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Bringing Work to Worship

Resources for Pastoral Leaders



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In this document the following elements are included:

- 1. Calls to Worship**
- 2. Prayers of Confession**
- 3. Prayers for Various Workers**
- 4. Children's Story Ideas**
- 5. Congregational Activities for Worship/Work**
- 6. Sermon Ideas**
- 7. Additional prayers**
- 8. Hymns and Songs**
- 9. Bibliography – Faith and Work**

We trust and pray that these will be helpful to you as you shape Sunday worship, or a series of worship services, focused on work that is brought into worship. There are sufficient resources to have four work-focused services focussed services. These could be done one after another in sequence, or spread through the year.

Alongside this master document, we are also providing four individual orders of service that contain everything you need for four such Sunday services.

For more information be in touch with:

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1. CALLS TO WORSHIP

Responsive:

Offer praise to God, the creator
who made the world in its beauty.
Sing the glory of God the first Worker
who formed creation as gift and grace.
Declare God's goodness and love,
for we have been created in God's image.
Wonder at God's call to work and serve,
our work a participation in God's work.
See the world as a place of God's action,
In Christ the work of God continues,
We serve and labour in the way of Christ,
whether in field, office, clinic, or school.
Offer praise to God, by the Spirit
our lives and gifts offered for God's glory.

Responsive:

Offer praise to God,
with instruments, songs and lyrics
Offer praise to God,
with hands raised and voices engaged.
Offer praise to God,
with work done well in serving others.
Offer praise to God,
with abilities offered and skills honed,
Offer praise to God,
in church sanctuary and at dinner table,
Offer praise to God,
in office, on tractor, in clinic, at workbench
Offer praise to God,
with all of our lives, through Christ our Lord.

Responsive:

O living God, you have called us,
called us to be people of worship.
Today we offer praise as your people,
we offer worship through song and prayer.
On other days of the week we also worship you,
through diligence and care in our workplace,
through sacrificial love offered in volunteer hours,
through the care of children or parents.
Oh living God, we offer you the work of our hands,

we offer our bodies and selves as a living sacrifice.
This work we offer is true worship,
receive all offered for your glory.
Receive the worship we lift to you this day and every day.
Amen.

Unison:

**Praise is our vocation, our calling.
Praise with words and in prayer,
Praise with songs and dancing,
Praise with strings, drum, organ, cello,
Praise through creativity expressed,
Praise through service of neighbour,
Praise in work and labour,
Praise on a Sunday morning,
Praise from nine to five in the week.
Receive all our praise, O God,
through Christ our Lord.**

Responsive Call to Worship

Leader We have come together to worship God.
and we have not left the world behind,
we have not left our daily lives behind,
we have not left our daily work behind.

Congregation **We come as those who are parents
and spouses and parents and friends.
We come as those who serve others
through paid work and unpaid work.
We come as those who love our work
or sometimes find our work difficult.**

All *We gather for worship and prayer today,
looking expectantly toward God's kingdom
joyful that the renewal of all things is promised,
asking God to lead us faithfully into our work
seeking the presence and joy of the Holy Spirit.*

2. PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Unison:

**God who draws near to us in Jesus,
we confess our failure to live wisely and well.
In our working we often forget your call.
We labour as if everything is up to us;**

**as if it all depends on our strength and ability.
We forget that you have called us to serve.
We forget that you have given us skills.
We forget that our work is for others.
We forget that your love animates our service.
Forgive us our sin, and lead us back to our work,
so that it may be true service of you,
offered for our neighbours, whom you love.
We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus
and for the sake of his kingdom. AMEN.**

Prayer led by the worship leader or pastor:

God of our life together, you have set us within human community. We have our life in a weaving together of relationships. We acknowledge, oh God, that the fabric of our shared life is in many ways torn. We think especially of the world of work, which often does not reflect your goodness and justice. Workers are exploited through poor working conditions and inadequate wages. Some receive huge annual pay cheques while others can hardly get by. The contributions of many workers are hidden from public view, and taken for granted. Loving God, we confess that we have not looked with hope and joy to Jesus' coming kingdom. We have forgotten that his way of goodness and justice and compassion is our future. Forgive us our individual failures, as well as our shared sin. Help us to pursue the way of Jesus, and work toward his good and beautiful kingdom. We pray for the sake of your glory. Amen.

Responsive Prayer of Confession

We draw near to you O living God,
in the faith, hope, and love of Christ.

**We come as those who know our failures
and those who live with a sense of shame.**

The work we do during the week can be
the place of our failures and our shame.

**We sometimes treat colleagues unfairly
or fail to support them in their work.**

We see our work as a way to make a living, only,
rather than a way to serve Christ and neighbour.

**We participate in an economy too oriented
toward wealth, rather than toward human flourishing.**

Sometimes our work is carless and we fail
to offer our gifts diligently and with gratitude..

**Hear our confession, O God, and grant us freedom
and joy in our work and service, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Unison Prayer of Confession

**Gracious Lord, we bring before you
our personal failures in our daily work.
We have not laboured as those made in your image.**

**We have been poor stewards of your creation.
We have not given you the glory.
We have not laboured in your love.
We confess, too, the faults of our
commercial and industrial society:
continuing injustice, lack of harmony.
The inability—and worse—the unwillingness
to seek the paths of reconciliation.
Have mercy upon us, and grant that,
as the workshop at Nazareth was blessed,
through the labour of the Christ,
so may the workplaces of this land
be enriched by the work of those who call him “Lord.”
We ask this in his name Amen.**

(From the Theology of Work Project, shared in Work and Worship by Kaemingk and Willson — adapted)

3. PRAYERS FOR WORKERS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

These paragraphs, each a distinctive prayer, may be used within your broader Pastoral Prayer of Prayer of Intercession and Thanksgiving. You can use one or two of these for each of the Sundays you are focusing on work and worship. It may be helpful for you, depending on your context, to write prayers that respond to other fields or vocations. (Some of the ideas for these prayers are taken from a set of prayers prepared at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Manhattan, but most are significantly revised or written fresh.)

