers who are fighting for more just and humane working conditions?

Articles on Faith & Labor

- ["The History of Labor Sunday,"](#) by Heath Carter (1 page)
- [Biographies of Jewish Labor Leaders](#)
- [Labor Day and Islamic Principles of Social Justice and Fair Treatment,](#) by Ejaz Naqvi, MD
- Brief [articles on Faith and Labor](#) from *Sojourners* magazine
- Understanding [Collective Worker Power](#)

Preview of Worker Justice Study Guide

- [Link to Preview of Session Three](#)

Statements on Worker Justice Issues by Faith Traditions (interfaith perspectives)

- [Link to Statements on Worker Justice Issues](#)

Jewish Resources:

- [Text Study - JFREJ Shabbat Vigil for Domestic Workers](#)
- [A Jewish Approach to Economic Justice - Text Study](#)
- [Living the Legacy Labor Lessons](#) ~ Jewish Women's Archive (jwa.org)
 - *"These eight lesson plans weave stories of immigration and collective action together with traditional Jewish texts to create a rich investigation of Jewish involvement in the American Labor Movement."*
 - Example lesson: ["We Have Found You Wanting:" Labor Activism and Communal Responsibility."](#)
- [Passages from the Tanakh](#)
- [Labor on the Bimah Resource](#)
- [Reflection by Rabbi Renée Bauer, former Executive Director of ICWJ](#)

Christian Resources:

- See preaching resources and ideas for the Revised Common Lectionary during September 2022 on the next two pages of this toolkit.
- ["A Theology of Labor"](#), article by Adam Ericksen (UCC pastor)
- [Link to U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\) Resources on Labor](#)

Muslim Resources:

- [Link to Labor Rights in Islam by Sh. Abdool Rahman Khan](#)
- [Link to Your Rights as an Employee](#) (from the Council on American-Islamic Relations)
- [Passages from the Qur'an](#)
- [Labor in the Minbar Resource](#)

Buddhist Resources:

- [Buddhist Reflection](#)



Worker Justice Wisconsin's Faith and Labor Statement

Worker Justice Wisconsin is an interfaith nonprofit organization that advances justice in our community by building collective worker power together with Faith and Labor allies. It partners primarily with low-wage and immigrant workers because they are among the most exploited in our community. It empowers individuals to fight workplace injustice through education, community building, and collective actions.

As people of faith, we uphold the sacred and intrinsic dignity of every person. We believe that work should be a vehicle for discovering a sense of purpose and fulfillment, but that too often it is a means for abuse. We recognize that in today's climate, individual workers are at the mercy of more powerful employers, and we commit to joining forces with workers when they collectively summon the courage to demand fair and just working conditions. Finally, drawing on our sacred traditions, we stand together as communities of faith to advocate for:

- A just and living wage for all
- Paid sick and family leave
- Workplaces free from all forms of discrimination and harassment
- Opportunities for collective organizing without fear of retaliation
- A healthy work/life balance for all people regardless of race, gender, national origin, immigration status or creed

Knowing that faith leaders and members of faith communities stand with them in their struggle for justice *greatly* increases workers' resolve to organize and advocate for the above issues.

Demonstrate your support today by clicking the link below:

[Sign the Faith and Labor Statement](#)



WORKER JUSTICE WISCONSIN

Worker Justice Wisconsin (WJW) is a Madison-based nonprofit that builds collective worker power together with faith and labor allies.

The centerpiece of WJW is our worker center, where non-unionized and mostly Latinx and immigrant workers come when facing workplace issues such as wage theft and discrimination.



\$121,560
Amount of previously owed but unpaid wages that WJW helped recover in 2022



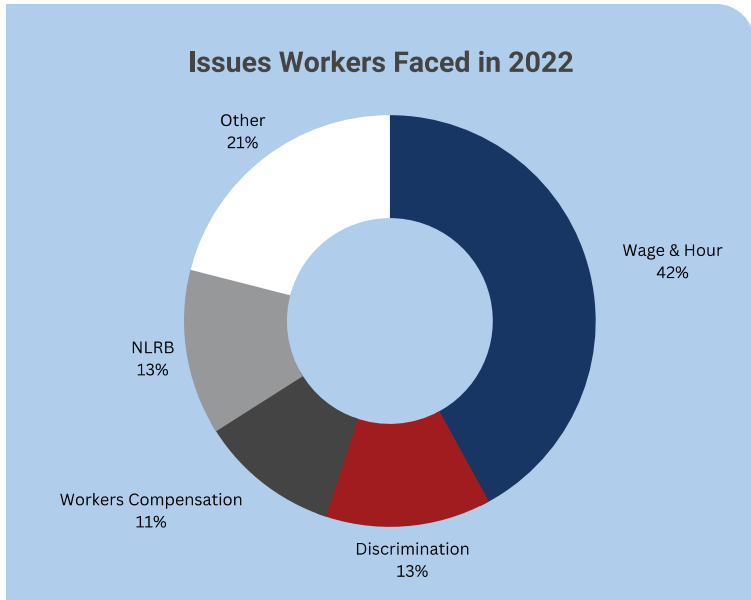
52% of the workers who opened cases in 2022 were women

WJW **organized the following workplaces** in 2022:

- Clarion Hotel
- Crushin' It Apparel

WJW **incubated the following cooperatives** in 2022 (*all Latinx immigrant-led*):

- Flora Screen Printing Cooperative
- El Chisme Food Cart
- Los Hornitos Bakery



91% of workers identify as Latinx, 4.5% as African American, 4.5% as White



88% of workers prefer Spanish

Faith & labor allies partner with us to advocate for:

- A just & living wage for all
- Paid time off for all
- Workplaces free from all forms of discrimination
- Opportunities for collective organizing without fear of retaliation

Did you know...?

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Sources: "Immigrant Essential Workers and COVID-19," Xavier Roberts and Christian Burks, July 27, 2021, National Conference of State Legislatures; "Why Businesses Should Support Immigration Reform," March 10, 2022, immigrationforum.org

Labor Day Prayers

READER 1:

We begin our session with a reading from *mujerista* theologian, Ada María Isasi-Díaz. Theologians and pastoral ministers coined the term, *mujerista*. It means "someone who makes a preferential option for Latina women" in their struggle for liberation, someone who is willing to stand with them in solidarity.

Isasi-Díaz writes: "Solidarity is not a matter of agreeing with, of supporting, liking, or being inspired by the cause of a group of people. Though all these might be part of solidarity, solidarity goes beyond all of them."

ALL:

God reminds us that new ways of being are possible.
Systems that reduce our dignity and exploit our labor have been remade before,
And they can be remade again.
Help us to lift one another into that newness as we pray:
Help solidarity bloom around us, O God.
Use our hands and feet and our whole selves to the glory of your coming kin-dom.
Amen.

READER 2:

"Solidarity has to do with understanding the interconnections that exist between oppression and privilege, between the rich and the poor, the oppressed and the oppressors. It also refers to the cohesiveness that needs to exist among communities of struggle ... [T]he goal of solidarity is to participate in the ongoing process of liberation through which we become a significantly positive force in the unfolding of the kin-dom of God."

*(Source: Prayer from
enfleshed and adapted by
Rev. Larissa Romero,
Interim Pastor, Downtown
Presbyterian Church,
Nashville)*