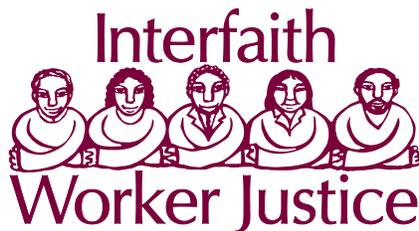


t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world

LABOR IN THE PULPITS:

A Toolkit for Protestant Congregations



Labor in the Pulpits:

A Toolkit for Protestant Congregations

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Getting Started	2
3. Publicity and Media Outreach.....	3
4. Speaker’s Guide	5
5. Next Steps: What You Can Do for Workers	6
6. Additional Denomination Specific Resources	7
7. Prayers	17
8. Lectionary Readings and Suggested Bible Scriptures.....	21

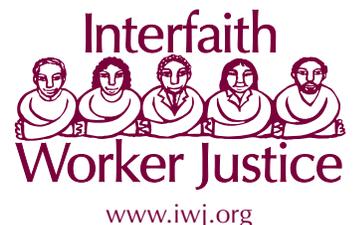
Introduction

Interfaith Worker Justice believes that people of faith are an integral part of the effort to guarantee that all workers are treated with dignity and respect. As corporations, unions, worker advocates and workers seek to cooperate and build together, the religious community can urge and help them grow in a moral context.

Since 1996, thousands of congregations have spent Labor Day doing this important work. From San Diego to New York, religious communities focus Labor Day weekend services on the injustices facing low-wage workers and the religious community’s efforts to support those workers’ struggles for living wages, family-sustaining benefits, and for dignity and respect on the job. Participating congregations integrate worker justice themes into their services, and many invite a worker from within their congregation, a union member or worker advocate to be a guest on Labor Day weekend.

Through *Labor in the Pulpits*, congregations have the opportunity to talk about the connections between faith, work, and justice. This toolkit offers some introductory resources to help celebrate Labor Day in your community. If your worship service or congregation’s tradition does not accommodate outside speakers, you could have someone speak before or after the service, or at adult or teen education classes. If you would like more information on how to become a speaker or host a speaker, please e-mail info@iwj.org.

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



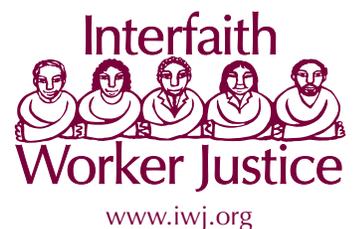
Labor Day Resources

Getting Started

There are different ways to plan a Labor Day service that lifts up workers within your community and around the country. The suggestions below can help you get started. Many of these can be incorporated into groups and programs that already exist in your congregation.

- **Connect with your local federation of labor or Interfaith Worker Justice affiliate.** Many IWJ affiliates have strong Labor in the Pulpit programs. Reach out to one in your area. A list of affiliates is available at www.iwj.org.
- **Invite a speaker (worker, union leader, worker advocate).** Recruit someone from your community to speak on Labor Day weekend. If no one is available, IWJ and our affiliates can match your congregation with a guest speaker for Labor Day weekend. For more information, e-mail info@iwj.org
- **Focus on education.** Labor Day weekend offers congregations the opportunity to highlight and lift up issues that impact workers within the community. Immigration reform, minimum wage, health and safety, dignity at worker, low-wage worker organizing and wage theft are among the topics that your congregation can focus on. Issue and campaign-specific resources are included in this toolkit. Additional resources are also available at www.iwj.org.
- **Get the word out.** Promote your Labor Day service in your congregation's bulletin and/or newsletter. IWJ will help promote events registered here: <http://bit.ly/2014labordayservice>
- **Develop a worship planning committee.** A worship committee can explore creative ways to integrate worker justice themes into the service either by using resources included in this toolkit or creating their own.
- **Lead a worker justice bible study.** Throughout the month of September, have someone (maybe you!) teach a Bible study or lead a prayer group focusing on labor and faith.
- **Honor an outstanding member (or members) congregation.** Lift up the good work of members of your community. Honor a church worker, volunteer or an outstanding member with a gift to IWJ. We will send you certificates to hand out. Honor a worker here: <http://bit.ly/2014honoraworker>

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



Labor Day Resources

Publicity and Media Outreach

Labor in the Pulpits provides a great opportunity for labor groups, worker advocates and faith communities to collaborate and lift up issues that impact workers, especially those in low-wage jobs. Below are a few tips on engaging the broader community.

- **Register your event with IWJ.** In the weeks leading up to Labor Day weekend, IWJ will actively promote services planned around the country. Include yours in the list: <http://bit.ly/2014labordayservice>
- **Promote your Labor Day service** in your congregation's bulletin and/or newsletter. Sample language is available below. Visit www.iwj.org to download Labor Day images.
- **Inform local media about the event.** Invite members of the media to your Labor Day event. Highlight issues – minimum wage, wage theft – that are already getting coverage.
- **Select a spokesperson from your congregation.** Have a “point person” for media interviews who might share personal stories about worker justice or reflections about Labor Day.

For questions and more information, email info@iwj.org.

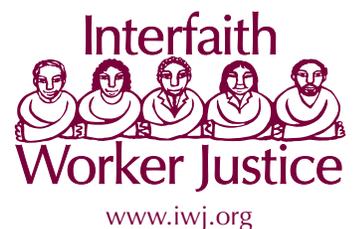
Sample blurb for congregation newsletter or bulletin:

Celebrate The Sacredness of Work

On _____, we will join with congregations across the nation in lifting up and honoring the sacred link between work and faith. This is an opportunity to educate ourselves about the issues that impact workers, especially those in low-wage jobs, and reflect on the true meaning of Labor Day.