Hospitality workers

We thank you for those who work in the hospitality industry—preparing meals and serving food, setting up rooms for rest and sleep, laying out logistics for celebrations and conferences. Oh God, bless those who work in these ways; grant them meaningful encounters with others, opportunities to show care, and ways to exercise their skills creativity. When they are treated poorly, or function in the shadows of the industry, grant them a sense of your love and your protection, opportunities to seek fairness and just treatment.

Farmers

Gracious God, you have set among us those who till soil and plant seeds and milk cows and raise sheep. We thank you for the entrepreneurial spirit and hard work of farmers. Their work provides the means of our sustenance and growth, our nourishment and energy. Bless the work of their hands as they pore over spreadsheets, operate farm equipment, supervise employees, care for animals and soil, and sell their products. We pray that they would care diligently for the land, that they would be acknowledged for their contributions, and that they would know your peace and provision for them and their families.

Childcare workers

Living God, we praise and thank you for the gift of little lives; for the infants and children of our families, of our neighbors, and those children who belong with families we don't know around us. Their little lives bring joy, energy, work, and challenges. We thank you particularly today for those whose work is to care for these children, whether in day cares or preschools or home settings. Thank you for the good work of teaching the alphabet, wiping noses, sharing food, modeling care, showing love. Bless their work, and grant to them the recognition due to them for the care and teaching of precious lives.

Financial Service Workers

Ours is a world that operates on the basis of exchange in so many ways—including financial exchanges. We pray for those who work in banks, investment companies, insurance companies, and other financial service organizations. Grant to them honesty and transparency in all their work. Grant to them meaningful encounters and relationships with clients and coworkers. May these relationships be oriented toward goodness and compassion and the support of those planning for their lives and futures. Grant to each one who works in financial services a sense of how their work is for the economic sustainability of communities and families, for the blessing of each one.

Journalists

God of truth and word and covenant, we pray today for journalists, whose task is to share news of important events and decisions and people in our society. We know that the reporting of news has changed over the years, and that the news industry today is in a state of flux and change. In the midst of this, grant to journalists a continuing desire to speak the truth, to uncover what is hidden, to highlight things that matters. May they help us understand who we are and who we are becoming. Bless their work with clarity and insight and wisdom, by the grace Christ, the truth-teller.

Healthcare Workers

God of creation, we are embodied and limited creatures—humans are those who inhabit the world in diverse ways according to our body's abilities or particularities. Throughout our lives we often need care for these bodies and selves that we are. We thank you for physiotherapists who help us gain strength, functionality, and flexibility. We thank you for nurses who attend to the signals and needs of our bodies, and to the care of our families. We thank you for family doctors who diagnose and prescribe and listen and share. We thank you for patient care attendants who wash us and clip nails and make us comfortable in a chair or bed. Bless the work of each one, and grant them the grace to see their expertise and care as the work of Christ to care and bless.

Construction Workers

God of covenant, we are those who live in a built environment of apartment buildings, houses, office buildings, community centers, sports facilities. We thank you for those who build these structures—for plumbers and carpenters and laborers and engineers and crane operators and all who contribute to the construction of the spaces we inhabit daily. Thank

you for their attention to detail, for their knowledge of materials, for their aesthetic sensibilities. Especially we thank you for their work in allowing us to make our way through daily life and activities comfortably and in accessible and functional ways. May we not neglect their contributions, and may they offer their work as for the building up also of those they serve.

Artists

O living God, in giving this world and creation, you worked imaginatively and carefully. You also created humans in your image, with a capacity for creativity and innovation. We are those who can take paint and words and fabric and metals to reflect on the world, to interpret our lives, and to create what is beautiful. We praise you for artists who take up this vocation of creativity through painting and poetry and sculpture and filmmaking. May their imaginations be in the service of truth, for the asking of good questions, and for our inspiration and encouragement. In the daily grind of their making, may they know themselves blessed and called by you.

Labourers

Gracious God, in Jesus you draw near especially to those who are forgotten. We know that in our society those who labour are often forgotten. We think of cleaners up in the night vacuuming offices, workers trimming fruit trees, sanitation workers collecting our recycling, technicians adjusting boilers or air conditioners, those who change our oil. In so many way, our lives are supported by labourers who work behind the scenes and often unacknowledged. Bless their work, remind them that their service is for the sake of Christ, and fill them we a sense of purpose for the contributions they make to so many others.

Non-Profit Workers

God who shows the way of service in Christ, we pray for those not-for-profit organizations that contribute to our communities, and for those who serve within them. We pray that you would fill them with creative ideas for fulfilling their mission, wisdom in distributing resources, and care in managing the shared life of employees and volunteers. May their hearts be consistently moved by compassion, and may you sustain them through difficult work experiences, conflicts, and discouraging days. Remind them of the purpose they fulfill to bless others, and fill them with the love of Christ.

Parents

For some, O living God, the work never seems to stop. We think especially of parents and grandparents and others who raise children, and the busyness of their lives. In caring for kids there are tasks that are repetitive and jobs that are thankless. Making meals, doing laundry, driving to activities. Bath time and snack time and nap time and screen time. For parents there is self-doubt and a sense we may not be doing enough. Gracious God, we ask you to bless all those who raise children. Grant to them energy and creativity and compassion and a spirit of openness to their kids. Surround them with others to support them. Give them opportunities for rest and rejuvenation. Grant them a deep sense of your presence, and of purpose. We pray in the name of Jesus, the one who calls us and renews us for service, by the Spirit.

