

LABOR *in the* Pulpits

Speaking Out for Worker Justice

LABOR DAY

ORGANIZING KIT AND

WORSHIP RESOURCES

A joint project of

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTERFAITH COMMITTEE FOR WORKER JUSTICE

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits and working conditions for workers, especially low-wage workers.

ABOUT THE AFL-CIO

The AFL-CIO works to provide a strong voice for working families on the job, in our communities, in government and in the changing global economy. The federation—with 61 national union affiliates, more than 500 central labor councils and area federations and 51 state labor federations—is committed to building a movement of workers for economic justice through organizing, bargaining and political, legislative and community campaigns in coalition with community, civil rights and religious organizations.

A N O P E N L E T T E R

from Our Directors

Dear Friend,

As we enter into another Labor Day and celebrate the contributions of all workers to society, the religious community and the union movement have a once-a-year opportunity to focus attention on the needs of working families.

The *Labor in the Pulpits* program enables us to reach a broad base of people in congregations with a message about values the religious and labor communities share: all work enhances us collectively and merits respect, justice on the job and wages and benefits that support families and build strong communities.

Most people in the religious community are deeply concerned about poverty, low-income workers, immigrants, workplace justice and wage disparities. Our challenge is to create a message appropriate for congregations and one that lifts up all workers while highlighting the need for good jobs and a voice at work. We encourage *Labor in the Pulpits* organizers to:

- Recruit workers to tell their stories about working families' struggles in today's economy and the importance of making faithful voices heard in our nation and communities.
- Identify groups of workers who have lost jobs and health care, workers who are seeking better lives by forming unions in your community and workers whose rights are under attack because of their race, ethnicity or immigrant status.
- Encourage workers to speak to their own congregations to figure out common ways in which congregants can help specific community struggles.
- Consider how well or poorly public services at the local, state and national levels are meeting the needs of working poor families.

As workers tell their stories, we can educate congregations about the connections between faith and work.

We are excited by the potential that *Labor in the Pulpits* provides for the religious community and the union movement to form relationships and work together. Through local AFL-CIO central labor councils, unions have been energized by the AFL-CIO's Union Cities initiatives to strengthen ties with all sectors of the community. AFL-CIO state federations also have been successful in creating vital links to the community. In the 60 communities where there are interfaith committees or labor-religion coalitions affiliated with the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ), these groups will help organize the *Labor in the Pulpits* program.

The materials contained in this packet describe how you can institute *Labor in the Pulpits* within local congregations. The first two sections describe the program. The last section offers materials that can be used by union presenters, clergy, lay leaders and congregations in worship services. At the back of this booklet, you will find copies of bulletin inserts and readings that congregations may print. These also can be downloaded from the NICWJ website at www.nicwj.org and

from the AFL-CIO website at www.aflcio.org/pulpits. If you have questions, contact Kristi Sanford at the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (773-728-8400) or Josh Cazares at the AFL-CIO (202-637-5351).

We urge you to take advantage of the *Labor in the Pulpits* program this Labor Day to establish new or reaffirm ongoing relationships between the religious community and the union movement to achieve economic and social justice in the workplace. Now is the time to be doers of the word.

In peace and solidarity,



Kim Bobo
Director, National Interfaith Committee
for Worker Justice



Marilyn Sneiderman
Director, Field Mobilization, AFL-CIO

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FAITH, JUSTICE, LABOR DAY

and Beyond

Labor Day weekend provides a unique opportunity to educate the religious community about unions and provides union members with a deeper appreciation of the close ties between religion and labor. The AFL-CIO central labor council or AFL-CIO state federation, which represent working families at the local and state levels, or individual congregations can initiate a *Labor in the Pulpits* program simply by following the steps outlined in this booklet and utilizing the resource materials provided.

Organize a *Labor in the Pulpits* Program

Each Labor Day, in cities across the country, interfaith and ecumenical organizations, local religious leaders and central labor councils work together to recruit union leaders and congregations to participate in *Labor in the Pulpits*. The program places union leaders and workers as guest speakers in congregations to speak out about their faith, justice in the workplace and workers' freedom to join a union. There are many scriptural references to workers' rights that are the basis for those statements (see page 31).

Starting in 1996 as a pilot program in Chicago, the *Labor in the Pulpits* program grew to include more than 37 cities in just three years. Last year, union speakers addressed an estimated 100,000 congregants at more than 700 services in more than 140 cities around the nation.

The goals of *Labor in the Pulpits* are to educate congregations about connections between faith and work, inspire new friendships between the religious community and unions, present congregations with opportunities for acting on the social teachings of their faith groups and give union members a deeper understanding of their faiths in action. In most congregations, speakers deliver a sermon. In others, speakers share a message after the Mass or service. Each congregation can determine what is most appropriate.

***Labor in the Pulpits* Is a Catalyst for Cooperation**

Each year, members of congregations are inspired by the reflections of union speakers, while union members gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between their

faith and work. The *Labor in the Pulpits* program has served as a catalyst for closer cooperation between religion and labor in many cities and serves as a concrete step to establish ongoing relationships by the central labor council with the local religious community.

These *Labor in the Pulpits* relationships with the religious community can help central labor councils fulfill one of the objectives of the AFL-CIO's Union Cities initiative for building community coalitions.

Religious Community and Unions Working Together

Labor in the Pulpits demonstrates ways the religious community and unions can work together to achieve social and economic justice in their community and emphasizes their common values. The program brings together members of the religious community and leaders of the central labor council or state federation to discuss and plan *Labor in the Pulpits*, either on a congregational level or through a broader, interfaith approach, and serves as an important bridge between religion and unions.

Even if religious leaders and the central labor council or state federation are unable to start a *Labor in the Pulpits* program this year, congregations and clergy can use the sample bulletin inserts, sermon notes and special prayers provided in the resources section of this booklet. Local clergy might consider focusing Labor Day weekend worship services or religious education classes on workplace justice concerns, share their program ideas with the central labor council or state federation and invite representatives of the central labor council or state federation to attend. A number of local congregations and the central labor council or state federation could work together to plan an interfaith Labor Day service. (Contact information is printed on page 47, and the resources section provides a sample interfaith service.)

A central labor council or state federation can initiate a *Labor in the Pulpits* program by identifying union leaders who are members of local congregations and asking them to approach their congregations with information about the program. A meeting with interested clergy members then can be arranged and the program mutually discussed. Again, the resources section of this booklet

contains a letter that can be addressed to local religious leaders and also provides a sample form that can be used to survey union leaders and central labor council delegates about their congregational membership. If the central labor council or state federation is planning a Labor Day event, representatives of the religious community could be invited to participate, address the gathering or offer an invocation or closing prayer.

The Time to Start Is Now

Interfaith and ecumenical groups, local congregations and central labor councils can begin to develop Labor Day programs, even on a limited basis, this Labor Day and then build on these programs in future years. The time to start is now, and the resources provided in this booklet will give you the tools with which to work.