[Name of speaker] will join us to speak on what it means to be a person of faith and a [worker, worker advocate].

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



Labor Day Resources

Sample News Advisory

(Print on your letterhead.)

For Immediate Release

<Enter date here>

Contact:

<Name, E-mail, Phone number>

Celebrating the Sacred Link Between Faith, Justice, and Work [Worker/Labor leader/worker rights activist] brings [issue] to the pulpit on Labor Day Weekend

WHAT: [Congregation] will join more than 500 congregations across the country in honoring workers and lifting up worker struggles this Labor Day weekend. The service is part of the annual Labor in the Pulpits/on the Bimah/in the Minbar program hosted by national worker rights organization, Interfaith Worker Justice, and its network of affiliates.

Presentations will celebrate the ever-growing relationship between religion and labor and their efforts to not only uplift the efforts of past labor leaders and workers, but also to educate people shine light on the oppressive working conditions and poverty wages millions of workers are forced to endure, educate workers' about their rights in the workplace, give life to living wage ordinances throughout the country, highlight anti-wage theft efforts, and a host of other initiatives that honor and respect the innate dignity of all workers.

WHO: [Speaker] will talk about [issue].

WHEN: [Specific date and time of your service]

WHERE: [Your church's address]

WHY: [Include additional information regarding particular issues impacting your community and why it is important for people of faith to be involved.]

###

Speaker's Guide

1. Call the pastor/rabbi/imam as soon as you are assigned. Ask him/her:

- What time does the service start?
- At what point in the service will I be speaking, and how long a talk is appropriate?
- How do I get there?
- Which scripture readings/texts the congregation will use.
- The justice activities, ministries and relevant history of the congregation.

2. Getting there:

- Dress appropriately.
- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the service begins.
- Identify yourself to the pastor/rabbi/imam. Thank him/her.
- Ask where you should sit and where you will be speaking from (some congregations have more than one pulpit).
- Get a sense of the sound system, acoustics, and lighting.

Sample Outline

1. Introduction and thanks to the congregation

2. Reason for speaking

- Labor Day is an opportunity for people of faith to recognize God's commitment to justice.
- Reminder that Labor Day is a hard-earned holiday coming out of the struggles of working people for the eight-hour day and the right to organize unions.

3. Tie Labor Day to the lectionary, other Biblical readings, or the appropriate faith group statement on the right to organize.

4. Describe the importance of unions and worker centers in light of a current situation.

3. Final reminders for giving your presentation:

- Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.
- Be brief.
- Be well prepared.
- Be creative.
- Introduce yourself and clarify your relationship to labor.
- Keep your presentation within the allotted time frame.
- Talk about your own experiences. It is far more important to believe what you are saying than to be eloquent.

4. Once you have finished:

- Take a deep breath and smile!
- Thank the pastor, rabbi or imam.
- Greet people after the service. This is a great opportunity to chat informally with interested people.

– Tell a personal story of how unions or worker centers have had a positive impact on you, your family and community.

– Offer up a historical perspective of unions and worker organizing: Unions are responsible for benefits we often take for granted, such as the eight-hour day, the end of child labor, the public school system and pensions.

5. Emphasize the importance of the religious community, unions and worker centers working together. Corporations and unions work most effectively when they can cooperate and build together. The religious community can urge them both and help them grow in a moral context.

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



www.iwj.org

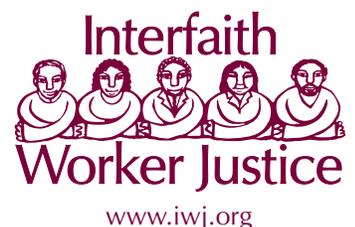
Labor Day Resources

Next Steps: What You Can Do for Workers

- **PRAY** for all workers, especially those in low-wage and unsafe jobs. Pray also for employers and business owners, that they may all learn to value people over profit. Pray for our elected leaders, that they place those struggling on the margins at the center of their deliberations.
- **EDUCATE** yourself and other members of your community on worker and economic justice issues. Connect with a worker center in your area and visit www.iwj.org for resources on faith and labor.
- **ORGANIZE** a worker rights training at your congregation to learn how your Denomination's teachings apply to worker rights in your city.
- **PAY AND TREAT WORKERS WELL.** Seek to ensure that all the workers employed by your congregation are paid wages that can support families and provide family health coverage.
- **DEVELOP** a construction policy for your congregation that awards repairs and construction work to contractors and subcontractors that treat workers justly.
- **ADVOCATE** for public policies that seek justice for all workers, including decent wages and health care benefits for all workers.
- **SUPPORT** workers who are organizing for better wages and working conditions. Over the last few years, workers in the fast food, retail and service industries are standing up to demand dignity and respect on the job. Be inspired by the courage of Walmart, McDonald's and other workers in low-wage jobs.
- **SHOP ETHICALLY.** Make an impact with your dollars. Find out how your vendors treat their employees and support those with policies that promote fairness, fair wages and respect at the workplace
- **BECOME A WORKER JUSTICE CONGREGATION. Support IWJ's efforts to improve wages and working conditions for workers by joining our congregational membership program. As a member you will also receive discounts to ethical vendors and access to many of IWJ's education resource materials.**

Take action on the ground and online. Join IWJ's e-advocacy team. Register at www.iwj.org.

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



Labor Day Resources

Additional Denomination-Specific Resources

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Martin Luther and Worker Justice

The Rev. Alexia Salvatierra

Economic justice was not one of Martin Luther's primary passions, nor has the Lutheran church been consistently at the forefront of the fight for economic justice. However, the core beliefs of Lutheran theology clearly support the struggle for fair wages and benefits in the workplace. At the core of Lutheran theology is the call to faith in a God whose love is unimaginably great, broad, deep and full. God's love embraces all aspects of our physical and emotional lives. God intends that we have "everything required to satisfy our bodily needs, such as food and clothing, house and home, fields and flocks, money and property." Martin Luther saw the process of obtaining what we need, our labor, as a holy act when performed in faith and gratitude; "picking up a piece of straw" could be equal in God's eyes to formal prayer and study (Treatise on Good Works).

