

https://www.ucc.org/justice_worker-justice_labor-sunday_worship-resources#beatitudes

Beatitudes for Workers

(a responsive reading or prayer)

Voice I Blessed are you poor who have no work or too little income.

Voice II God has promised: yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Voice I Blessed are you who are hungry now.

Voice II God has promised: you shall be filled.

Voice I Blessed are you who weep over unpaid bills, the loss of a job, or your children's lack of opportunities.

Voice II God has promised: you shall be comforted, you shall laugh.

Voice I Blessed are you who are merciful.

Voice II God has promised: you shall receive mercy.

Voice I Blessed are you who hunger and thirst for justice.

Voice II God has promised: you shall be filled.

All The time is surely coming when God's justice and peace shall reign throughout the land. Thanks be to God.

(Based on Matthew 5:3-6 and Luke 6: 20-21)

by Rev. Ed Middleton, First Community Church of Dallas, UCC

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Prayer #1: Thanks for Abundance

by Mari Castellanos, Policy Advocate, Justice and Witness Ministries, UCC.

God of Grace, you have gifted us with a world of abundance; a land of plenty; a country where all can have enough. We come before you this day to thank you for this prosperity and to repent from our apparent inability to share this wealth. God, we declare our own complicity in systems that sustain some of us, while forsaking many others. And we come before you to seek your forgiveness, even as we pray for your justice.

Righteous God, you hear the cry of the poor. You listen to those who do without, while so many spend recklessly and our leaders invest the wealth of the nation in instruments of destruction.

Be with us this day Lord. Hear our prayers. Touch our hearts that we may be faithful witnesses and effective voices for justice. God of mercy, hear our prayer. **Amen.**

Prayer #2: Thanks, and Forgive Us

Loving and generous God, you are the font of every blessing, the source of all we have. Your breath gives us life, your love gives us courage and strength, healing and compassion. You care for us like a loving parent and feed our spirits, our minds, and our bodies. We thank you for your abundance given freely to all.

But God, forgive us for wanting more, even when we have more than we need. Create in us new hearts to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. Help us to know that our abundance is for others' needs. Great Teacher, write your law on our hearts: God's abundance is enough for all if we share.

A Prayer for Workers

Loving, Working God,

On this Sunday we ask your special blessing on all people who labor, either for pay or as volunteers, in jobs or at school, in the workplace or at home, in the U.S. and around the world.

We especially pray for your blessings on workers who do not have jobs and for those whose inadequate pay does not allow them to live the full life you intend for each of us.

Creator God, help us to build a new world in the midst of the old.

A world where all workers are valued.

A world where those who clean houses are also able to buy houses to live in.

A world where those who grow food can also afford to eat their fill.

A world where those who serve and care for others are, themselves, also served and cared for.

We pray for the coming of a world where all workers everywhere share in the abundance that you have given us.

We ask these things knowing that you give us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary.

Amen.

A Responsive Prayer for Justice

by Rebecca Sutton, Program Coordinator of Global Women's Exchange. This prayer was developed for the NY State Labor-Religion Coalition's seventh annual 40-hour fast. It was also part of Prayers for a Just Economy, a prayer service calling for an increase in the federal minimum wage held in Washington, DC, July 24, 2013.

Pray for those who are hungry.

Pray harder for those who will not feed them.

Pray for those who struggle each week to pay their bills.

Pray harder for the wealthy who do not care.

Pray for those who are homeless.

Pray harder for those who deny them shelter.

Pray for the sick and lonely.

Pray harder for those who will not give them comfort.

Pray for those who cry out for dignity.

Pray harder for those who will not listen.

Pray for those oppressed by unjust wages.

Pray harder for those who exploit them.

Pray for those who bear the yoke of prejudice.

Pray harder for those who discriminate against them.

Pray for those whose basic needs are denied.

Pray harder for public officials who cater to the greedy and ignore those bound unjustly. Amen.

Calls to Worship

Call to Worship #1

For one voice or unison voices:

Worker God, whose hands built the earth, molded our bodies, and sowed the stars across the sky, we gather in your presence this morning with praise and thanksgiving for your mighty deeds. Meet us here, Worker God; strengthen our hearts and our hands to work with you in the building of a world filled with justice and peace.

Call to Worship #2

For reading responsively:

One Voice: Our God is an awesome God who breathed into emptiness and created all that is.

Many Voices: With love and care, God shaped the world in all its diversity with mountains and valleys, rivers and deserts, and people of all colors and sizes.

One Voice: And threading through it all are beautiful dreams of justice, compassion, liberation, and peace.

Many Voices: O God, creator of our past, our present, and our future, we thank you for the many blessings you bestow on us each moment.