Here's What Some Participants from Around the Country Have to Say About *Labor in the Pulpits*

"I had a lot of positive feedback from people in my parish, which kind of surprised me. I'm still getting compliments weeks after my presentation. People really did welcome it." Cathy Cody, South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, Office and Professional Employees Local 28, speaker at Visitation Catholic Church, Des Moines, Iowa

"We had a wonderful speaker from AFSCME. I believe the Labor Day program is a special opportunity to impress upon people a union's special role, inspired by religious faith, to exercise the right to organize and bargain collectively." Rabbi Robert Marx, Congregation Hakafa, Chicago

"The participation of the labor union representative in worship services over Labor Day weekend enhanced the understanding of the true meaning of the holiday. It also served as a powerful reminder of the historic ties of the faith communities to the causes of justice in the workplace, the dignity of human labor and the inherent dignity of workers." Rev. Wayne Riggs, Plymouth Congregational Church, San Diego

"I think the more we get out to local congregations through programs like *Labor in the Pulpits*, the more people are going to see that we have so much in common when it comes to social and economic justice." Lindsay Brown, Central Arkansas Labor Council, Painters and Allied Trades Local 424, speaker at Hunter United Methodist Church, Little Rock, Ark.

"Our first year far exceeded our expectations. Eighteen congregations participated, and we gained front-page headlines emphasizing the faith community's response to workers' rights." Rev. C.J. Hawking, United Methodist Pastor, Bloomington, Ind.

"*Labor in the Pulpits* helps to highlight the tie between faith and our work life, a linkage that is crucial to a healthy spirituality. This message should be preached not only around Labor Day but be a theme throughout the year." Rev. Ed Boyle, S.J., St. Angela Catholic Church, Boston

"*Labor in the Pulpits* is a special opportunity to reflect on common goals of religion and labor and to consider how we can work together to build a just society." Barbara Augenstein, administrator, St. Benedict the Moor Parish, Milwaukee

O R G A N I Z I N G

*a Labor in the Pulpits Program***Make the Decision**

Do you have sufficient commitment to move forward?
To answer this question you will need:

A commitment by the central labor council and state federation to recruit speakers and assign someone to work with religious leaders on matching speakers to congregations and arranging a training program. The resources section of this booklet includes the phone numbers of AFL-CIO regional offices and the areas they cover. By calling the appropriate regional office for your area, you can obtain the name and phone number of the central labor council or state federation and appropriate contact person in your local area.

A commitment by a local Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (see contact list on pages 47–50) to recruit congregations. If a committee does not exist in your area, contact a broad-based religious organization (such as a Council of Churches) or a handful of religious leaders from diverse religious traditions. If you are working with individuals instead of an organization, seek participation from people with key positions, such as the Catholic diocese social action director, a Jewish community council social action leader, a United Methodist Conference church and society chair or the local president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Set Manageable Goals

Set a goal of placing speakers in five, 10, 15 or more congregations. Work out the difficulties the first year in order to reach larger numbers of congregations next year.

Recruit Congregations

Recruiting congregations to participate is like all recruiting: It is best done personally.

The central labor council, state federation and religious organizations can send out recruitment letters to clergypersons, but most congregations will decide to participate because someone personally talked with a member of the clergy or key members of a social action committee.

The most effective way to recruit a significant number of congregations and to build relationships with key leaders

is to work through the appropriate staff or volunteer leadership. One approach is to convene a meeting with key religious social action leaders—for example, the social action director for the Catholic diocese, the president of the Black Ministerial Association, staff for the Jewish Federation or the president of Church Women United. Who is invited to an initial meeting will vary by community. Check with friends in the religious community for advice. If possible, be certain the religious leaders invited represent a variety of faith bodies: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and other groups that are significant in your community. If there have been some strong religious allies in support of labor struggles in the community, be sure to invite them to a planning meeting. In some cases, you might even want to start with them.

At the planning meeting, review the basic outline of the program and ask everyone present to commit themselves to recruiting a specific number of congregations. For example, the social action director for the Catholic diocese might agree to recruit five Catholic parishes to participate. This kind of personal recruitment by a faith body is very effective. (See sample fliers and forms in the resources section.)

If the central labor council is initiating *Labor in the Pulpits*, a survey of where union leaders and central labor council delegates are members of congregations can be conducted, and this can be used as the basis for beginning outreach. A letter can be sent to the local pastor about the program; the union leader or delegate who is a member of the congregation can follow up. A meeting with religious leaders who agree to participate should be arranged to plan the program and consider other congregations that might be approached. A state federation can utilize the same approach by surveying executive council members and affiliates. (A sample survey form and invitation letter can be found in the resources section of this booklet.)

Recruit Speakers

Not all workers and union leaders initially feel comfortable speaking to a congregation. The central labor council or state federation can assure union speakers they will be provided sample presentations and training for how to make a

presentation. (See the sample outline and presentations in the resources section.) Be sure to include workers who are in a current organizing drive to be part of your *Labor in the Pulpits* program. This will personalize the struggles workers face while trying to organize a union. Some pastors, ministers and rabbis like to recruit workers and leaders from their own congregations to speak.

Labor leaders who spoke at services in past years were pleased with the positive way they were received. Many were nervous ahead of time but found the experiences rewarding. Speakers at services one year often agree to speak again the next year and help recruit other presenters. Recruiting for the first year may be the hardest!

The easiest way to recruit speakers is to ask each union involved with the central labor council to agree to provide a specific number of speakers. State federations can use the same approach. Focus on unions with current or recent organizing campaigns so you can find workers with personal stories to share. Again, like most organizing, the most effective recruitment is done personally. Sending out a letter will only obtain a limited number of speakers. Personally calling the same number of people will generate many more. Once speakers agree to participate, they should be encouraged to take part in a training session. (See sample recruitment letters and response forms in the resources section.)

Match Congregations and Speakers

Don't wait until the last minute. Begin matching speakers to congregations as soon as possible to be sure you have an appropriate number. You would not want to deny congregations a speaker because you didn't recruit enough, nor would you want to recruit more speakers than needed. However, a number of speakers should be recruited as alternates in case a speaker gets ill or a congregation requests one at the last minute.

Because some congregations have more than one service on the day of worship, you will need to decide whether one person will speak at all of the services or different people will speak. If you have enough speakers, it is better to involve more people to expand the number of persons involved in the program.

Some of the factors to consider for matching union speakers and congregations are:

- **Languages other than English:** What language is needed for the service and which speaker is fluent in that language? If a speaker is not fluent in the domi-

nant language of the congregation, can an interpreter be found?

- **Faith tradition:** Workers and union leaders tend to be most comfortable speaking in congregations with which they are familiar. Whenever possible, match a speaker with his or her own congregation. Do the best you can to place Catholics in Catholic congregations, United Methodists in United Methodist congregations, etc.
- **Geography:** Avoid asking people to drive long distances unnecessarily.