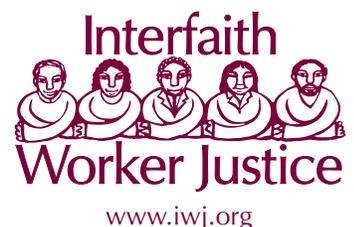
While Luther emphasized the internal stance of the individual and the individual's existential relationship with God as primary concerns, he unquestionably expected faith in God's grace to result in righteous action. In his small and large catechisms, he painted a passionate picture of the kinds of behavior that would arise from faith— including the arena of labor relations. Luther's exegesis of the seventh commandment (Thou shalt not steal) includes the following passage:

"For to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully, which briefly comprehends all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. To steal is to signify not only to empty our neighbor's coffer and pockets, but to be grasping in the market ... wherever there is trading or taking and giving of money for merchandise or labor. Therefore they are also called swivel-chair robbers, land- and highway-robbers, not picklocks and sneak-thieves who snatch away the ready cash, but who sit on the chair [at home] and are styled great noblemen, and honorable, pious citizens, and yet rob and steal under a good pretext.

No more shall all the rest prosper who change the open free market into a carrion-pit of extortion and a den of robbery, where the poor are daily overcharged, new burdens and high prices are imposed, and every one uses the market according to his caprice, and is even defiant and brags as though it were his fair privilege and right to sell his goods for as high a price as he please, and no one had a right to say a word against it."

Luther clearly sees from the perspective of an independent producer, a small businessman, whose experience of being robbed by the powerful is primarily connected to price gouging. However, the heart of his accusations would apply equally to the modern multinational corporations that

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



Labor Day Resources

seek profit at the expense of people not primarily by raising prices but rather by lowering wages. The core violation of “using the market according to his caprice as though it were his fair privilege and right” is as characteristic of Walmart as it was of the noblemen of Luther’s time.

Luther also believed that it was clearly the job of political decision-makers to protect the rights of their constituency. His doctrine of “two kingdoms” recognized that even human beings who have faith do not always live in accordance with their faith and that most people do not automatically treat one another with the love and respect called for by the Gospel. We all live in two worlds, the emerging world in which the law is written on the heart and people treat each other well out of love, and the old order in which it is necessary to intentionally ensure respect for human rights through civil authority. As Luther continues in the commentary on the seventh commandment:

“... to check such open wantonness there is need of the princes and government, who themselves would have eyes and the courage to establish and maintain order in all manner of trade and commerce, lest the poor be burdened and oppressed nor they themselves be loaded with other men’s sins.”

While Luther could not have envisioned a world in which every citizen had the right and duty to participate actively in political decision-making, we can see that in a modern democracy, we all have power and authority in the political realm and we all need the “eyes and the courage to establish and maintain” correct order in the economic sphere. When we campaign for living wage legislation or conditions on Big Box development, we seek to ensure an economic order that does not allow the poor to be burdened and oppressed. Unions are another modern structure through which workers can exercise legitimate power and authority in the public sphere to ensure protection of their rights.

These modern structures and the responsibilities that accompany them are recognized in a Resolution of the ELCA Church-wide Assembly in 1991

that reads, “The ELCA commits itself to advocacy with corporations, businesses, congregations, and church-related institutions to protect the rights of workers, support the collective bargaining process and protect the right to strike.”

However, while Luther would have supported those with legitimate authority acting in the public realm to protect workers’ rights, he would have seen clergy as having a different role. Luther saw the work of clergy as belonging to the second realm, the kingdom of God. The heart of that work, for Luther, was proclamation – the speaking of the truth that transforms. When religious leaders in interfaith worker justice committees utilize their moral authority to call business and political leaders to accountability to the scriptural vision of economic justice, they are fulfilling Luther’s understanding of their calling to speak the Word of God.

The Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, an ELCA pastor and long-time advocate for immigrant and worker justice.

Our Challenge As Pastors

The Rev. Wayne C. Stumme

The painful consequences of a recessionary economy include increasing numbers of men and women have had wages reduced, benefits curtailed, and pensions threatened by executive cupidity, or excessive desire for wealth. Other workers – but especially the working poor – have suffered actual loss of livelihood through decisions made in the name of corporate profitability. The most powerless of workers – immigrants, migrants, women and, in some instances, children– exist today on the meager margins of a still affluent economy. At the same time, employer intimidation of employees seeking unionization has intensified in business and industry.

Why is this happening? Whatever other causes may be cited, what many workers are experiencing is more than a cyclic occurrence that will pass in time. Behind the self-justifying rhetoric advanced by those whose actions benefit a few at the expense of the many is the grim reality of the continuing exploitation of working people. This is nothing new, of course. We would rather

deny its existence in this country of opportunity and promise. Some even go so far as to blame the poor and the near poor themselves for their desperate plight. It has been done before, and today new voices join that macabre chorus.

Is all of this of concern to the Church of Jesus Christ? More specifically, does any of this impact the understanding of the pastoral vocation? What does it mean for those who exercise the ministry of Word and Sacraments in our congregations? For some, the answer is “Nothing” or “Very little.” It is not part of the tradition of being a Lutheran pastor as they have come to understand it.

Then that tradition is lacking something of essential importance. For the Bible does speak of an option for the poor, the just decision of God on behalf of those who consistently are denied both economic and political justice. There is an unmistakable scriptural polemic against those who exploit the weak and needy.