One Voice: Be with us now. Draw near to us as we draw near to you.

Many Voices: Lead us in paths of righteousness. Fill our hearts with compassion and a thirst for justice. Teach us to be co-creators, with You, of a world where all belong and share in the abundance you have given us.

All: Praise be to God.

Call to Worship #3

One: God of Life,

All: you are as near to us as our breath.

One: Touch our eyes,

All: that we may see you in one another.

One: Open our ears,

All: that we may hear your voice in the cries of the oppressed.

One: Enter our hearts,

All: that we may be filled with your love toward all people.

One: Come, O God of life and breath and wholeness.

All: Be with us now. Show us the way to new life and grant us the courage to be people of your Way.

Prayers of Confession

Prayer of Confession #1 *(note: some of this language parallels that of the Prayer for Workers, above)*

Call to Confession: On this Labor Day Sunday let us, in a special way, lift up all people who labor, either for pay or as volunteers, in jobs or at school, at home or in the workplace, in the U.S. and around the world.

Unison Prayer of Confession: We are workers, God, just like you. But we confess that our actions do not always affirm and honor each other. Our work is not always done in a spirit that is pleasing to you. We confess that, on some occasions, we have blindly bought goods made by people who are paid too little or work in unsafe conditions. We admit that we have failed to end an unjust system in which some workers have jobs that provide good wages and benefits while others may have no job, or one that pays little and provides few benefits.

Creator God, help us to be your people, working for a world where all workers are valued. A world where those who clean houses are also able to buy houses to live in. A world where those who grow food can also afford to eat their fill. And one where those who serve and care for others -- in stores, schools, hotels, restaurants, nursing homes, and many other places -- are, themselves, also served and cared for. It will be a world where all workers everywhere share in the abundance that you have given us.

Words of Assurance : Our God is a God of grace and transformation. When we ask, God gives us the courage and strength to live out our faith in the workplace and the marketplace, as well as in the sanctuary.

Prayer of Confession #2

Creator God, you made us to be neighbors, members of one family blessed with great diversity. You created us to be helpers and friends to one another, entrusting to us your justice and your joy. Yet we have denied justice and joy to many, creating worlds of poverty, pain, lost opportunities, and absence of hope. In so many ways, we break each other's hearts. Still, you do not reject us. We ask your forgiveness and pray to be transformed.

Brief period of silence

Loving God, you restore us to each other and to you, mending our hearts and repairing the world. Through the power of your Spirit, you shape us to be for others what Christ is for us: pardon and peace, new life and blessing. We give you thanks for your love, forgiveness, and constant presence. Amen.

HYMNS for Labor Sunday

Intercessory Prayer for Economic Justice

This is one part of Prayers for a Just Economy, a Prayer Service calling for an increase in the federal minimum wage held in Washington, DC, July 24, 2013.

Let our prayers surround those who are struggling on the economic margins:

The ones who have not shared in the great abundance that God has entrusted to our care;

The ones who have been left behind by the so-called economic recovery;

The ones who are unemployed or underemployed; and

The ones who are unjustly employed, working hard and yet living in poverty.

And let us pray for all those caught up in the workings of our unjust economic system -- the workers, the managers, the owners, the policy-makers and the consumers - all of us have a responsibility to help create a faithful economy that values work and honors the dignity of all workers.

Hear now our prayers O God:

We pray today for all those who are seeking employment, those facing a very difficult and uncertain future whether they are experiencing joblessness for the first time today or are among the millions of the long-term unemployed. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray today for those who are working in low-wage jobs yet remain trapped in poverty -- workers who need fair wages, respect and dignity in their workplace. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for children whose parents must work long hours in hard jobs just to afford shelter, food and clothing. And we pray for the moms, dads and family members who struggle with the difficult choice of working long hours and making long commutes, or spending more time with their children, to be able to tuck them into bed each night and see them off to school in the morning. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for those who labor in the fields to provide us food each day. For the farm workers who too often work beneath the hot sun without shade and in the deadly heat without water and who do not even make sufficient wages to buy the food they are harvesting. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray today for our brothers and sisters who work in the shadow of a broken and unjust immigration system – workers who face discrimination and exploitation and whose rights are too often denied through intimidation and threaten deportation. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for all those who labor in restaurants and earn as little as \$2.13 per hour – the ‘tipped wage’ which has not been raised in twenty-two years. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for ethical employers who share fairly the earnings of their businesses with all their workers; we pray for those who pay living wages and provide benefits sufficient for workers to support themselves and their families. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for those employers who have not yet learned to value their workers or recognize their inherent dignity. We pray for CEOs and managers who have hoarded riches and yet denied fair wages to their employees. We pray, God, that you might turn their hearts of stone into hearts of compassion. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for our President that he might use the power of his office to guarantee that all workers on federal property are paid a living wage. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