Contact Speakers and Congregations

Once a match has been made, contact the speaker and the congregation. Urge the speaker to call the pastor, rabbi or imam as soon as possible.

Prepare the Speakers

Many speakers will be unsure about what to say in their presentations. Consider hosting a training session for speakers led by the religious leaders who helped recruit congregations and the central labor council or state federation. (Remember, sample presentations are provided in the resources section.)

Ask the religious leaders to plan the training session. They may consider meeting in small groups divided by faith background. For example, a rabbi might meet with all speakers assigned to synagogues. (A sample survey form and invitation letter can be found in the resources section of this booklet.)

SAMPLE ITEM FOR A CONGREGATION NEWSLETTER OR BULLETIN

Guest Labor Day Speaker

On [the Friday, Saturday or Sunday before Labor Day], we will join with congregations across the nation in the annual *Labor in the Pulpits* program. Nationally co-sponsored by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the AFL-CIO, this is an opportunity to educate ourselves about the union movement and reflect on the true meaning of Labor Day.

[Name of speaker] will join us from [name of central labor council or state federation] on [date] to speak on what it means to be a person of faith and a union member.

Promote Your Program

Promoting to the Media

One of the goals of *Labor in the Pulpits* is to reach a wider audience with a message of the crises facing working people and the concerns of the religious community. We encourage you to use the sample news release in the resources section as a model for explaining the program to your local newspaper's religion or community news editor. Mail the news release to media contacts in early August, about a month before Labor Day, and follow up with a telephone call a few days later.

Emphasize that your activity is part of a growing national movement among religious congregations and unions. Please feel free to have reporters contact the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice for background information and a national perspective.

Promoting *Labor in the Pulpits* Within Congregations

Ask religious leaders to start placing *Labor in the Pulpits* information in their bulletins or newsletters several weeks before Labor Day. Ask them to include the sample announcement on page 4 in their bulletins and newsletters as well.

Promoting *Labor in the Pulpits* Within the Central Labor Council or State Federation

The central labor council should do a mailing, e-mail or blast fax to its delegates and include a list of union speakers along with the congregations where they will be speaking. The announcement should include the list of congregations with addresses and times of the presentations. Union members should be urged to attend these services. State federations can do the same with executive council members and affiliates.

When possible, an announcement about *Labor in the Pulpits* also should appear in the newsletters and on the websites of the central labor council, state federation and local unions. An article reporting on *Labor in the Pulpits* also can be placed in publications and on websites after the event.

Evaluation, Follow-Up and Next Steps

Participating in *Labor in the Pulpits* can initiate new, long-term relationships and a stronger commitment to improving the lives of workers.

- **Evaluation:** You will want to learn what worked and what didn't work in order to conduct a more effective program next year. Seek suggestions and comments from all speakers and all religious leaders whose congregations participated in the program. The best way to get constructive suggestions is to call everyone involved and ask a standard set of open-ended questions. An evaluation questionnaire can be found in the resources section. It is highly recommended everyone involved be called and asked the survey questions instead of just receiving the comments of participants by mail. It takes a bit more time but produces better results.
- **Follow-up:** Every speaker and every congregation that participates should receive a follow-up thank-you note from the conveners of the program, usually the president of the central labor council or state federation

Promotional Checklist

- Send the bulletin inserts and a news announcement to the congregations a few weeks before Labor Day.
- If you have Internet access, check the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice's website for the Labor Day bulletin board at www.nicwj.org.
- Adapt the sample news release for the religious affairs pages of local newspapers.
- Send the news release to area religious newspapers or newsletters, including denominational papers.
- Place announcements in the newsletters and websites of the central labor council, state federation and local union.
- Announce *Labor in the Pulpits* at central labor council and state federation meetings.
- Send a mailing or e-mailing to central labor council delegates with a list of congregations that are participating in *Labor in the Pulpits*. Ask that announcements be made at local union meetings about these events, inviting union members to attend. State federations can do similar mailings or e-mailings to executive council members and affiliates.
- Promote your event on the AFL-CIO's website at www.aflcio.org/laborday.

and religious leaders. A meeting of union speakers and religious leaders should be held as soon after the event as possible to evaluate the experience and make plans for next Labor Day. If you weren't satisfied with the media coverage generated before the event, consider sending a press release immediately after Labor Day weekend summarizing the success of the program.

- **Next steps:** All leadership in congregations that participated in the program should be considered potential supporters for worker justice issues. If you have a local interfaith committee or religion-labor coalition or are planning to form one, these religious leaders are likely supporters. Call and invite them to your next meeting.

As with any organizing initiative, it is best to involve people in concrete struggles. Contact congregations early in the fall with a concrete worker campaign in which to involve them. This should be planned in consultation

with the central labor council or state federation. Pastors, rabbis and other congregational leaders are busy people, but those who have shown an interest in worker justice issues want to be involved in bringing justice to working people.

Religious leaders whose congregations participated in the *Labor in the Pulpits* program should be placed on the central labor council mailing list and kept informed about issues of importance to unions. Follow-up meetings with religious leaders and central labor council or state federation officers also should be arranged to develop ongoing relationships.

If you would like help in forming a new interfaith committee, contact the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice for assistance and contacts (773-728-8400). If the central labor council or state federation is interested in forming a religion and labor outreach committee, contact the AFL-CIO for assistance (202-637-5351).

I D E A S

for Additional Activities

In addition to *Labor in the Pulpits*, consider planning some other activities to stimulate reflection and further action among your congregation for worker justice, as well as continuing relationships with the central labor council. After Labor Day, religious leaders and the central labor council or state federation should meet to discuss possible program ideas.

The following activities are offered as possibilities, and you certainly will think of others that best relate to your congregation's gifts and the challenges facing workers in your community.

- Focus the education lessons on worker justice and what people of faith can do. For a study booklet, contact the National Interfaith Committee at 773-728-8400 or write to the committee at 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660.
- Involve union members and other workers in your congregation by having a Bless the Tools of Work ceremony. Encourage members to bring tools that are meaningful to their work, such as a hammer, a pen or even a keyboard. Then say a special blessing over them.
- Include prayers for workers regularly during your weekly worship service. Specifically name problems in your community, as well as crises affecting workers across the United States and throughout the world.
- Select hymns and anthems that focus on justice.
- Take a special action for workers who are struggling in your community. Call your local interfaith committee (see pages 47–50), the National Interfaith Committee at 773-728-8400 or the AFL-CIO regional office (see page 47) for ideas and contact information for your central labor council.
- The central labor council can form a religion and labor outreach committee to continue developing contacts and relationships in the religious community. For ideas about outreach committee activity, contact the AFL-CIO at 202-637-5351.
- Hold a religion–labor meeting, sponsored by the central labor council or state federation and religious leaders, to discuss developing a closer working relationship. Encourage the central labor council or state federation to invite religious leaders to participate in upcoming worker justice events or other central labor council activities.
- Find out how to participate in other activities by visiting www.aflcio.org or www.nicwj.org.
- Encourage your central labor council, state federation and local congregations to work together on a community project.