There is a biblical warning against greed, cruelty, hard-heartedness, and injustice. And there is the compelling vision of a human society in which all persons – without regard to class or wealth, position or power – are equally valued and where genuine community can take root. To affirm these truths, and certainly this is part of the calling of the Christian preacher, requires taking up of practical tasks that the God of all righteousness has laid upon us.

Yes, the pastor as pastor, the pastor as leader of the people of God in the local congregation, has responsibility for speaking and acting on behalf of the victims of economic injustice. What will that include?

- Without question, the task of better informing both self and members with respect to the expectations of Scripture and the cruel deformations of economic practice.
- It will mean the recapturing of the profound biblical compassion for working people and the poor.
- It will mean courageous advocacy wherever and whenever human beings are robbed of their dignity, denied what they have earned,

and deprived of their rights.

- It will mean – as it has meant in many cities throughout this land – new forms of cooperation with the representatives of organized labor in situations where our shared commitment to justice due working people, the working poor, and the poor is threatened or denied.
- And it means – as a gift and encouragement – that our limited and often inadequate efforts may help to open our eyes to that final gift of grace, the Kingdom in which humanity finds both its true home and righteous and lasting community.

The time is late. Let us begin.

*The Rev. Wayne Stumme, a retired ELCA pastor and seminary professor, is a member of the Twin Cities Religion and Labor Network.
E-mail: wcstumme@aol.com*

ELCA Statements

Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All

Below are selected portions of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) social statements pertaining to workers rights and economic justice. As amended and adopted by a more than two-thirds-majority vote as a social statement of the Evangelical Church in America by the sixth biennial Churchwide Assembly on August 20, 1999, at Denver, Colorado.

Livelihood: vocation, work, and human dignity

Human dignity: Human beings are created “in God’s image” (Genesis 1:27) as social beings whose dignity, worth, and value are conferred by God. Although our identity does not depend on what we do, through our work we should be able to express this God-given dignity as persons of integrity, worth, and meaning. Yet work does not constitute the whole of our life. When we are viewed and treated only as workers, we tend to be exploited.

Employers have a responsibility to treat employees with dignity and respect. This should be reflected in employees’ remuneration, benefits, work conditions, job security, and ongoing job training. Employees have a responsibility to work

to the best of their potential in a reliable and responsible manner. This includes work habits, attitudes toward employers and co-workers, and a willingness to adapt and prepare for new work situations. No one should be coerced to work under conditions that violate their dignity or freedom, jeopardize their health or safety, result in neglect of their family's well-being, or provide unjust compensation for their labor.

Our God-given dignity in community means that we are to participate actively in decisions that impact our lives, rather than only passively accept decisions others make for us. People should be involved in decision-making that directly affects their work. They should also be free to determine their lives independent of particular jobs. Public policy can provide economic and other conditions that protect human freedom and dignity in relation to work.

Power disparities and competing interests are present in most employment situations. Employers need competent, committed workers, but this does not necessarily presume respect for the personal lives and needs of individual workers. Individual workers depend on the organization for employment as their means of livelihood, but this does not necessarily presume respect for the organization's interest and goals. Management and employees move toward justice as they seek cooperative ways of negotiating these interests when they conflict. Because employees often are vulnerable and lack power in such negotiations, they may need to organize in their quest for human dignity and justice. When this occurs, accurate information and fair tactics are expected of all parties involved.

A Social Statement on Economic Life (August 20, 1999)

We commit ourselves as a church to:

- hire without discriminating on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disabilities, sexual orientation, or genetic factors;
- compensate all people we call or employ at an amount sufficient for them to live in dignity;
- provide adequate pension and health benefits,

safe and healthy work conditions, sufficient periods of rest, vacation, and sabbatical, and family-friendly work-schedules;

- cultivate workplaces of participatory decision making;
- honor the right of employees to organize for the sake of better working conditions and for workers to make free and informed decisions; encourage those who engage in collective bargaining to commit themselves to negotiated settlements, especially when participatory attempts at just working conditions fail; and discourage the permanent replacement of striking workers.

We call for:

- other employers to engage in similar practices;
- government enforcement of regulations against discrimination, exploitative work conditions and labor practices (including child labor), and for the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively;
- public policies that ensure adequate social security, unemployment insurance, and health care coverage;
- a minimum wage level that balances employees' need for sufficient income with what would be significant negative effects on overall employment;
- Tax credits and other means of supplementing the insufficient income of low-paid workers in order to move them out of poverty.

Workers' rights and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Below are selected portions of a 1991 Churchwide Assembly Resolution on Workers' Rights adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at the 1991 Churchwide Assembly resolution.

Whereas, our faith makes us particularly sensitive to those who are adversely affected by economic dislocation and powerlessness; and

Whereas, the collective-bargaining process is fundamental for the attainment of justice in American society; and ...

Whereas, for many years, it was generally recognized that employees who engaged in a legal

work stoppage as part of the collective- bargaining process would not be penalized by the permanent loss of their jobs; and in more recent time a growing number of employers have responded to these legal work stoppages by hiring persons to replace permanently the striking workers, and unfortunately, this practice is allowed under existing labor laws, but until recent years was not widely used by employers; and

Whereas, this practice is a direct threat to the collective bargaining process as it has developed in this country since the mid-1930s, causing hardship in families and entire communities where employees have, in effect, been fired from their jobs for engaging in collective bargaining, and a weakened collective-bargaining process deprives American workers of the right to participate effectively in decisions that impact their lives and future ... now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the 1991 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

offer its support and prayers for labor and management who engage in collective bargaining to reach acceptable agreements in their working relationship; urge employers, corporations, and workers to commit themselves to negotiated settlements; express concern for workers and their families who endure hardship and job insecurity due to the breakdown of the traditional collective bargaining practices; call for an end to recriminations against workers who participate in strikes; call upon the appropriate churchwide units, synods, congregations, and members to support legislation that would strengthen the viability of negotiated settlements and prevent the permanent replacement of striking workers; call upon the Division for Church in Society to have available information to assist the members of this church to understand these issues; and commit itself to public policy advocacy and advocacy with corporations, businesses, congregations, this church, and church related institutions to protect the rights of worker, support the collective bargaining process and protect the right to strike.