Those who are Unemployed

God of mercy and compassion, there are those among and in the society around us who are looking for work at this time. They are looking for ways to use their gifts, offer their energy, and contribute to our community and society. We thank you for their skills and training, and ask that you would prepare a place of meaningful work for them. Grant them patience and grace in this time of waiting and job searching. When discouragement sets in, remind them of your presence and provision for them. Surround them with others who will be a blessing and encouragement to them. In these days of waiting we thank you that you continue to give opportunities to bless and serve others. We pray through Christ's name.

Retired People

God of all ages and of all stages of life, we pray for those who are retired. We thank you for years of service offered and contributions made through work and in workplaces; we thank you for skills sharpened and successes achieved. We praise you now for this season of rest after so many years worked—a season of refreshment and perhaps of new beginnings. We pray that those who are retired would have a continuing sense calling to bless others. Protect the retired from listlessness and a lack of purpose. Fill them with gratitude and generosity. Enable them to live into this third, third of life care for neighbours and their community. We pray with thanks and with anticipation of Christ's kingdom.

4. CHILDREN'S STORY/CHILDREN'S SERMON IDEAS

The following children's stories or sermons depend on having at least a few kids present in a worship service. But they also all can build on the presence of a few with congregational participation. In some instances they could be done just with the adults. Adjust as you think appropriate, of course, and particularly with reference to the age of the children.

#1 Kids helping create worship content (on the theme of work!)

Point out to the kids that worship is full of words. Words in songs. Words in prayers. Words in announcements. Words in sermons. So many words!

Ask the kids if they have ideas about where all of these words come from. Possible answers they'll provide, or you'll provide, could include: the minister, God, Jesus, the writers of the Bible, church members who make announcements, etc...

Tell the kids that they are going to help you create some of the words of worship today. They are going to do that by helping creating a litany together. That the litany is going to be built around the phrase: "We thank God for workers and their work." (Put the phrase on the screen if you have that capacity.)

Ask the kids to tell you about the different types of jobs people have, and what the people in those jobs do. If the group of kids is small, ask the congregation to chime

in, too. (Add in your own ideas to help spur thoughts.) Write down the answers they provide (in your own notebook)

The answers could include so many options, such as:

- Nurses take care of sick people.
- Teachers help us to learn new things.
- Farmers grow food to eat.
- Bus drivers take people places.
- Janitors keep offices and buildings clean.
- Technicians fix things that are broken.
- Plumbers make sure the sink works.

Once you have a good list, tell them that together you are going to share a litany, and their job is to repeat the phrase “We thank God for workers and their work.” It would go like this:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| You/Leader: | We think of nurses who take care of the sick. |
| Kids (unison): | We thank God for workers and their work. |
| You/Leader: | We think of farmers who grow food to eat. |
| Kids (unison): | We thank God for workers and their work. |
| You/Leader: | We think of bus drivers who take us places. |
| Kids (unison): | We thank God for workers and their work. |
- Etc., until your list is complete.
AMEN.

End by thanking them also for helping to write/create part of the worship service.

#2 Gifts and Skills for Building

This children’s story or children’s time is intended to explore the ways that workers can be treated unfairly. As always with the teaching and leading of children, we need to approach this in a way that is sensitive to age and culture and experience. This children’s time might also take just a little bit more preparation.

Find two or three everyday items that have been produced somewhere in the world. Examples could include almost anything, really. Things like: item of clothing, book, lamp, cell phone, door mat, cooking pot.

“These are everyday items that we use at home or school. Have you ever thought about who made them and now they get to us? Can you think of some of the workers who would have helped make them and get them to us.”

- Where did the materials come from? (wood or cloth or stone or metal)
- Who made that fabric or cut down the tree?
- Did someone work in a factory to make this? What kinds of jobs?
- How did it get here? This says “made in Bangladesh” or country X
- Who put it on the shelf at the store?
- Etc...

“It is important for us as followers of Jesus to remember that all of the workers who have brought this [pot, cellphone, door mat] to our house should be treated well. Workers should have fair pay, and a place to work that is safe. They should get holidays and time to rest.”

“But we also know that sometimes workers are not treated fairly, and that is very sad. Some of the workers who allow us to have this [pot, cellphone door mat] might had good pay or a safe place to work. There are places around the world, and even here, that workers are treated unfairly.”

If age appropriate, ask if the kids can think of things we can do since we know that sometimes workers aren’t treated right or fairly.

“There are three things we can do when we think about these things we use. (i) We can remember the many workers who have allowed us to have these things. It’s amazing how many people have helped get these things to our homes. (ii) We can try to make sure that workers who made things we buy were treated well. That is sometimes hard to do. (iii) We can pray for the workers, thanking God for them and asking God to help them. Let’s pray now for those workers:

“Loving God, thank you for the many things we have at home. We thank you for things like pots and cell phones and door mats. We thank you for all the workers who have made these things and have brought them to the stores here for us to buy them and use them. We pray that all the workers will be treated well. We pray that you would be with all the workers who help us. That you would bless them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

#3 Work can be really hard

“In our bible it tells the story of the building of the temple. And it gives details about how that special place of prayer was to be constructed. The story of the building of the temple from 1 Kings also mentions some of the workers that God called to participate in building this special place.

“There were workers to dig stones for the walls, and workers to build doors for the temple, and artists to decorate the temple, and those who would weave fabrics. All of them were asked by God to help with the work.

“You live in a house or apartment. Can you think of what kind of workers are needed to be done to build a house today?” You could put up a few pictures of a house being built at its various stages: <https://www.dreamstime.com/home-construction-house-build-stages-isometric-cottage-building-erection-process-foundation-to-roof-isolated-home-image125254549>

Prompt the kids as needed to raise the following ideas/answers about workers needed to build a house or apartment today.