We pray for all our elected leaders that they might place our brothers and sisters struggling on the margins at the very center of their deliberations. We pray that they will support policies that create good jobs with living wages. We pray that Congress will increase the minimum wage so that no one again would be forced to work full-time and still live in poverty. ***God of justice, hear our prayer***

And finally, we pray that we, members of your faithful community, might use our voices and our resources to build a just economy: an economy of shared prosperity where workers earn living wages and all people live lives of dignity. ***God of justice, hear our prayer.***

God of Justice – we lift up all these prayers to you in the knowledge that you are already at work amid the brokenness of our economic system and that you invite each of us to be a part of your holy work of justice. God we offer to you these prayers today – both spoken aloud and those in our hearts – in the hope that together we might be the people you have called us to be, reflecting your compassion, mercy and justice in all that we do. In your many holy names we pray – **Amen.**

http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org/website%20docs/Church_Covenant_Service.pdf

Gracious God, when we do not listen for your word in the voice of others,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When we neglect or misuse the gifts you have given us,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When we do not love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When we prefer our needs to those of our neighbours,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When our trade is built on power and not on justice,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When the earth's bounty is used to satisfy greed rather than need,

All: forgive us and renew us.

When we fail to share the Good News with the poor,

All: forgive us and renew us.

Sisters and brothers, God calls us to action on behalf of the poor. Let us, then, make a covenant with each other and with God to respond to his call in everything we do, and wherever Christ leads us.

To take up this covenant means that we are content that Christ directs us and that Christ alone is our reward.

Christ calls us to fairness and justice in many different ways. Some ways are easy and require little effort or personal sacrifice, but others are difficult and will mean us having to change what we buy and where we shop, and to go without ourselves.

Some ways will bring us praise from those around us and win us admiration, but others may bring criticism and make us unpopular, when we raise our voice for the voiceless, when we call for justice for the poor.

Some ways we will find interesting and absorbing and will play to our natural strengths, but others we will find tedious and a chore.

In some of these ways we may please both Christ and ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Yet we know that we have the power to be able to act in all these ways because Christ inspires and strengthens us, and because we know that he has no hands or feet on earth but ours. If justice is to be done, it is we who are called to do it.

Therefore, let us make this covenant with God our own, giving ourselves anew and relying on his promises and his grace.

Loving Lord, since you have called us through Christ to share in this covenant, we will take on this duty with joy. For whatever we do for the least of our sisters and brothers, we do it for you.

We are no longer our own, but yours.

All: I am no longer my own but yours.

Call me and open my eyes to the injustice around me, the unfairness around me and the poverty around me; call me to dare to change my lifestyle, my habits and my outlook for you.

Call me to strive for fairness and justice in everything I do, not just in words, but in actions; not just locally, but globally.

Let me change myself for you, and so change the world for you.

I freely and wholeheartedly commit myself to this duty, knowing that in everything you will give me your inspiration, strength and grace.

Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it.

Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven.

Amen.

Prayer

Living God, we give thanks for the work of Fair Trade organizations; for those whose vision and determination led to the setting up of these organizations; for those whose support and commitment has helped the fair trade movement to grow and flourish; and for those whose skill and advocacy keeps us alert to the continuing demand for trade justice and to the cry of the poor. Sustain and bless them in their work through the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, we pray. Lord, help us to put on the full armour of God as we seek to fight poverty through trade. Give us the courage, wisdom, discernment, grace and strength as we confront, challenge, engage with and overcome injustice and unrighteousness in your name. Give us the voice to speak for the voiceless and the grace and empowering to live out what we believe. Keep before us that vision of a world freed from the scandal of poverty, where trade is just and people and communities can flourish. Help us to live what we teach and not to grow weary in serving your kingdom and embracing your call upon our lives, alone and together.

http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org/Main%20pages/FTchurch_action_guide2009.pdf

Reflection A reflection on Proverbs 31 v.8–9 Proverbs 31 v.8–9 tells us: ‘Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.’ To those who want to speak up, stand up. Be visible to the world around you, guide the world through your actions and let your voice be heard throughout the chaos of life. Do not be complacent about injustice, but be angry. Campaign for change and yearn for justice. Join together in a passionate communion and ask God for strength, as the gospel of Luke says: ‘For nothing is impossible with God’. Pray that through Fairtrade, impoverished farmers can build stability in their own lives, that together we may tip the balance in favour of the poor, that they may see a road out of poverty. Do not be discouraged by failure, but use your energy to persevere. Lord, as in all that we aspire to do, the spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Help us therefore to keep you at the centre of our actions for justice and to continually pray for your strength and guidance to make change happen. Let us not forget that to defend the rights of the poor and needy is your will, therefore we pray that through us may your will be done.

