



**A Liturgy to Celebrate! Going to Work
Week Five of 2016 Christian Education Season
September 4, 2016
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Preparation for the Sunday:

- *Locate a copy of the song "Celebration" by Kool and the Gang to play as a gathering song for worship each Sunday of the CE Season. You may not want to play the entire song since it is about four minutes long and repeats.*
- *Ask your worship committee or a creative bunch of folks to decorate the worship area with items of work and word strands. You may want to decorate the altar or communion table with items representing various jobs of people in the church such as a hard hat, a stethoscope, teacher items, a Bible, etc. To make it even more festive looking, make some word strands to hang from the ceiling, on light fixtures, or somewhere they will show up well. Cut out letters that spell out vocations/jobs and tape them onto a thin string. If you can, borrow a die cut machine to easily cut out the letters. Recruit a member who scrapbooks to get these done. You may also want to provide nametags for people to write their vocation on and wear during the service.*
- *Well before this Sunday, ask some members to go to the workplaces of church members to take pictures of them in their work setting. Then call on your creative persons to put together a video celebrating Labor Day and show it before worship gets started.*
- *Look through the Additional Activities at the end of this liturgy and decide which of these you will do. Make plans to do them and gather materials as needed. You will also need to publicize and recruit people to help you with them so leave plenty of time to do so.*

Call to Worship

*If you have a copy of *Doorways to the Soul*, edited by Elisa Davy Permain, you might want to read "The Buried Treasure" (page 29).*

If not, use the following:

Leader: Leviticus tells us "You have six days when you can do your work, but the seventh day of each week is holy because it belongs to me."

This is a day of celebration and worship, a time of rest from your work.

People: O God, you have given us the Sabbath to worship and praise you.

Leader: Ecclesiastes says "We were meant to enjoy our work, and that's the best thing we can do. We can never know the future."

People: O God, you have given us gifts to use to sustain our lives and fulfill our needs.

Leader: Matthew tells us "But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what God wants, Then the other things will be yours as well."

People: O God, you have given us a calling to serve others before ourselves.

Leader: 2 Corinthians says "God has been kind enough to trust us with this work. That's why we never give up?"

People: O God, you have given us the Good News to believe and to share.

Leader: All through the scriptures, God speaks of the work given to humanity.

And we are asked to be faithful, joyful, and diligent in it.

People: O God, give us your strength to toil at your work until we at last rest with you.

All: Amen.

Call to Confession

Our failure to recognize and appreciate the gifts God bestows on us has separated us from Jesus Christ. Our failure to appreciate the people God has chosen to put in our path has separated us from Jesus Christ and has divided us, his servant people. So God calls us to repent and confess our sins before God and with our fellow Christians gathered here in community together. Let us with one voice confess our sins to God.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

O Holy one, we confess that all of our failures have been caused by our failure to have faith in you, our unwillingness to be guided by your work, and our timidity in following your example of love. Because we have not trusted you to deliver us, we have often lost the power to deliver others from oppression. Because we have not lived in obedience to the demands of the Gospel, we have forfeited the power to call others into obedience. Because we have not manifested your love within our own communities, we have been unable to serve as agents of reconciliation for the world. God, we are imprisoned by our powerlessness apart from you.

Forgive us, God. Cleanse our thoughts and hearts, heal our shame. Bring us back to faith in Jesus Christ. Restore in us obedience to your word. Manifest in us your perfect love. Fill us afresh with your Hope Spirit and power. Amen.

*—adapted, Sun Ai Lee, from *The Gifts We Bring*, v.3, Ecumenical Stewardship Center*

Assurance of Pardon

We work for so many things in this world and yet we do not have to work for the forgiveness and mercy and grace that God has bestowed on us in this act of confession. Friends, believe the good news—in Christ Jesus we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Children's Message

Read the book Edward the Emu by Sheena Knowles. If you do not own this book, this is a great opportunity to buy it for yourself or for your church's nursery or library. After reading it, you may want to make the following points:

- Today the scripture is talking about accepting people as they are, not as who they may have been and to allow them to use the gifts they have since God gives us all those gifts.
- In this story, Edward is not very happy with himself or his life. In fact, he thinks it is very boring. He decides that being a seal would be fun. And it was for a while, but then he got tired of that. So maybe the lion was the best animal to be. But then someone said they liked the snakes best. So maybe he would be a snake.
- Finally, one of the visitors to the zoo said that they emus were really the best animal to be at the zoo and Edward was both surprised and happy. Someone liked the emus the best! Hallelujah! And Edward decided that he would be an emu again tomorrow, but what happened when he got back to his place in the zoo? There was another emu in his place. They looked at each other for awhile and decided that they, Edward and Edwina, could both live and work together just fine because they were being who God made them to be.
- Sometimes we get bored being our same old selves. We don't want to do the same things we have always done. And it's ok to do some different kinds of things. It really important to recognize the things that we are really good at—we call them gifts in the Church—these are things that God has given us to make us special. It wouldn't do for everyone to be exactly the same and do exactly the same things. That would be boring and wouldn't be what God would want for us. So let's tell others what things they are good at. That might help them decide what kind of work they want to do when they grow up.
- Then pray something like this: God, we thank you for giving us special gifts that we can use to help others. We ask that you help us listen to others when they tell us what we are good at so we can know how to do things that will please you. Thank you for the jobs you give people and for those people who do things that we need in our world. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