- Someone to design what it will look like.
- Someone to help dig the hole for the foundation/basement.

- A truck driver to bring the cement or the bricks.
 - Someone to put up the walls—hammering and nailing.
-
- Someone to make windows and put them in.
 - Someone to put in the pipes for water and drains.
 - Someone to put in the wires for electricity – lights and stove.

“Once it’s done the house provides shelter, a place to sleep, a place to eat, a place to learn. All of those workers gave their skills and their time and their hard work to create that house for others. Maybe it will sound unusual, but we can say that God called those workers; God called them to work and to help in this way.”

Let’s offer thanks to God for those workers, and ask God to be with them in their work.” (Short extemporaneous prayer.)

#4 Who are you working for?

“I wonder whether you have a job? Are you a worker?”

“You seem pretty young [though some of you are a little older]. You probably don’t get up early and go

to work at the hospital,
or to prepare meals at a restaurant,
or to help people with their money at the bank,

“But let me still ask, are you a worker? Are there jobs you do? Are there jobs you do at home? Are there jobs you do at school? (Prompt with ideas and let the kids populate a list with you. You could even have them act out their work. For example, opening the dishwasher, taking out items, putting them in the cupboard. Or you could mime jobs for them.)

Putting equipment away after gym class.
Putting the garbage out to the street.
Loading or unloading the dishwasher.
Raking up leaves in the Fall.
Putting your clothes in the laundry.
Older neighbour, putting out her garbage.

And I wonder, when you do these jobs, who are you working for? Who are you thinking about? (Again, help them populate this ‘list’.)

Maybe working for mom who asked you to help.
Maybe working for the teacher who asked you to help.
Working for other students so equipment is organized.
Working for the family so the house is clean.
Working for the neighbours by delivering flyers.
Working for an older neighbour by taking out her trash.
Etc...

“In the Bible there a part where Jesus says something really interesting about our work. He say that when we work for others, when we help others, we are also working for God.

When we work for our parents.

When we work for our grandparents.

When we work for our neighbours.

When we work for other students at school.

When we do something that might even help a stranger.

We are working for God.

God loves to see us work well.

God loves to see us help others with our work.

God loves to see us support our neighbours with our work.

“Dear God, we thank you that we have jobs to do—all of us, from the oldest to the youngest. There are so many ways we can work for others by cleaning up and helping and being there for neighbours. Thank you that you love us. We are glad to know you see us and love us when we work for others. Help us to do our work well and show love in our work. Amen.”

5. CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR WORSHIP/WORK

Here we offer a series of activities for the congregation to participate in during this series of Sundays. The purpose is to increase worker participation and engagement in worship. Also to share in actions and activities that draw the congregation into prayerful and worshipful reflection on work. Many of these ideas are adapted from Kaemingk and Willson.

i. Offering to God – Physical symbols of our work

During worship we usually provide an opportunity for the congregation to make a financial offering. These offerings are a contribution to the mission and work of the church, and an expression of their worship.

One or two weeks before the service where this activity is to take place, as the members of your congregation to bring in an object that represents their work—whether paid work or unpaid work. Here are some examples (advise people to be creative):

A mechanic – a wrench or oil filter.

An accountant – a calculator or printed out spreadsheet.

A parent – a soother or blanket.

A farmer – seeds or a dairy cow tag.

Let them know in advance that during the offering time they will be invited to bring the item forward to a specifically designated table (this may or may not be the communion table, according to the worship culture of your congregation). This is a symbolic offering of their work in the service of others. With this activity, you may need to help people stretch their theological imagination to see who their work serves others. (Obviously, they will get the item back at the end of the service! If this too disruptive during offering, then the items could be placed at the front at before or at the beginning of the service.)

A prayer: O God who creates us to be those who work, we thank you for all of the service and labour we offer to you. And we thank you for these symbols of our work. Whatever our context of work, grant us the imagination to see how we are serving Christ and others. May our faith infuse our work and our workplaces, through Christ the risen one.

ii. Brokenness of Work – Lament over work (From Kaemingk and Willson)

Those who come to worship on Sundays often come with guilt, frustration, or fatigue from their work-week. They need an opportunity to lament, confess, or pray.

Provide paper and pens for those who are in attendance, whether at their seats or at a table near the wall. They should be invited to write short prayers that express their needs or desires or intentions for their workplace—as they seek God’s leading or blessing. The focus is to be particularly on the challenges of work.

There are two ways we can imagine these laments about work, these prayers, being shared.

- (i) Build a small actual wall of bricks or rocks perhaps to one side of the sanctuary, if you have the resources to do so. Otherwise, some form of drawn/paper wall could be just as effective. (This is modelled on the Wailing Wall). Prayers will be brought forward and rolled up/placed in the wall.
- (ii) Simply provide a basket on the communion table or somewhere at the front of the worship space. People may bring forward their written prayers or laments, folded and placed in the basket.

At the time of the pastoral prayer, an alternative action takes place as people bring their prayers forward. Children could also participate in this during story time. The wall can remain up or the basket in place for a period of time so people can bring their laments at other times. This exercise could be particularly appropriate for the season of Lent, but could be used at any time.

iii. Salvation and work – a TTT exercise!

A part of our ministry should be to help people realize that they can be followers of Jesus Christ in their vocations and workplaces. Since Jesus recovers and fulfills the original vocation of what it means to be human, we work now to apply his love toward others in our working situation.

Among other things, the Christian focus will be on agape/love. We will note how following Jesus means that we look at people, production, and products differently. In the worship service explain that the congregation will have a TTT exercise—this stands for “this time tomorrow.” Or it can also stand for “this time on Tuesday” or “this time on Thursday”.