For other resources offered by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, call 773-728-8400, write to the committee at 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660 or visit the website at www.nicjw.org.

R E S O U R C E S

If you are planning a *Labor in the Pulpits* program, copy the worship materials and send them at least a few weeks ahead of time to participating pastors, rabbis and imams. Provide each speaker with a copy of the presentations in the resources for speakers subsection.

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- AFL-CIO Central Labor Council *Labor in the Pulpits* Survey
- Sample Flier
- Sample Letters to Religious Leaders
- Sample Speakers' Workshop Agenda
- Checklist for Speakers
- Sample News Release
- Evaluation Form for *Labor in the Pulpits* Speakers
- AFL-CIO CLC/State Federations *Labor in the Pulpits* Activities Report Form

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- What Unions Do
- The Union Difference by the Numbers
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- Workers Want to Form Unions, but Employers Block Them
- Worker Justice Quiz

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- More Sample Presentations

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Contact Information

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- Network of Local Interfaith Groups Concerned with Labor Issues

Labor *in the* Pulpits

Speaking Out
for Worker Justice
[Insert date]

**Celebrate the sacred link between faith and work—
host union workers and leaders as guest speakers.**



On Labor Day weekend, religious congregations across the country will host union speakers to reflect on faith, work, justice and the meaning of Labor Day.

Union speakers are being recruited and trained by the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues and the Chicago Federation of Labor. Labor Day speakers receive worship materials to help them develop their presentations. Speakers will be available for services on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday before Labor Day and on Labor Day.

Resources available include prayers, bulletin and newsletter inserts, calls to worship, responsive readings and copies of presentations from previous Labor Day programs.

For more information on hosting or becoming a speaker, contact Kristi Sanford, Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660; phone: 773-728-8400.

Sample Letters to Religious Leaders

To a Faith Group Leader

Dear Reverend/Rabbi/Imam,

As summer approaches, it is my pleasure to make you aware of the Chicago-area Labor Day *Labor in the Pulpits* program. Based on the success of last year's program, the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues are preparing a larger program for this year. Because you represent or are in contact with a large number of congregations, we ask for your help in recruiting congregations for the *Labor in the Pulpits* program.

The *Labor in the Pulpits* program provides wonderful opportunities to connect religion and labor. The feedback from last year was very positive. The speakers were happy for the opportunity to speak about their work in a religious setting, and the clergy reported that the congregations found the presentations educational, inspiring and spiritually enriching. You can help by getting information to congregations. Please send the following packet of information to congregations: (1) An invitation letter (A sample invitation letter is enclosed. If you can, please send out the invitation letter on your letterhead.); (2) a flier describing the program; (3) the sign-up sheet.

I will be in touch with you soon to review this. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

To a Congregational Leader

Dear Friend,

On behalf of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, it is my pleasure to invite you and your congregation to participate in the Labor Day *Labor in the Pulpits* program. Labor Day offers a wonderful opportunity to remember God's commitment to justice in the workplace and the dignity of work. This Labor Day weekend, the Labor Day Outreach Program will recruit, train and place union speakers in congregations in the metro area. It is a chance to honor people's work and recall our religious traditions that dignify work. The Labor Day program gets people involved in the worship and connects faith with everyday life.

Please review the enclosed flier and fill out the sign-up sheet. Please keep in mind that we encourage you to help us locate people within your congregation who would like to participate in the program as speakers. Return the sign-up sheet to the Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660, or fax it to 773-728-8409. Please call Kristi Sanford at the Interfaith Committee if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sample Speakers' Workshop Agenda

[Insert date]
8:30 a.m.–10 a.m.
UNITE Hall
333 S. Ashland

8:30 a.m.

- Welcome
- Prayer
- Introductions

8:40 a.m.

- Overview
- Labor Day Speakers Program Background and Overview
- Congregation Assignments
- Speakers' Packet Walk-Through

9 a.m.

- Speaking in Congregations
- What's Important?
- What to Talk About
- Reflection on Scriptures
- Personal Stories
- Individual Questions, Concerns, etc.

10 a.m.

- Adjourn

Checklist for Speakers

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

- What time does the service start?
- At what point in or after the service will I be speaking, and how long a talk is appropriate?
- How do I get there?

2. Getting there:

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

3. Final reminders for giving your presentation:

- Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.
- Be brief.
- Be prepared.
- Talk about your own experiences. It is far more important to believe what you are saying than to be eloquent.

4. Once you have finished:

- Take a deep breath and smile!
- Greet people after the service. This is a great opportunity to chat informally with interested people.

CUT OUT AND HAND THIS SAMPLE INTRODUCTION TO THE PASTOR/RABBI/IMAM:



.....

Labor Day is an opportunity to recognize and remember God's commitment to justice. We have with us today _____, who will speak to us about faith, work and the struggles of working people to be treated with dignity. [He/she] [describe your guest speaker]

Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 28, 2003

CONTACT: Jeff Weiss, Chicago Federation of Labor, 312-222-1000

Kim Bobo, Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues, 773-728-8400

Labor in the Pulpits: 15,000 Celebrate Connection Between Faith, Labor

In celebration of Labor Day, members of the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) will speak from the pulpit to at least 15,000 worshippers in more than 100 congregations in the Chicago metropolitan area. Instead of the traditional Labor Day parade, the CFL is working with the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues (CICWI) to organize *Faith and Work*. The event, designed to renew and strengthen the historic ties between unions and religious communities, has the participation of top religious leaders, including Rabbi Bruce Elder of Congregation Hakafa, the Rev. Chuck Dahm of St. Pius Catholic Church and the Rev. Addie Wyatt of the Vernon Park Church of God.

At more than 150 religious services in the city and suburbs, union members will speak to Jewish, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant congregations on the shared connection between unions and religious values. *Faith and Work*, piloted five years ago in Chicago by the CFL and the CICWI, also will be taking place in other cities around the country.

"Labor Day weekend is about more than a parade. Labor Day is a time to celebrate working families and pay tribute to the struggle of workers to achieve social justice," said CFL President Dennis Gannon, who will be addressing the congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. "It is also time for people of all faiths to reflect on spirituality and its connections to a commitment to social justice."

Union members will address congregations across the metropolitan area, including the Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago Temple and St. James Episcopal Church. They are building upon a long history of the connection between unions and religion that extends back to the early 1900s.

"Religion and labor share a common set of values about faith and work," said CICWI Director Kim Bobo. "Labor Day weekend is the perfect time to reinforce those connections and to remember the struggles of working people to be treated with dignity."

The CFL, which is the central labor body for Cook County, includes more than 300 unions with 500,000 workers. Since 1986, the CFL has been advocating the rights and interests of working people in the workplace and in the halls of governments.

###

Every Day in America

81,378
workers lose their jobs.