Caroline Hughesdon, Fairtrade Foundation and prayers Fairtrade Foundation, 3rd Floor, Ibex House 42–47 Minories, London, EC3N 1DY T: +44 (0)20 7405 5942 F: +44 (0)20 7977 0101 fairtrade.org.uk Designed and produced by Forster. Photography: © Sue Atkinson, © Janet Davies, © Fairtrade Foundation, © Simon Rawles, © Valerie Gill, © Zed Nelson, © Andy Aitchison, © Naomi Kranhold, © Diocese of London, © Sharon Mitchell This booklet is printed on recycled paper

Reflections For more prayers and reflections for

Prayers

God of justice, God of the poor grant us
energy, resolve and perspective to challenge
the injustice we see before us. In the presence
of God, in the light of the world, we commit
ourselves to this task:
Speak out for those who cannot speak, defend the rights of the poor.
We will.

Speak out with fairness and make your views heard, defend the rights of the poor.
We will.

Speak out on behalf of the silenced and voiceless, defend the rights of the poor.
We will.

We will defend the rights of the poor. We will speak out, we will speak out.

Amen

Based on Proverbs 31:8-9

Tender God, with arms stretched out
enfolding each one of us in divine love,
mend our broken hearts, where we fail to love,
and where we fail to act
to resolve injustice.

Amen

God of all, you know the desperation
of living with hunger.

You have felt the pain

of living with thirst.

You see the devastation

of people dying.

Come among us,

powerful God, bring change

within us.

Amen

Rachel Halsall, Mothers' Union

<http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org/website%20docs/prayerspoems.pdf>

Help us Lord...

Help us Lord...

As we stand together...

for the ideals and practice of fair trade

for the welfare of grassroots craft workers

Help us Lord...

As we stand together...
against child labor
against the exploitation of craft workers, farmers and growers.

Help us Lord...

As we stand together for fair business.

(Based on Traidcraft 21st birthday reflections from Moon Sharma, Tara Projects, India.)

Thank you Lord...

Small producers have benefited with Fair Trade. Better and sustained incomes from fair trade have brought real change in the quality of life. The enabling process has made for a remarkable growth in skills.

But real growth for the producers has been in the intangibles, learning and evolving, a sense of belonging and togetherness.

(Based on Traidcraft 21st birthday reflections from Shabbi Kohli, Sasha (SSA), India.)

A life to the full

Generose Suyao works as a capiz worker for Saffy in the Philippines, which is a Traidcraft supplier. She says she has been helped "to face the real challenge of life through skill training programmes and value formations... Saffy is not a venue of luxurious life, but a life to the full that is blessed with Christian principles and living faith."

A little of God's wonder

Salay in the Philippines provides some of the beautiful handmade paper products which are sold by Traidcraft. One of Salay's paper makers sends this message: "When I make these sheets my heart swells with the fulfilment of creation. It's only paper but it is also me! And when I hand you this to keep and enjoy, a little of me is with you; a little of God's wonder I give to you!"

Making the Connection

Think of the difference fair trade brings,
the dignity of wages for work that is valued.
Pride in the history of learning to grow,
to carve, to stitch: that sense of purpose.
Think of the power of a coffee bean,
the taste of satisfaction. Crops grown,
enjoyed by others, appreciated,
giving the pleasure of making plans.
Think of the fingers that made that stitch,
weaving us together, thread to thread,
touch upon touch, smile meeting smile.
Imagine the dream and feel it taking shape.

Think of connecting hope with reality,
 one world with another, lives and hearts
 and voices in a joyful celebration.
 Rejoice in the difference fair trade brings.

Fiona Ritchie Walker

<http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org/Main%20pages/prayerandworship.htm>

“I tell you, if your justice goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven” Matt 5: 20

God’s justice is done when arbitration is transformed by reconciliation; when people become more than objects of desire, manipulation and profit; when poverty is confronted by asking, not how much the poor require, but how much the rich need; when the goods of the earth are looked upon, not as sources of private profit, but as sacraments of divine and human inter-communication. As and when such things occur, then God’s justice is done, and there the kingdom of God becomes manifest. For the justice of God is the kingdom of God.

Mark Searle: Serving the Lord with Justice

‘The fields of the poor may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it all away’ Proverbs 13:23

<http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org/website%20docs/prayingforchange.pdf>

Lord, you know that we long to see your justice and peace reign in the world. Please touch the hearts of all those who can make a difference.