What’s the point? The point is to Invite the congregation to creatively locate themselves at work. Provide them with time in the service to think about where they will be TTT. Ask them to imagine a scenario at work in which they will express love to someone or change how they approach people, production, or products.

In the course of this exercise, you will need to give them a bit of time to think about (i) Who they work with and (ii) what they will be doing. It might be helpful to have these questions or ideas on the screen or in a handout. Some examples:

(i) **Who will you be working with TTT?**

- Colleagues in person at the office
- Colleagues you meet only in online meetings
- Managers, supervisors, employees
- Customers you meet or people you serve
- Children or parents they take care of

How might we show greater love to these people in our work?

(ii) **What activities will you be engaged in TTT.**

- Teaching in a classroom
- Serving food
- Discussing finances with a client
- Fixing a car
- Combining a field of corn
- Reading financial statements
- Giving a child a bath

How might we show greater love and attention in what we are doing?

The congregation might need a bit of time to think about this in relation to their own work, whether paid or unpaid. These may be new ideas for them, and so it may also help to have pen and paper available.

Close with a prayer in which you commit “this time tomorrow” to the grace and care of Christ.

iv. ***Work anticipates the Kingdom – Mapping Your City***

There is an old tradition of churches having maps on the wall (often in the lobby) where they would mark the location of missions or missionaries supported in the city or overseas. Pins placed on the map indicated locations. It was a way to remember, and pray for, those who were serving Christ in diverse contexts.

This exercise will extend or play on that older idea. Specifically we invite you to place a map of your community or city on a bulletin board or some other prominent place (you could also find a way to creatively locate this in the sanctuary itself). The map of the city can be mounted over wood or corkboard.

As a response to the sermon, or during the prayers of the people, individuals should be invited to approach the map and place a pin on their workplace, home, neighbourhood, or the workplace for which they pray. After the service the map can continue to be displayed in

the lobby and people can continue to participate—prayers can continue to be offered. In a more digital context, a google map could have pins dropped onto it for the locations of workplaces, and shared on a screen.

The point is to help a congregation anticipate God's final shalom for humans and creation—God's healing and reconciliation for the world. To see their work as participation in God's mission and an anticipation of God's coming kingdom. As they place their pins, they are invited to see their places of work as opportunities for justice, healing, and spreading God's love.

The mapping could work with one of the other themes as well. Retired people can also place pins on workplaces or institutions that they will pray for or volunteer at. Students can put pins on their schools.

Prayers should be offered for all of the places identified on the map, for the work that is undertaken there, and for the full expression of Jesus' love in that context and work.

v. Other Ideas!

Others forms of participation that may be meaningfully used in worship, also shared from Kaemingk and Willson:

Commute as time of examination

You can invite parishioners to prepare themselves for work/worship by making their travel/commute to church a time of spiritual examination. This could be done by singles, couples, or the whole family by simply asking: "a simple question, "what do I need to bring to God from my week?"

Note the origins communion bread and wine (company, location)

This may seem off-topic for a communion service, but the bread and wine used in communion would have been an obvious sign for agrarian workers in the ancient work. It is very likely they would have known who made the bread and wine. In Greek Orthodox churches today, parishioners make special bread for communion know as prosphora ('offerings') – which is another option if you have people who like to bake in your congregation.

Display pictures of city, industries, or vocations

In ancient Jewish temples and some early churches there were pictures of Eden, nature, and agricultural life that made the connection between work and worship. Displaying pictures of various vocations in the sanctuary, lobby, or throughout your church would be a contemporary equivalent to this.

Automated slide presentations (offerings or prayers of the people)

Similar to the displaying of pictures, automated slides could be used during the offering or prayers of the people to make the connection to work, especially if the pictures connected to particular prayers. The slides could incorporate important industries for

your congregation or town and could even incorporate pictures from members of the congregation.

Celebrations: vocational success, transitions, callings

Churches are important places for celebrations such as weddings, but we don't often think of celebrating vocational successes or transitions. This could also include celebrations for high school, college or university graduates. These need to be done with humility and gratitude and aim to be inclusive and sensitive to people unemployed or under employed.

Commissioning people for new positions

While people entering church ministry or missionary work are sometimes commissioned, the same could be done for workers. During the commission a focus should be made on work as participating in God's creating, providing, and redeeming of the world. The commissions would need to be unique to industries (including virtues and vices). The format of the commission could include testimony, affirmation, framing, vows, and a blessing/charge.

Blessings or Commissions for Yearly Work Cycles

This could be done during prayers or separately. If your church has a lot of farmers, for example, there will be busy times of harvesting, other cycles exist for teachers, students, accountants, those working in retail, etc.

Testimonials

Testimonials could be done during offerings or another part of the service. Testimonials about work could describe how work participating in God's providing or reconciling work. They should be honest and highlight not only the successes but struggles and temptations as well.

vi. SERMON IDEAS/OUTLINES

SERMON FOR WEEK 1 – Work and Creation

Sermon title: Created for Good of Work

Scripture text: Genesis 2:4-15

Main theme: Humans are created by God, set in the garden, and invited to take care of it. All of our work is a response to that invitation of God. We may not work in a garden, although we might, but our work is a caring for the world and creation that God has made.

It is hard for many of us to see our work as a response to God's invitation and as a way of serving the creation/others. Or, to see that

we are already participating in God's provision and care for the world. This sermon will encourage people to think in those new ways.

Video Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkWjepehUP8>

Main points or content of the Sermon (to be filled out and illustrated according to your context and study).