14.2 million
workers are jobless, underemployed
or have given up looking for work.

43.6 million
people have no health insurance.

4,227
people file for personal bankruptcy.

12,878
workers are injured or made ill
by their jobs.

6.8 million
people are in the workforce but are
still poor.

11 million
children attend broken-down schools.

Sources, based on daily averages: U.S. Census Bureau, *Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2002*, 9/03; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *A Profile of the Working Poor, 2001*, 6/03; BLS, *Business Employment Dynamics: Third Quarter 2003*, 5/20/04; BLS, *The Employment Situation: May 2004*, 6/4/04; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999*, 6/00; American Bankruptcy Institute, Annual U.S. Non-Business Bankruptcy Filings by Chapter 2000–2002. Working poor: Number of people who were poor and spent 27 weeks or more in the labor force. Bankruptcy: U.S. bankruptcy estimate calculated by summing the 2002 bankruptcies for the states. The number of people filing for personal bankruptcy is based on a daily average. Job loss: Summed monthly layoffs and discharges for June–September 2003 and calculated daily average. Child poverty: Children with at least one parent who works full-time, year-round, Children's Defense Fund, www.childrensdefense.org/fs_chpov.php.

A Quick Study of How Unions Help Workers Win a Voice on the Job

What is a union? A union is a group of workers who form an organization to gain:

- Respect on the job,
- Better wages and benefits,
- More flexibility for work and family needs,
- A counterbalance to the unchecked power of employers, and
- A voice in improving the quality of their products and services.

How do people form a union? When workers decide they want to come together to improve their jobs, they work with a union to help them form their own local chapter. Once a majority of workers shows they want a union, sometimes employers honor the workers' choice. Often, the workers must ask the government to hold an election. If the workers win their union, they negotiate a contract with the employer that spells out each party's rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

Does the law protect workers joining unions? It's supposed to—but too often it doesn't. Under the law, employers are not allowed to discriminate against or fire workers for choosing to join a union. For example, it's illegal for employers to threaten to shut down their businesses or to fire employees or take away benefits if workers form a union. However, employers routinely violate these laws, and the penalties are weak or nonexistent.

What kinds of workers are forming unions today? A wider range of people than ever before, including many women and immigrants, is joining unions—doctors and nurses, poultry workers and graduate employees, home health care aides and wireless communications workers, auto parts workers and engineers, to name a few.

How do unions help working families today?

Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job—and good union jobs mean stronger communities. Union workers earn 27 percent more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union. In 2003, median weekly earnings for full-time union wage and salary workers were \$760, compared with \$599 for their nonunion counterparts. Unions lead the fight for better lives for working people, such as through expanded family and medical leave, improved safety and health protections and fair-trade agreements that lift the standard of living for workers all over the world.

What have unions accomplished for all workers?

Unions have made life better for all working Americans by helping to pass laws ending child labor, establishing the eight-hour day, protecting workers' safety and health and helping create Social Security, unemployment insurance and the minimum wage, for example. Unions are continuing the fight today to improve life for all working families in America.

What challenges do workers face today when they want to form unions?

Today, millions of workers want to join unions. The wisest employers understand that when workers form unions, their companies also benefit. But most employers fight workers' efforts to come together by intimidating, harassing and threatening them. In response, workers are reaching out to their communities for help exercising their freedom to improve their lives.

Unions guarantee rewards for hard work and initiative.

- Workers with unions earn an average 27 percent more than workers without a union.
- Seventy-five percent of union members in private industry get health benefits on the job, compared with about half of workers without unions.
- Sixty-nine percent of union members in medium and large private companies are covered by defined-benefit pensions that guarantee a benefit, compared with only 14 percent of workers without a union.

Unions help remedy discrimination in the workplace.

- Union contracts raise earnings by 33 percent for working women, 35 percent for African Americans and 51 percent for Latinos.
- Union contracts help make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally on the job.

Unions raise living standards for the whole community.

- For decades, union membership paved the way to a strong and growing middle class. As union membership declined, the gap between the wealthy and everyone else grew.
- Better wages and benefits through unions mean that more families can make it on their own in the community—and the wage and benefit floor is lifted for everyone.

- Studies show that states in which many of the workers have a union are also states with lower poverty rates, better schools and less crime.

Unions make America work better.

- Unions raise professional standards. Union workers have a say in decisions that affect the quality of the products they make and the services they deliver. Unions train more workers each year than any organization outside the U.S. military.
- Studies show that by lowering turnover rates and giving workers a voice in how work is done, unions raise productivity by 19 to 24 percent in manufacturing, 17 to 38 percent in construction and up to 16 percent in hospitals.
- Unions help make sure our nation prioritizes working people's issues—they hold corporations accountable, make workplaces safe, protect Social Security and retirement, fight for quality health care and make sure working people have time to spend with their families. If unions weren't out there fighting for these issues, who would be?

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings, January 2004*; Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Benefits in Private Industry, 2000*; U.S. Census Bureau; *Income of Households by State in 2000*; O'Leary, Kathleen and Scott Morgan, *State Rankings 2002*; Belman, Dale, "Unions, the Quality of Labor Relations, and Firm Performance," in *Unions and Economic Competitiveness*. Lawrence Mishel and Paula B. Voos, eds.

THE UNION DIFFERENCE

by the Numbers

Union workers earn higher wages and get more benefits than workers who don't have a voice on the job with a union.

Union workers' median weekly earnings:	\$760
Nonunion workers' median weekly earnings:	\$599
Union wage advantage:	27%
Union women's median weekly earnings:	\$696
Nonunion women's median weekly earnings:	\$523
Union wage advantage for women:	33%
African American union workers' median weekly earnings:	\$665
African American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings:	\$491
Union wage advantage for African Americans:	35%
Latino union workers' median weekly earnings:	\$632
Latino nonunion workers' median weekly earnings:	\$419
Union wage advantage for Latinos:	51%
Asian American union workers' median weekly earnings:	\$759
Asian American nonunion workers' median weekly earnings:	\$681
Union wage advantage for Asian Americans:	11%
Union workers with guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions:	69%
Nonunion workers with guaranteed (defined-benefit) pensions:	14%
Union pension advantage:	55 percentage points
Union workers who get health benefits:	75%
Nonunion workers who get health benefits:	49%
Union health benefits advantage:	26 percentage points
Union workers who get short-term disability coverage:	69%
Nonunion workers who get short-term disability coverage:	30%
Union disability coverage advantage:	33 percentage points
Union workers who get life insurance coverage:	82%
Nonunion workers who get life insurance coverage:	51%
Union life insurance coverage advantage:	31 percentage points

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings, January 2004*; Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employee Benefits in Private Industry, 2000*.

When workers join unions, the whole community benefits.