Episcopal Church of the United States of America – Statements & Resolutions

Economic Justice/ Worker Rights

1997: Urge Church-Wide Promotion of the Living Wage – “The 72nd General Convention... urges all congregations, missions, dioceses and the national Episcopal Church to become actively involved in promoting the enactment of a ‘living wage’ as well as family health benefits in the cities and communities in which they live...All parishes, missions, diocesan institutions of this Church are urged to accept, at minimum, this norm in the compensation of their workers.”

2000: Increase Awareness of Social and Economic Problems of Farmers and Rural Areas – “... expressed Church support for the public policies ensuring farmers a just income, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, supporting health-care access, education, jobs, housing, and other services in rural communities”

2003: Support the Establishment of a Living Wage – “...called upon the government to establish a living wage including health benefits as the standard of compensation of all workers in the United States...It also affirmed the right of workers to organize, and insisted that the companies in which the Church invests or with which it contracts provide their employees with a living wage and serve as a model for ethical labor practices.”

2003: Urge Legislation to Raise the Federal Minimum Wage – “...urged Congress to pass legislation raising the federal minimum wage..”

2003: Urge Legislation to Expand Temporary Workers Program – “...urged Congress to enact legislation to expand temporary worker’s programs to include all persons residing in the United States engaged in meaningful labor, to ensure that temporary workers receive compensation and benefits parallel to those available to

other legal residents, and to give such workers the option of adjusting to permanent resident status and naturalization.”

2006: Support Worker Unions and a Living Wage – “...supports the right of workers to form a union and to earn living wages. It commits the Church to contract solely with union hotels, or to obtain confirmation that local prevailing ‘living wages’ are paid.”

2009: Economic Justice Ministry for and with Lower Income People – this legislation adopts numerous measures for Economic Justice of The Episcopal Church to engage and support people with a lower income to pursue during the next six years.

2012: Deter Blacklisting of Workers – The 77th General Convention condemns the practice of blacklisting workers because it forces workers to “remain in temporary employment agencies or contracting agencies instead of obtaining direct employment;”

Immigration

2003: Support the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride – “Resolution C028 declared the Church’s commitment to actively working support of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride”

2009: Support for Immigration Equality for Same-Sex Couples – “...urge that the leadership of both Houses of Congress... provide immigration equality for same-sex couples by permitting a citizen or permanent resident alien to sponsor an immigration partner for permanent residence in the United States.”

2012: Halt Unjust Immigration Enforcement – The 77th General Convention supports Comprehensive Immigration Reform and Humane Immigration Reform. It calls for a halt to the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement’s Secure Communities program. The Church also condemns the use of racial profiling and identity checks for the purpose to determining immigration status.

2012: Reform Unequal Immigration Law – “The 77th General Convention urge enactment of legislation to permit same-gender legal domestic partners and spouses of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents to seek lawful permanent resident status in the same manner as different-gender spouses of citizens and lawful permanent residents...”

Labor Movement

2009: Support for Day Laborers – “laborers are treated fairly and in a manner which befits their communities;”

2009: Fix Our Broken Labor Laws – “...the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church urge the Congress of the United States to pass, and the President to sign into law, labor law reform legislation designed to better protect employees seeking to engage in collective bargaining, to simplify and streamline the procedures by which employees may choose to organize, and to assist employers and employees in reaching agreement.”

2012: The Labor Movement – The General Convention recognizes the importance of the labor movement, of labor unions, and the need of labor unions and the Church to work together for the common good. It opposes legislative attempts to deter collective bargaining rights. It commends the work of Interfaith Worker Justice. In purchasing and contracting decisions the General Convention and the Executive Council will urge The Church to consider union rights as favorable factor.

Wage Theft

2012: Condemning the Practice of Wage Theft Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 77th General Convention of The Episcopal Church of 2012 condemn the practice of wage theft and urge Episcopal congregations to learn more about wage theft in their own communities, partner with workers centers and wage enforcement agencies to stop and deter wage theft, ask questions of those who provide contracted services, and advocate local, state and national policies to strengthen educational outreach to workers

about and enforcement of wage laws; and be it further Resolved, That this Convention encourage individual Episcopalians to support initiatives to stop and deter wage theft and be responsible consumers by asking questions about how workers are paid when visiting stores and restaurants and hiring contracted services; and be it further Resolved, That this Convention vow, when engaging with outside businesses or restaurants, to support ethical businesses that pay workers fairly and legally, recognizing that such ethical businesses are placed at a competitive disadvantage by employers that cheat workers and commit payroll fraud by calling workers independent contractors when they are really employees; and be it further Resolved, That this Convention vow to support and participate in educational programs on worker rights such as Interfaith Worker Justice's Labor in the Pulpits program.

The Baptismal Covenant

Pan-Methodist Statements

AME Statement

Liberation for Working Persons: A Statement in Support of Labor Unions on behalf of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Adopted July 1997

Since their inception Labor Unions have served as a liberation force for American workers. Labor Unions were established, much like the African Methodist Episcopal Church, to insure that their members received certain immutable rights. The guarantee of safe working conditions, fair pay, health and retirement benefits remain Labor Unions' lofty agenda. Even in 1997, a mere three years before the dawn of the twenty-first century, Labor Unions are as critical and necessary to the American worker as they were nearly a century ago.