(1) God is a Worker

- In the first creation narrative (Genesis 1) in the six days of creation, the following work is attributed to God: God creates (ex. Heavens and earth), God sets things in place (the stars in the sky), God makes (the dome), God names things (he called the dry land earth), God commands (let there be), God blesses (the creatures).
- In the second creation narrative (Genesis 2) God also forms (human), plants (trees),
- In other words, God is engaged in all kinds of work, and most of these forms of working are later attributed to humans. With the exception of creating (!) which belongs to God only.

(2) God created us to work

- Genesis 2:15 – “The Lord God took the earthling and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”
- To care for the earth is to care for what God has made. We are invited to do so wisely, attending to God's purposes, for the flourishing of creation and for fellow humans. We are created for such work. We are called to such work by our creation.
- Genesis 4 is an extension of the creation stories and includes the story of Cain and Able and also the descendants of Cain. The narrative of creation has extended here to those who keep flocks and farm the land (4:2), and to those who play instruments (4:21) and those who engage in tool making and metal work (4:22). Similarly, all of these forms of work and creativity are to serve creation and fellow humans.

(3) Creating community together

- In Genesis 2, a helper or co-worker is given to the earthling, and they together take on the care of creation and of others in the world.
- To care for creation is to name things – using our minds to consider what they are and how they fit and function. (Adam names things in 2:18-20)
- To care for creation, the garden, is to use hands (Adam tills the ground and keeps the garden).
- Thus the second creation narrative presents us with a vision of the humans working together wisely, carefully, physically, and in response to God's call and creation in mind.

- All of our work is a sharing together with others—in wisdom, with care, with our bodies, in partnership, and with God’s call and creation in mind.

SERMON FOR WEEK 2 – Brokenness of Work

Sermon title: Work and Suffering

Scripture text: This sermon outline suggests using three texts to reflect on the challenges and brokenness of work in our world. Rather than simply one reading and one sermon, the idea is to offer three texts and three reflections on those texts. The scripture passages are:

Matthew 6:25-30, 34

Genesis 4:1-12

Amos 8:4-8

Main theme: Human work is important and a gift of God through creation. Yet we know that work is also a source of grief and pain, and that the injustices of life are expressed in our work. This sermon will pick up three themes based on the above texts:

The Anxiety of Work

The Competition of Work

The Injustice of Work

You may choose to focus on only one or on two. However, we do think that each touches on important dimensions of the brokenness of work.

Video Resource: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/newyork/yes-im-mechanic.html>

This video shares the story of someone who lost almost everything as he lost his large real estate business. He was left only with his job as a mechanic and learned to find dignity and satisfaction in that work.

Main points or content of the Sermon

(1) Matthew 6:25-30, 34 – The Anxiety of Work

- Many of our anxieties in life are tied up with our work.
 - o Anxieties about who we are and whether our life matters.
 - o Anxieties about whether our work makes a difference.
 - o Anxieties about whether we have enough money to live day by day.
 - o Anxieties about whether we will advance in our career.
 - o Anxieties about our futures and saving for tomorrow.
- God invites us to trust that God will provide everything we need.

- The text of Matthew 6 is about learning to trust God above all else.
- There are those who do not have enough to eat in our world, who have no work and no prospects of work. However for many of us, we have enough but continue to live anxious lives.
- We are reminded that work cannot fully satisfy us. It is only God who can satisfy us. We seek God together.

(2) Genesis 4:1-12 **The Competition of Work**

- The story of Cain and Abel is a story of competition and jealousy in work.
 - o Abel is a keeper of sheep – a herder of animals.
 - o Cain is a tiller of the land – he raises crops like his dad.
 - o It seems likely these brothers were always in competition.
 - o Each brings an offering to God from their work, but only the offering of Abel is recognized and accepted.
 - o Cain doesn't reflect prayerfully on why his brother's offering was accepted. He doesn't reflect on his own life and gifts in relation to God. Rather, he reacts with anger and violence.
- Within our work lives, we sometimes get trapped in a spirit of competition.
 - o This competition may be with co-workers or supervisors.
 - o We can easily focus on what others have and what we don't have.
 - o Sometimes there is injustice in our workplaces, but we know that we also sometimes just give in to jealousy.
- God invites us to work faithfully and thankfully.
- God invites us to look past competition and jealousy to service and compassion.

(3) Amos 8:4-8 – **The Injustice of Work**

- This text in Amos is about the way that God's people sometimes exploit the needy in their trading and business practices.
- The response offered by God is a response of strong judgment.
- God makes a call for confession and repentance.
- On the other side of this biblical text (in some ways unnamed) are those who suffer from these practices. Those who are just called "the poor".
- We can imagine all kinds ways that workers exploited:
 - o Failure to provide a living wage.
 - o Benefits packages are inadequate.
 - o Jobs are moved to locations where labour is cheaper.
 - o Employers use loopholes to minimize pay to workers.
 - o Working conditions may not safe.
- We lament all of these ways that workers are exploited. We speak against them, as God does through the prophets.
- We seek confession and repentance, and transformed relationships to workers.

SERMON FOR WEEK 3 – Work in the Spirit

Sermon title: Working in the Spirit

Scripture texts: Ephesians 4:1-13
Exodus 31:1-11

Main theme: It is through the Holy Spirit that the Body of Christ is built up. The Spirit gives gifts to each one, that we offer in mission and service—to one another and the community. The Spirit also gives us gifts and skills and opportunities to work well in the world, whatever our form of work is.

Video Resource: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/silicon-valley/business-as-god-meant-it-to-be.html>

This video tells the story of a tech Startup founded by a woman who says: "I'm able to engage in the restorative work that God cares about . . . building business as it ought to be, as a channel for the common good."