- By joining together in unions, working men and women have a way to solve problems and gain a say in decisions that affect their jobs, safety and security.
- Through unions, working people can help close the gap between themselves and the very wealthy. For decades, union membership paved the way to a strong, growing middle class. As fewer people had the benefits of union membership, economic disparity grew.
- Statistics show states with strong unions have higher wages, better benefits and better schools.
- When workers have a union, they make more money and are more likely to have affordable health care and retirement security—that means fewer families must depend on the community. Union workers make an average of 27 percent more than nonunion workers.
- Unions address wage inequality for women and people of color. Women and African Americans with a union make 33 percent and 35 percent more, respectively, than those without a union, and union Latinos make 51 percent more.
- Unions’ training and apprenticeship programs provide much-needed job opportunities—unions train more workers each year than any organization except the U.S. military.
- Millions of workers would join a union tomorrow, but too few will ever get that chance because employers routinely violate workers’ freedom to improve their lives through a union.
- When employers interfere in workers’ decisions about having a union, the community loses—living standards decline and income inequality grows. The community ends up paying the bills for employers’ decisions.
- When employers respect their employees’ choices, the community benefits from stronger tax bases, more stable families and healthier local economies.
- With support from the community, workers can stand up to employers that abuse their power and can bring America’s values of democracy, equality and freedom to the workplace.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings, January 2004*; U.S. Census Bureau, *Income of Households by State in 2000*; O’Leary, Kathleen and Scott Morgan, *State Rankings 2002*.

but Employers Block Them

Working people want to form unions. With a union, working people win basic rights, like a say in their job, safety and security. Unions help remedy discrimination because union contracts ensure all workers are treated fairly and equally. When there's a problem on the job, workers and management can work together as equals to solve it.

Union members negotiate for health care and pensions, and with higher wages, they can buy homes and send their children to college. Higher union wages also translate into stronger tax bases for our communities, better schools and infrastructures and healthier local economies. And when workers have a real say in their hours and working conditions, that means they can spend more quality time with their families.

Half of U.S. workers who don't already have a union say they would join one tomorrow if given the chance, according to a recent poll.

But most employers routinely block workers' right to choose a union. U.S. labor laws and international human rights treaties protect workers' right to form unions—on paper. But when U.S. workers try to exercise their rights, employers intimidate, harass, threaten and coerce them.

Instead of respecting workers' freedom of speech and freedom of association, a quarter of employers illegally fire workers for supporting a union. Fully 78 percent of employers use workers' own supervisors to pressure

workers in one-on-one meetings, and 92 percent of employers force workers to attend meetings aimed to "change" employees' minds about wanting a union, according to Cornell University scholar Kate Bronfenbrenner.

Most Americans think these employer tactics are wrong. But most—two-thirds—of the public is not aware employers engage in a war against workers hidden from public view.

The community is standing behind workers. Our communities suffer when employers prevent workers from having a voice on the job. When fewer workers in a community have a union, the standard of living for everyone falls. Wages, health care coverage and pensions decline. The gap between the rich and poor grows, corporate power goes unchecked—and democracy itself is suppressed.

Community leaders and activists—elected officials, religious leaders, civil rights groups, neighborhood organizations—are reaching out to workers, standing with them in their efforts to exercise their freedom to choose a union and to intervene with employers who block that freedom. They are building the foundation for long-term change for laws and social norms that protect workers' freedom to choose a voice on the job.

WORKER JUSTICE QUIZ

L a b o r D a y

Labor Day weekend offers us the opportunity to question how our nation is treating the workers throughout the nation. As people of faith, we have a special concern for immigrant workers, those who toil in sweatshops, and those who work but still live in poverty. Take this quiz of the facts to look at the areas of challenge for our nation.

1. How many adults work full time but earn poverty-level wages?

- a. one out of ten
- b. one out of five
- c. one out of four
- d. one out of two

2. How many Americans are without health insurance?

- a. 22 million
- b. 33 million
- c. 44 million
- c. 55 million

3. What percentage of families go into bankruptcy because of health care costs?

- a. 90 percent
- b. 50 percent
- c. 30 percent
- d. 10 percent

4. Do sweatshops exist in the United States?

- a. No
- b. In a few garment shops
- c. In ten major cities
- d. Throughout the nation

5. Why do 42 million workers say they would join unions if they could?

- a. Higher wages
- b. Health care benefits
- c. Respect on the job
- d. All of the above

6. What percentage of workers are in unions?

- a. 50 percent
- b. 27 percent
- c. 13 percent
- d. 5 percent

7. What percentage of Americans without health care lives in a household in which somebody has job?

- a. 22 percent
- b. 83 percent
- c. 67 percent

Quiz Answers

1. Full-time workers earning poverty wages: Poverty wages are those that are at minimum wage or just a bit above. Poverty wages are wages that can not lift a family out of poverty. In 2004, poverty wages are those that are annually \$18,900 or less. Even though \$18,900 is the official poverty-line guidelines for a family of four, most people believe that the government poverty-line figures are inadequate because the figures do not reflect the high costs of housing, child care and health care. Nonetheless, using this poverty-line figure, one in four workers earn poverty wages.

2. Health insurance coverage: Approximately 43.6 million Americans, primarily low-wage workers and their children, do not have health insurance. The numbers of people without health insurance coverage continues to increase each year. Eight out of ten uninsured people are in working families.

3. Bankruptcy because of health care costs: Health care costs are a major cause of approximately 50 percent of family bankruptcies. In 2002, there were 1.6 million personal bankruptcies.

4. Sweatshops: A sweatshop is a routine violator of labor laws. It is characterized by low wages, unsafe working conditions and disrespectful treatment of workers. Sweatshops often rely on immigrant workers who are viewed as more vulnerable and less likely to complain about working conditions. According to the U.S.

Department of Labor, there are large industries in the United States that are routine violators of labor laws, and many are characterized by low wages, unsafe working conditions and disrespectful treatment of workers. Industries in the United States that fit the sweatshop definitions include farm labor, landscape work, poultry and meatpacking, many nursing homes, garment factories and many restaurants. Sweatshops appear to be increasing, not declining.

5. Why workers want to be represented by unions:

Workers who are represented by unions have higher wages, better benefits and an ongoing voice in what happens at work. Although studies vary somewhat, most show union jobs pay roughly 20 percent more than nonunion jobs. The difference between union and nonunion wages is even higher for African American, Latino and women workers. Collective bargaining also makes a huge difference in workers access to decent pensions and health insurance coverage. Union workers are 53 percent more likely than nonunion workers to get health insurance benefits through their jobs and are nearly five times more likely to have guaranteed, defined-benefit pension plan coverage.

6. Percent of workers in unions: Only about 13 percent of the total workforce is represented by unions—a higher percentage in public-sector jobs and a lower percentage in private-sector jobs. Unfortunately, many workers who would like better wages, benefits and a voice in the workplace are afraid to organize unions because of the anti-union messages in the workplace. Unions are an essential element for a just democracy and an important mediating institution for many workers, especially low-wage and immigrant workers.