Labor Unions are endeared to our church as they and their legendary leaders showed unwavering support for African American civil and voting rights movements. The African Methodist Episcopal Church affirms and upholds the outstanding accomplishments and achievements that Labor Unions have made in the past benefiting the entire spectrum of the American economy; and we sup-

port their efforts at reformation as well as strengthening themselves for the new millennium.

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People: **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: **I will, with God's help.**

(BCP 417)

UMC Statement

The Social Principles, paragraphs 163.B-C

We support the right of public and private (including farm, government, institutional, and domestic) employees and employers to organize for collective bargaining into unions and other groups of their own choosing. Further, we support the right of both parties to protection in so doing and their responsibility to bargain in good faith within the framework of the public interest.... We reject the use of violence by either party during collective bargaining or any labor/management disagreement. We likewise reject the permanent replacement of a worker who engages in a lawful strike. Every person has the right to a job at a living wage. We support social measures that ensure the physical and mental safety of workers, that provide for the equitable division of products and services, and that encourage an increasing freedom in the way individuals may use their leisure time. We believe that persons come before

profits. We deplore the selfish spirit that often pervades our economic life. We support policies that encourage the sharing of ideas in the workplace, cooperative and collective work arrangements. We support rights of workers to refuse to work in situations that endanger health and/or life without jeopardy to their jobs.

CME Statement

By Rev. James B. Walker

Phillips Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Hartford, Connecticut

A selected portion of the Social Creed of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church states "Jesus taught us...to be concerned for the welfare and the well-being of others, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be concerned for justice... For the church to be silent in the face of need,

injustice, and exploitation is to deny the Lord of the Church."

The creed is meant to serve as a springboard for a larger and more salient dialogue on the ideal of justice for workers within a society where justice often lies dormant. The Social Creed is meant to usher the church to a platform of advocacy and action in a way that brings the message of the gospel to bear on institutions and systems of power. Congregations therefore will seek God's guidance to become agents of challenge and change institutions on labor issues.

There are precious few resources for pastors and congregations that lift up the concerns of Labor Day Weekend during the worship experience. However, workers are losing ground on the battlefield for just and equitable wages and the church is uniquely positioned to partner with unions and workers to effect change.

A Heritage of Advocacy for Workers -Ninety years after adoption of the Social Creed, United Methodists continue to uphold the rights of working people.

By The Rev. Darren Cushman Wood

1812 - In 1812, nearly 80% of the class leaders in New York City were journeymen, master craftsmen, or unskilled laborers.

1820 - Rev. William Stillwell helped to found the New York Society for Promoting Communities in the 1820s. The Society issued an "anti-capitalist manifesto" based on Leviticus 25. Stillwell also provided support for the AME Zion Church.

1830 - In the 1830s in Baltimore, class leaders Richard Donahue, David Parr, John H.W. Hawkins and several founding members of the Strawbridge Methodist Church were leaders in the hatters and cordwainers strikes and advocated for the ten-hour day.

1834 - In 1834 six British farmers were convicted to hard labor for organizing a union. The leader, James Loveless, was a Methodist local preacher. They became known as the "Tolpuddle Martyrs."

1844 - "When Lord Londonderry evicted strikers after the 1844 coal strike [in England], two-thirds of the Durham Primitive Methodist circuit became homeless." (E.J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*)

1870 - Before becoming a bishop in the AME Church, Henry McNeal Turner introduced a bill mandating the eight-hour day in the Georgia state legislature in 1870.

1872 - Boston ship carpenter and Methodist local preacher Edward Rogers helped start the Christian Labor Union in 1872, the first organization dedicated to labor and religion. Rogers served in the state legislature and served on committees that investigated the apprentice system and work hours.

1894 - When workers went on strike in 1894 against the Pullman Palace Car Company, Rev. William Carwadine of First Methodist Episcopal Church in Pullman and the Swedish Methodist pastor were alone in their support for the workers. Carwadine publicized their plight and organized the Pullman Relief Committee.

1908 - In 1908 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church adopted the first Social Creed declaring the church's opposition to child labor, unsafe working conditions and a reduction in work hours.

1919 - Methodist Episcopal Bishop Francis J. McConnell led the Interchurch World Movement's investigation of the 1919 Steel Strike.

1927 - Rev. A.A. Geist and Grace Community Methodist Episcopal Church of Denver opened their doors for union meetings during

1929 - Winifred Chappell of the Methodist Federation for Social Action helped organize textile workers in North Carolina in 1929.

1932 - The 1932 General Conference of the Methodist Church declared that "the present industrial order is unchristian, unethical and antisocial."

1938 - In 1938 Bishop Bromley Oxnam made a radio appeal to listeners to support the passage of the National Labor Relations Act. Throughout the 1950s he served on the Public Review Board of the United Auto Workers.

1946 - Rev. Charles Webber of the Methodist Church was known as the "chaplain of organized labor" for his work in creating the Denver Labor College in the 1920s, serving as president of the Virginia CIO in 1946 and as director of the Office of Religious Relations for the AFL-CIO until 1963.

1975 - Bishop Eugene Slater was instrumental in supporting melon field workers in Texas.

Additional Resources

United Methodist Workers Rights Manual, Published by the United Methodist Concern for Workers Task Force. Contains Bible studies, worship resources, suggested activities for congregations, etc. Order from the General Board of Church and Society for three dollars at (800) 967-0880 or www.umc-gbcs.org.

The following survey reports are available in the 2000 Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church:

- Concern for Worker Task Force
- Environmental Health and Safety in the Workplace and Community

- Rights of African American Farmers
- Rights of Farm Workers in the US
- Rights of Workers
- The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively.

Social Protest Thought in the AME Church, 1862-1939, edited by Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn, University of Tennessee Press, 2000.

Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Ethics, by Theodore Jennings, Abingdon Press, 1990.

Presbyterian Church of the United States of America

Book of Confessions, Confession of 1967, 9.46

"... A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs... makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God."

Social Policy Compilation, Economic Justice, Ch. 7

The church has stood in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, called for reform of corporate misdeeds and actions, proposed living wages, supported economic boycotts, demanded safe working conditions, supported fair and equitable policies and practices and ratified the collective bargaining process.

Labor Statements of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1959 ...the church must seek to open the lines of communication for Christian action in the areas of tension between labor and management.... Management, as a governing force, should be called upon to manage fairly for all concerned... and not to be a force only for the few.

1959 The General Assembly expresses its confidence in collective bargaining as the most responsible and democratic way of resolving issues in labor-management relations...calls upon individual Presbyterian union members to take a responsible part in the activities of their unions.

1971 Since God has created life and material resources to sustain life,[humanity] does not have the right to deny life by withholding the means of existence to some...justice demands that everyone have the material conditions necessary for their physical and social existence... a guarantee to every American for an income...large enough to provide for basic needs and to sustain every person's participation, with dignity, in society....

1980 ...we affirm that the Church should espouse for all persons the opportunity and responsibility for productive work ...we affirm for all persons the right to be paid adequately and treated with fairness and dignity... we affirm the right of all workers...to join labor organizations and participate in collective bargaining...we affirm the necessity of the church to view economic issues from the side of the lowly and oppressed and for Christians active in our economic system to be concerned for serving the needs of the world.... The Presbyterian Church ...will need to engage in a conscious effort to view labor-management issues from the perspective of the unskilled, uneducated and underpaid.... The point of the Parable of the Laborers and the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16) is that all workers receive a just wage.... The Church affirms the rights of labor organizations and collective bargaining as minimum demands of justice...and arrangements which offer opportunities for work-

ers...to share greater economic rewards.

1987...employment training [should] be for jobs that will pay a living wage... the focus [should] be on job creation where jobs at a living wage do not exist...continued health benefits for parents and children [should] be made available....

1995 Justice demands that social institutions guarantee all persons the opportunity to participate actively in economic decision-making that affects them. All workers – including undocumented, migrant, and farm workers – have the right to choose to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining.

1997 The 209th General Assembly of the PC (USA) resolved to:

- Endorse the Day of Conscience and Holiday Season of Conscience as a public witness to the need to eliminate sweat shops and urge members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to support and participate in the events
- Call for the Workplace Code of Conduct and Principles of Monitoring to include provisions that assure wages above subsistence levels and guarantee independent monitoring of compliance
- Urge the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) in collaboration with other offices and networks to give leadership to the education and mobilization effort

2006 The 217th General Assembly of the PC (USA) resolved that “the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through the Stated Clerk of the PC (USA), communicate to all members of Congress its desire that legislation to increase the minimum wage be swiftly passed and accurately reflect the increase in the cost of living since the last minimum wage increase in 1997. Additionally, middle governing bodies, local congregations, and individuals are encouraged to support efforts to increase the minimum wage at state and local levels as well.”

Prayers

Great Thanksgiving suitable for Labor Day Weekend

[Produced by Workers Interfaith Network]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everything, to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image for work and for Sabbath rest.

When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from hard labor in Egypt, and made covenant to be our sovereign God.

You spoke to us through your prophets, who looked for the day when justice shall roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor.

He gathered common laborers to be his disciples,

and by Your Spirit he preached good news to the poor,

proclaimed release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,

set at liberty those who were oppressed,

and announced the year of Jubilee.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup,

Gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



www.iwj.org

Labor Day Resources

poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ’s offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
That we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

Renew our communion with your Church throughout the world,
and strengthen it in every nation and among every people
to witness faithfully in your name, resisting evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
All honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayers of Blessing the Work of Our Hands

Blessed be the works of your hands,
O Holy One.
Blessed be these hands that have touched life.
Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.
Blessed be these hands that have held pain.
Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.
Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens.
Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.
Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds.
Blessed be these hands that have cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed.
Blessed be these hands that have become knotty with age.
Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice.
Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.
Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future.
Blessed be the works of your hands,
O Holy One.

[Prayer by Diann Neu from Imagining the World: An Arts and Lectionary Resource, Volume 1, 1994]

Prayers of the People

Left: Show me the suffering of the most miserable;
So I will know my people's plight.

Right: Free me to pray for others;
For you are present in every person.

Left: Help me take responsibility for my own life;
So that I can be free at last.

Right: Grant me courage to serve others;
For in service there is true life.

Left: Give me honesty and patience;

So that I can work with other workers.

All: Bring forth song and celebration;
So that the Spirit will be alive among us.
Let the Spirit flourish and grow;
So that we will never tire of the struggle.
Let us remember those who have died for justice;
For they have given us life.
Help us love even those who hate us;
So we can change the world.

Amen

[Prayer of Cesar Chavez, adapted into litany form by April McGlothin-Eller]

We Have Been to the Mountaintop: A Prayer for Workers

Almighty God,
We are gathered here today in fellowship and in hope
As women and men committed to justice and freedom,
And as people who honor the dignity and rights of all working people.
We recall today the life and the hope of Martin Luther King, Jr.
And we remember today his vision of a just society, a beloved community.

*We have been to the mountaintop,
And we have seen the Promised Land*

Even as Dr. King courageously stood with sanitation workers in 1968,
So we stand today with teachers, firefighters, police officers,
An all workers whose rights are today imperiled across this nation
We know, God, that your Spirit is among us
And that Dr. King's vision abides in our hearts.

*We have been to the mountaintop,
And we have seen the Promised Land*

We see in one another and in our working brothers and sisters
Your divine signature, God, and we lift it up this day.
We offer this common prayer in one voice to your,
In one mighty chorus across the nation.