Main points or content of the Sermon

(1) Building up the Body

- By the Spirit, Christ gives gifts to each one gifts to build up the Body.
- There are similar texts in 1 Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians (4:1-13) all of which speak about how we serve and build up each other based on our unique gifting and calling.
- We show love toward God, and love toward one another, as we use our particular gifts in the Body of Christ.
- Paul uses the language of humility, gentleness, patience, and to describe how we do this work of building up the Body.

(2) Building up the Community

- The same Spirit that gives gifts to build up the church, gives gifts and skills for the building up of human communities.
- Exodus 31:1-11 describes skills possessed by members of the community.
- The skills they had were in knowledge, trades, artistic design, stone cutting, woodworking, and every kind of craft.
- These workers did not develop these skills simply for religious purposes.
- When it came time to build the temple, God says to Moses: "Hey, you know Bezalel, from the tribe of Judah, he's totally skilled in the trades you need—by the Spirit have gifted him."
- In other words, the work of the Spirit is not only for religious purposes or the building up of the church. The Spirit is at work gifting people for many vocations, with various skills, and in nurturing diverse competencies.

(3) Fulfilling our Vocations Today

- The Spirit is equipping us to love and serve each other in the church.

- The Spirit is equipping each one to contribute to the common good.
- If you have skills in software development, it is through the Spirit.
- If you have skills in human resources management, it is through the Spirit.
- If you have skills in carpentry or accounting, it is through the Spirit.
- And all of these are in the service of Christ and his love for the world and us in it.
- ***The above video, could be used to illustrate this final point.***

SERMON FOR WEEK 4 – Work and the coming Kingdom

Sermon title: Working toward Christ’s Kingdom

Scripture text: Deuteronomy 24:14-22
Luke 4:16-21

Main theme: The kingdom of Jesus is always somehow future—we wait for it. It is also coming to our world now. As we anticipate Christ’s kingdom, we also work for it. We work in ways that exhibit justice and compassion and equality and goodness.

Video Resource: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/thisiscity/detroit/gardening-to-make-beauty-out-of-blight.html>

Riet Schumack couldn't believe it when she sensed God calling her to Detroit. "I hate big cities, so when the Lord called us [here]—there was no way around it—we spent many years questioning God," [says](#) the Dutch native. After moving with her husband to the struggling Brightmoor neighborhood in 2006, Riet wondered how she could serve her neighbors. She took an inventory of her passions, and "children" and "gardening" topped the list.

Main points or content of the Sermon

(4) Jesus is creating a new world

- Jesus opens the scroll, reads from Isaiah, and declares the text fulfilled.
- The text declares good news for those who are marginalized and vulnerable.
- Economic exploitation, or lack of opportunity, characterizes the vulnerable.
- Jesus is declaring the existence of a new world and a different future and a just economy and a fair world of work.
- The scriptures also remind us that this is the truth that is to come.

(5) Work is implicated in this new world

- Deuteronomy 24 shows us first steps toward a more just world of work.
- Those who have property and farms are told to leave space for other people to work and sustain themselves from the land. (Don’t take everything from the field or vineyard)
- The text also requires just wages, and opens up space for migrant workers or those who are otherwise economically vulnerable.

- Twice this passage links up with the narrative of Exodus, which is about escape from economic and employment exploitation.

(6) Imagining our work in God's new world

- A series of ideas to suggest how Christ's kingdom can and should be embodied in the world of work today:
 - o Providing opportunities for all for meaningful work.
 - o Access to education and career development possibilities.
 - o Support those who have been prevented from accessing financial or entrepreneurial resources to build businesses.
 - o Pursuing work that respects creation and is sustainable.
 - o Ensuring just wages and benefits for those who work.
 - o Providing just arrangements for migrant workers.

vii. ADDITIONAL RESPONSIVE PRAYERS

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER (General)

Whether we work at home, or at school,
in a factory or an office,
indoors or out of doors,
we give our work to you, O living God.

Whether we work alone, or with others,
with hand or brain,
in a shop or a hospital,
we give our work to you, O living God.

Whether our work is paid or unpaid,
interesting or boring,
with computers or with people,
we give our work to you, O living God.

Whether our work involves manufacturing or planning,
travelling or homemaking,
teaching, learning or caring,
we give our work to you, O living God.

Whatever we do,
give us a sense of wonder.
Whatever we make,
give us a sense of achievement.
Whatever we build,
grant us a sense of glory.
Whatever our work,
grant us a share in your purpose.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, **Amen.**

(Greater Manchester Industrial Mission from Work in Worship, by the Industrial Fellowship, edited by David Welbourne.)

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER (Education)

Gracious God, in the power of the Holy Spirit we bring our prayers of thanksgiving, joy, and concern to you—thinking particularly of the sphere of education.

Gracious God, we give you thanks for our education system, for all teachers, for teachers' assistants and Principals and administrators. We remember the work all those who have trained carefully, and who now use their skills in educating others. We pray that each would use their skill wisely, feel themselves to be valued, and help the students in their care to learn and grow.

Lord God, we remember all these people in their various tasks; give them strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.

Heavenly Father, we pray for struggling or unsupported teachers, teachers who feel overwhelmed by their workload. We pray for those who feel inadequate or stressed.

Lord God, we remember all these people in their various tasks; give them strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.

Gracious God, we pray for teachers who and those who work with special needs students, in elementary schools, in secondary schools[, in CEGEPs], in colleges and universities.

Lord God, we remember all these people in their various tasks; give them strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.

Gracious God, we pray for school administrators managing budgets and the resources entrusted to them. We pray for trustees and governors learning how to best support and provide meaningful motivation to school workers. We pray for teachers and teachers' assistance whom we know personally.

Lord God, we remember all these people in their various tasks; give them strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.

Gracious God, we pray for those who are training to work in the education system and our schools, or those considering a career in education.