7. Americans without health care are in working families.

Even a full-time job does not guarantee health care coverage. More than eight in ten (83 percent) of the nonelderly uninsured lives in families where the head of the family works. Over one-half (56 percent) of working adults who lack coverage are employed full-time throughout the year. In fact, among poor nonelderly Americans, full-time workers are less likely to be insured than part-time workers and nonworkers. “Uninsured” also is becoming a household word among the middle class as well: One out of four individuals with incomes between at 300 percent to 400 percent above poverty (\$55,980–\$74,640 per year for a family of four in 2003) were uninsured over the past two years.

for Union Labor in the Pulpits Speakers

Introduction and Thanks to the Congregation

Reasons for Speaking

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

Importance of Worker Justice

- Tie Labor Day to the lectionary, other Biblical readings or the appropriate faith group statement on the freedom to organize a union.
- Refer to those included in this book.

The Importance of Unions Today

Tell a personal story of how unions have had a positive impact or how they can help reverse some of the following problems:

- Decline of earnings.
- Loss of job security.
- Job exporting or heavier work burdens.
- Loss of health care and retirement benefits.
- Increasing need for multiple breadwinners in a family just to maintain the current standard of living.
- Growing disparity of wealth.
- Unions are responsible for benefits we often take for granted, such as the eight-hour day, the end of child labor, the public school system and pensions.

- By supporting workers who are trying to form unions, congregations can put their faith into action. By urging employers to embrace ethical teachings in the workplace—and grant the freedom to freely form unions without fear of reprisals—people of faith can help restore justice in the workplace and in the economy.

Religious Communities and Unions Working Together

Corporations and unions work most effectively when they can cooperate and build together. The religious community can urge them both and help them grow in a moral context.

Some Dos and Don'ts

When you prepare to speak on faith and work this Labor Day:

Please do:

- Keep your presentation within the allotted timeframe.
- Be clear, concise and well prepared.
- Introduce yourself and clarify your relationship to labor.
- Thank the pastor, rabbi or imam.
- Use your own experience in telling of the connection between religious values and worker justice.

Please do not:

- Talk statistics.
- Use jargon.
- Speak too long.

This sample presentation can be used by Labor in the Pulpits speakers. Speakers can add personal or local examples that will illustrate the points found in the presentation or a personal testimony of their own faith in action through their work in the union movement. This sample presentation is offered as a base for building your own presentation. Speakers can use part or all of it in their own presentations. More sample presentations also can be found in this section (see page 35).

The Dignity of Work and Workers

Thank you very much, Father Pat. My name is Dave Zabor, and I'm a teacher and a parishioner here at St. Benedict's.

So, what am I doing here now? Well, at churches around the valley, and in fact throughout the country, lay people—and, in particular, members of labor unions—have been invited to speak at the services this Labor Day weekend. It's a program sponsored by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. I really want to thank Father Pat for being in the forefront of this.

When I began to prepare for speaking about the connection between faith and work and work and justice, I found I had much more material at my disposal than others who are speaking at churches of different faiths and denominations. That's because the Catholic Church has been so explicit and articulate in its support of workers.

I want to focus on two ideas today—the dignity of work and the dignity of the worker. Sometimes it's hard to find dignity in one's work. A common way of looking at work is that it's something that takes up your time while you live your real life on the side. Another current idea—an unfortunate one—is to look down on those who work and to only think how much more clever and profitable it is to generate money through the work of others.

Behind both of those interpretations of work is the idea that work is what you have to do so eventually you won't have to do it anymore. The Church teaches differently. It teaches that work is an end to itself, a sacred end to itself. Work can be holy. In doing our work, paid or unpaid, we can make our experience miserable or happy for those around us and for ourselves.

Now you're thinking—what's so sacred about scrubbing a toilet or pounding shingles or loading trucks or making beds? How we do our jobs, paid or unpaid, both in the quality in which we do them and in the manner in which we do them—that is, how we interact with others—can be holy if we do them for the greater glory of God. Colman McCarthy, a Catholic writer, has said, "We aren't called on to do great things; we are asked to do small things in a great way."

We also have the example of Christ. Scripture says that St. Joseph was a carpenter by trade (he's even known as St. Joseph the Worker). Tradition has it that Jesus was apprenticed to him. (Now would He have joined Nazareth Carpenters Local 417? We can only speculate.) We do know that He changed occupations—something more and more prevalent these days—from laborer and carpenter to preacher and teacher. Throughout His public life, He preached about human dignity, especially of the poor and the oppressed.

That brings us to the dignity of the worker. What exactly is meant by that phrase? Well, according to our Catholic bishops, the dignity of the worker means fair compensation for work. Working year-round, full time, for the new minimum wage would gross a little over \$10,000 a year. Our country has a huge number of working poor—people working full time or more and still trapped in poverty. That's a national shame. The dignity of the worker means family-friendly schedules. Jobs should pay enough that families do not have to work extraordinary hours in order to raise their families. I heard a report on NPR a few weeks ago that said that Americans are putting in more hours on the job today than possibly since the adoption of the 40-hour week. There's a joke that a low-paid worker says, "Yes, our economy is producing more jobs than ever. I have three of them."

There are a few more ways which the bishops recommended to uphold dignity of workers but probably the most significant is the right to organize. Encyclicals, pastoral letters and statements by popes and bishops throughout this century explicitly encourage labor organizations.

What has the labor movement done? As some people like to say, they're the people that gave you the weekend. Not just this weekend, but every weekend. Some other little things include the eight-hour day, the end of child

labor, pensions, sick leave, vacations and medical benefits, a working environment that is relatively safe and many other things we take for granted. All these things came through hard-earned efforts and much struggle and suffering.

But there are still challenges today. The right of people to organize into labor unions does not exist in many places throughout the world. Child labor is rampant among our trading partners. There are still worker abuses and sweatshops—even in our own country.

So what can we do? Plenty. The call to action from our Church is the one from St. James in the second reading today: “Act on this word. If all you do is listen to it, you are deceiving yourselves.”

So, as you enjoy the weekend and do life’s work—

FIRST: Try to cultivate an attitude of appreciation and even reverence for all work.

SECOND: Let’s thank and honor those in our families for their work. (Friday, my students said that we could say to our moms and dads, “Happy Labor Day. Thanks for working so hard. We appreciate it.” Wow! Imagine if we adult children could call our parents and say the same thing!)

FINALLY: Let’s support the teachings of our Church. It may mean educating ourselves as to what is happening out there, but united we can enhance our own dignity as well as that of our brothers and sisters who work.

Have a wonderful Labor Day weekend!

Dave Zabor, Teacher

Host: St. Benedict’s Catholic Church, Tempe, Ariz.

Opposing Justice

Tomorrow is Labor Day, a holiday to honor the working men and women who create and maintain our world, everything we see around us. It is also a day to honor an institution, the labor union, created by working men and women to protect their interests and give voice to their aspirations.