*We have been to the mountaintop,
And we have seen the Promised Land*

God of Compassion and Mercy,
We ask that you remain with us and strengthen us
As we endeavor to ensure that freedom prevails for working people,
And that your divine signature is never obscured by injustice.

*We have been to the mountaintop,
And we have seen the Promised Land*

We ask that you guide us today and in the days to come
That we may all one day arrive in the Promised land
As a beloved community, a great fellowship of men and women
Committed to the dignity and welfare and freedom of all people.

*We have been to the mountaintop,
And we have seen the Promised Land*

We ask for these things
In the sure knowledge that justice
Will triumph.

Amen.

Labor Day Litany

Reader: Friends, let us offer our prayers to God,
who pronounced all creation good, who sent his
Son to live and work as one like us, and who calls
us to serve the poor and those oppressed. Lord,
give success to the work of our hands.

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For all those who work:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For those who are unemployed or un-
deremployed, or have lost their jobs because of
changing economic conditions, let us pray:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For those who work in hazardous condi-
tions without sufficient protection, let us pray:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For migrant workers and all who work the
land, let us pray:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For all employers that they may seek to
provide a just work environment:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For those who face discrimination, ha-
rassment, or abuse in the work place, let us pray:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: For those who must balance job commit-
ments with the needs of their family, let us pray:

All: **Lord, give success to the work of our hands.**

Reader: Loving God, through your Son you gave
us an example to love one another as he loved us.
Give us the strength to continue working to bring
forth your kingdom here on earth – a kingdom
of justice and peace, kindness and compassion,
grace and mercy. Grant this through Christ, our
Lord.

All: **Amen**

Lectionary Readings and Suggested Bible Scripture

First Reading (Exodus 3:1-15) and Psalm

¹ Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³ Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." ¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

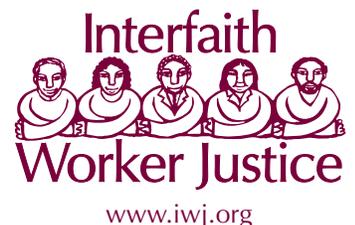
¹ O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. ² Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. ³ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. ⁴ Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually. ⁵ Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, ⁶ O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

²³ Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.

²⁴ And the LORD made his people very fruitful, and made them stronger than their foes, ²⁵ whose hearts he then turned to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants. ²⁶ He sent his servant Moses, and Aaron whom he had chosen.

^{45b} Praise the LORD!

t h r o u g h
work
we transform our
work
work
world
world
world



Labor Day Resources

**Alternate First Reading (Jeremiah 15:15-21)
and Psalm**

¹⁵ O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance do not take me away; know that on your account I suffer insult.

¹⁶ Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. ¹⁷ I did not sit in the company of merry-makers, nor did I rejoice; under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation.

¹⁸ Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail.

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the LORD: If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall serve as my mouth. It is they who will turn to you, not you who will turn to them. ²⁰ And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you,

Second Reading (Romans 12:9-21)

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD. ²¹ I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

Psalm 26:1-8

¹ Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

² Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and mind.

³ For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.

⁴ I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with hypocrites;

⁵ I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.

⁶ I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O LORD,

⁷ singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds.

⁸ O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides.

Gospel (Matthew 16:21-28)

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Suggested Biblical Passages

WAGE THEFT

Leviticus 19:13 "Do not oppress your neighbor... Do not keep the wages of the worker..."

Deuteronomy 24: 14-15 "Do not take advantage of workers. Pay them their wages because they are counting on it."

Isaiah 58: 3-7 "To observe religious practices, but oppress your workers is false worship."

Jeremiah 22:13 "Woe to him who makes neighbors work for nothing and does not give them their wages."

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 "Pay workers their wages regardless of where they are from."

Ruth 2:2-23 Boaz cares for Ruth, a widow and a foreigner, going beyond what the law required.

Jeremiah 34:8-14 "Treat the alien well like God treated the Israelites."

Matthew 25:41-46 The parable of the goats and sheep/Welcome the stranger

I Corinthians 12:12-13 "...we were all baptized into one body."

MINIMUM WAGE

I Corinthians 12:26 "Suffering of one is suffering of all."

Proverbs 17:5 "Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished."

RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

Jeremiah 22:13-16 A legitimate government upholds the rights of the poor and vulnerable.

Amos 5:11-12,21-24 "I will not look upon your offerings because you have trampled on the poor."

Malachi 3:5 "'I will be quick to testify against those who defraud laborers of their wages...' says the LORD Almighty."

Matthew 6:24 "You cannot serve God and money."

II Timothy 2:6 "The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops."

DIGNITY AT WORK

Deuteronomy 5:13-15 The Sabbath is for everyone. It is grounded in the memory of hard labor in Egypt and the exodus from Egypt.

James 5:1-6 "Those who become rich by abusing their workers have sinned against God."

JUSTICE

Deuteronomy 16:20 "Follow justice and justice alone..."

Jeremiah 21:11-12 "The Lord says to execute justice and aid the oppressed."

James 2:14-26 "Faith without works is dead."

Isaiah 1:17 "...learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

Proverbs 14:21 "Those who despise their neighbors are sinners, but happy are those who are kind to the poor."

Jeremiah 22:13-17 "...Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well..."

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Jeremiah 29:4-7 "Seek the welfare of the city, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

Luke 10:29-37 The Good Samaritan parable teaches us to show mercy to one another.

John 3:16-18 "Love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

I Corinthians 3:6-9 "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."

II Timothy 6:18-19 "Rich people are to be generous and ready to share."

*Thank you for bringing the issue of worker justice to the pulpits this year!
For questions and additional information, email info@iwj.org*