Lord God, we remember all these people in their various tasks; give them strength, courage and a sense of purpose in teaching.

As we offer these prayers to you, O God, help us as a community to be supportive and caring, offering support and a listening ear and practical support as we are able. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(c. Barbara A Scott 'Shaping Prayer', Methodist Publishing House 1996 - Adapted)

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER (At harvest)

Lord God, we acknowledge your creative power and energy, bringing our prayers for a world in need of your creativity.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we pray for your Church throughout the world. May there be a harvest of freedom, places where your Spirit moves in and through us, your people, that we might be all that you call us to be.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we pray for this earth. May there continue to be a harvest of land and sea. May the people who work to bring our daily food continue to use their skill and patience, and know the value of the work they do.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we pray for the areas of the world where the harvest has failed. For places where lack of rain has ruined the crops. For places where war and conflict have prevented the planting of crops. For places where there is hunger and famine. May those who work to bring relief and aid continue their work and know that it is essential. May governments be moved to offer support that will enable people to take responsibility for their own future.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we pray for those who work in all manner of place and situations. For those in industry. For those who develop our technology. For those who work in the emergency services. For those responsible for upholding law and keeping peace. May they know the importance of the tasks in which they are involved and may they find strength and support as they seek to contribute to society.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we pray for those whose work is not paid. For those

who take time out from a career to raise children. For those who cannot accept paid employment because they are caring for a sick or disabled relative. For those who work in a voluntary capacity, in the health service, in prisons, in community care, churches and charitable organizations. May they fulfil the task they are called to do and give of their best in each situation. May we as a society value the work they do as they contribute to our lives.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us.

Lord God, we acknowledge your creative power and energy, and we bring these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Creator God, hear us, renew us, help us. Amen.

(c. Barbara A Scott 'Reshaping Prayer, Methodist Publishing House 1996)

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER

O God the Father, Creator of all things:

Have mercy upon us.

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world:

Have mercy on us.

O God the Holy Spirit, Giver of life:

Have mercy on us.

O Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God:

Have mercy on us.

From envy, avarice and status-seeking, covetousness which is idolatry, from wanting more than is our fair share:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From ruthlessness in making money, and from irresponsibility in spending it:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From unwillingness to know the cost to others of our standard of living:

Good Lord, deliver us.

For financiers and politicians, industrialists and trade unionists, and all who wield economic power; that they may have grace, wisdom and compassion:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the bewildered and those who cannot cope with a budget or with filling forms or with the pressures of modern life:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the victims of inflation, pensioners, people on small fixed incomes, and all who have been robbed of their savings:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who cannot find jobs, or homes they can afford, for people made redundant for whatever reason:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the increase of the fruits of the earth, that all may enjoy them:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord, when we are deciding how to make money, how to steward it, and what to do with it; help us to look hard at our motives, our aims and our prejudices—honestly, as in your sight. O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake became poor; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. For your name's sake.

AMENT.

(From *Work and Worship* by Kaemingk and Willson.)

viii. HYMNS AND SONGS

The Book of Praise (1997), The Presbyterian Church in Canada

If some of these are unfamiliar, and difficult to pick up for your congregation, you could either (1) learn one or two by singing them each week of the series, or (2) if you have a choir or worship team of some kind, ask them to learn and present one or two.

- #652 Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go
- #802 For the fruits of all creation
- #805 Give thanks, my soul, for harvest
- #334 God who gives to life its goodness
- #663 God, whose giving knows no ending
- #648 I'm gonna live so God can use me
- #748 Lord of all hopefulness
- #769 Lord of light, whose name and splendor
- #775 Sent forth by your blessing
- #465 The things, good Lord, that we pray for (short poem)
- #438 When morning gilds the sky
- #760 Where cross the crowded ways of life
- #555 Worship the Lord

Other songs:

Note that some of these come from the album "Work Songs" by Porter's Gate. We have not included all songs from that album, but all are worth checking out—it's a great resource. If your congregation is not able to sing them, perhaps they could be played via audio and or video, with lyrics included in print form.

"Jesus Christ, Workers' Lord" from Hymnal Companion to "Sound the Bamboo": Asian Hymns in their Cultural and Liturgical Contexts.

https://hymnary.org/text/urinun_bujironhan

"A Boy's Prayer"

https://hymnary.org/text/sa_aking_pagtulog

“Your labour is not in Vain.”

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/track/your-labor-is-not-in-vain-feat-paul-zach-and-madison-cunningham>

“In the fields of the Lord.”

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/track/in-the-fields-of-the-lord-feat-audrey-assad>

“Father let your kingdom come”

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/track/father-let-your-kingdom-come-feat-urban-doxology-liz-vice-and-latifah-alattas>

“Establish the work of our hands”

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/track/establish-the-work-of-our-hands-feat-aaron-keyes-and-urban-doxology>

“Day by Day”

<https://theportersgate.bandcamp.com/track/day-by-day-feat-joy-ike>

“Before you I kneel”

<https://store.gettymusic.com/us/song/before-you-i-kneel-a-workers-prayer/>

“Hymn for Labor Day”

[https://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Hymn_for_Labor_Day_\(Thurlow_Weed\)](https://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Hymn_for_Labor_Day_(Thurlow_Weed))

“A hymn of calling” (To the tune of “The Church’s one foundation”)

<https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/prayers-and-hymns-of-calling-and-vocation/>

“All is done for the glory of God”

https://hymnary.org/text/all_is_done_for_the_glory_of_god

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Laura Kelly Fanucci, *To Bless Our Callings: Prayers, Poems, and Hymns to Celebrate Vocation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

Faith and Work in General

Many of these books will have content on worship but also ideas for sermons, discipleship, community development, theology, etc.

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