O send thy Spirit, Lord, Now unto me,
That he may touch my eyes, and make me see:

Show me the truth concealed within this word,
And in thy book revealed I see the Lord. Amen.

—“*Break Thou the Bread of Life,*” Mary A. Luthbury, *Public Domain*

Scripture Possibilities for the Sermon

- Philemon 1:1-21—Paul is making a plea for Onesimus who has been a slave but now comes as a brother in Christ.

This scripture is an opportunity for the pastor to talk about the work that we do with many different people in many different places and the opportunity we have to treat all like siblings.

This day is a time for all of the church to celebrate those who have been able to retire and to be in prayer for those who are without jobs. Be sure to take advantage of this time.

Bidding Prayer

Before you begin, tell the congregation that during the prayer you are going to raise up different areas for which to pray. At that time, ask them to silently lift up these people or situations.

God of all good gifts, the gift of being able to labor, the gift of being able to provide for our basic needs, the gift of being amidst a community of loving Christians, we praise you and thank you for all that we have and all that we are. We know that not all situations are as you would have them to be and so we lift them up to you and ask that you work your will in them:

...for those in our world who cannot work for what they need
...for those in our country who live below the poverty line
...for those in our communities and families that are not able to find jobs
...for our government officials and politicians who can work for better opportunities
...for those living without the support and love of families and friends
...for those so depressed that they are barely hanging onto life
...for those who are celebrating being in just the right place or just the right job
...for those who feel you raising them up and encouraging them to do courageous things

(Add other areas of prayer particular to your church community.)

Bless all these O God for whom we pray and those for whom we have forgotten to pray but need your loving hand. Touch them all and give them the peace that passes all understanding. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you intend to show the vocation video (see additional activities below), you may want to do it here.

Invitation to the Offering

We work hard for money to buy the things we need: to put food on the table, to clothe ourselves, to put a roof over our heads. We are blessed with many things and are asked by God to give a portion of those gifts to the church so others may also have the things they need. With grateful hearts bring your tithes and offerings to the altar of the Lord.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We humans toil on this earth O God. Sometimes we get ahead and other times we fall behind. We ask that you use these gifts that we bring to you this day. Bless them. Break them. And use them to feed and clothe and house those who are in need. Jesus gave us all and we bring back but a little. But what we bring represents who we are and what we do. Bless us. Break us. And use us to do your will in the world. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

Go out into the world to Celebrate! Celebrate the work that you do!
Celebrate the chance to use our bodies and minds and spirits to do what you want us to do!
Celebrate the relationships we have through our labors!
As you celebrate know that God is there to protect you,
Jesus Christ is there to grant you kindness,
And the Holy Spirit is there to give you rest at the end of a long hard day. Go in peace!

Additional Activities

- **Job Fair**—Hold a traditional job fair in your congregation inviting companies to come and meet people and talk about the job opportunities they have available. Or you may want to have Church Job Fair where you celebrate different kinds of jobs and invite members to have their own “booth” or display telling about what they do and what kinds of opportunities they may have in the future. This can be a great intergenerational event especially for youth who are looking toward careers for their future. You may give members a set time for them to speak so everyone gets a chance to learn about everyone’s job. Be sensitive to those who may be without a job at the time. This may even be a chance for them to tell what their experience is so others can help them make connections in the job world.
- **Vocation video**—This video was inspired by Volunteers Exploring Vocation and produced by The Fund for Theological Education. The video is called “Vocation 101: What is Vocation?” and can be found on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihnzFH2L818>. This short video can be shown as a part of the worship service or at the beginning of a fellowship time, etc. Be creative with how you can use it. You may want to write up some discussion questions to lead groups such as high school seniors, adults who are about to retire or those who are without a job at the moment to discuss in a deeper way.

- **Job Continuing Education**—Look into holding classes at your church for those persons who are without jobs and want to work at “retooling” their skills for broader prospects. You might get in touch with a local university or community college or employment agency to see how you can get started. This is a good way to utilize your church building at times when it is not being used and helping the community at the same time.