I speak to you as the child of a union family. My father, all my uncles and most of my neighbors when I was growing up were Steelworkers. I grew up in years when the Steelworkers union was completely transforming the life of my family, opening up possibilities for me and my sister that my mother and father had never dreamt of. Unions were strong then. Now they are weaker, and as a result, the lives of most working people in our society are

getting worse, not better. Old injustices and indignities have returned and are returning, in ways I never could have imagined as a young person growing up under the protection of a labor union. Child labor and sweatshops are not only in El Salvador, Guatemala or Indonesia, but also within a few miles of where we are this morning. People working 40 hours a week are not receiving return enough to provide the basic means of life. I speak to you today about our responsibility as Christians to oppose injustice. God instructed the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. God told Ezekiel (Ezekiel 33: 7–9), “If you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he shall die for his guilt. But I will hold you responsible for his death.” In instructing Ezekiel, God did not require us to speak out against the wicked man or to oppose him. God requires us to speak to the wicked to point out his unjust acts and to dissuade him “from his way.” The person who is unjust is in the process of losing his or her soul. Our responsibility is to save the unjust from the moral and spiritual consequences of their own acts.

Labor unions are practical instruments for opposing injustice in the workplace and in our society as a whole. If unjust employers cannot be dissuaded, unions use force—peaceful, nonviolent, economic and political action, but force nonetheless. As citizens, we should support labor unions and other institutions that fight for social justice. But as Christians, we must speak to the unjust and dissuade them from their ways.

Many employers today do not recognize their own injustices. Others do recognize that what they are doing to their workers is unfair, but they think they must do so because their competition is doing it. Few employers are evil. Only a few are unjust simply out of greed or vanity. Most of them are open to our dissuasion. Therefore, our voices as Christians can be powerful in speaking to the unjust. This is our special mission as Christians. But our voice, our suasion, is made stronger by practical instruments for fighting injustice.

Labor unions have weakened themselves over the past 20 years or so by narrowing their focus. Their ardor for opposing injustice had cooled. They looked out for their members’ interests, but they were no longer a force for social justice in our society as a whole. Sometimes they were themselves unjust. But that is changing now. Labor unions now realize that unless they are part of a broad and inclusive movement for social justice for all working people, they no longer can survive. If they exclude blacks and immigrants, if they treat or allow employers to treat

women as second-class citizens, if they allow any worker anywhere in the world to be treated as a thing rather than a full human being, they cannot survive. Unions are, therefore, reaching out to churches, calling us to increase our commitment to dissuading the unjust from their way. And they are themselves pledging to be a practical force for social justice again.

Let us begin a simple alliance around a fundamental principle of social justice in a modern society: that no one who contributes 40 hours of their labor a week, no one

who helps create and maintain our world, should be without the means of life.

Thank you.

*Jack Metzgar
Member of the American Association of University
Professors and of Communications Workers Local 189
First Congregational Church, Evanston, Ill.*

on Justice for Workers

Selected Passages from the Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis I: 26–28, 2:15, God the Creator.

Genesis 2:1–2, God rested on the seventh day.

Exodus 3:7–8, God heard the cry of the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 15:11, Open your hand to the poor and needy.

Deuteronomy 24:14–15, Don't withhold wages of poor and needy laborers, including those of "aliens."

Isaiah 30:18, God of justice.

Isaiah 32:17, Justice will bring peace.

Isaiah 58:6–8, The fast God chooses is to loosen the bonds of wickedness.

Jeremiah 21:11–12, Execute justice.

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

Jeremiah 34:8–14, Treat the alien well like God had treated the Israelites.

Amos 5:22–24, Let justice flow like a stream.

Amos 8:4–7, Woe to those who trample the needy...buying the poor for silver.

Micah 6:8, God requires us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly.

Psalms 72, God will judge people with righteousness.

Proverbs 21:13, Don't close your ears to the cry of the poor.

Ecclesiastes 4:1, God sees the oppressions that are practiced.

Selected Passages from the New Testament

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

Matthew 22:39, Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Matthew 25:31–36, The Kingdom is for those who feed the hungry, welcome strangers.

Luke 4:18–19, Anointed to preach good news to the poor.

Luke 10:27, Love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 16:19–31, Rich man who doesn't see the poor at his gate.

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

Romans 12:21, Overcome evil with good.

I Corinthians 3:6–9, Each will receive wages according to the labor of each.

I Corinthians 12:26, If one member suffers, all suffer.

Philippians 2:4, Look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

I Timothy 6:18–19, Rich people are to be generous and ready to share.

II Timothy 1:7, God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love.

II Timothy 2:6, The farmer that labors must receive the first rewards.

James 5:4, The wages of laborers kept back by fraud cry out.

CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH READINGS

for Labor Day Weekend Services

Many religious traditions have standard readings used in services. Among Christians, these readings are called lectionaries. In synagogues, there is a similar tradition of standardized readings. Which passages are read on which dates vary by year. Below are some of the traditions that use the set readings and where to find them.

Be sure to check with the leadership at the house of worship where you will be to find out if the congregation will be using a set of readings. If so, review the passages. If one or two of the passages have themes that relate to justice for workers, consider using them in your message. It is not required that your Labor Day message relate to the passages, so don't worry if the passages are unrelated to worker justice.

The **Roman Catholic Lectionary** is used by Roman Catholic churches. Find the readings at www.usccb.org/nab.

The **Revised Common Lectionary**, which can be found at <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/lectionary>, is used by various Protestant denominations including:

- The United Methodist Church
- The Presbyterian Church (USA)
- The United Church of Christ
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- The American Baptist Churches

The **Episcopal Church Lectionary** is used by The Episcopal Church. The readings can be found at www.satucket.com/lectionary.

Lots of additional lectionary reading background materials are available at www.textweek.com.

In **Jewish synagogues**, there are two standard readings. First, a passage from the Torah is read. In the course of the year, the entire Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) is read. This passage is referred to as a parshah. The weekly parshah is followed by a passage from the prophets, which is referred to as a haftarah. The readings can be found at www.jewfaq.org.

Possible Worker Justice Themes from the Readings

Psalm 45: Verses 6 and 7 describe a God whose royal scepter is a scepter of equity. They honor God who loves righteousness and hates wickedness. The word "righteousness" is the same word as justice. It is right relationships between people. Labor Day is an appropriate time to lift up a God of equity and justice.

Deuteronomy 4: The verses admonish the Israelites to obey God's laws in order to make a great nation. Many of the rules of fairness and justice, especially toward orphans, widows and immigrants, are appropriate guides for the nation today.

Psalm 15: This short Psalm has strong words about doing what is right, speaking the truth, despising wickedness and fearing God. This passage offers guidelines for just relationships between managers and workers—appropriate for Labor Day.

James 1: This passage is the easiest with which to work. Believers are urged to be doers of the word and not just hearers. Pure religion is described as that which cares for orphans and widows, as well as keeps people unstained by the world. Labor Day provides an opportunity to challenge people of faith to do justice and not just hear about it or talk about it.

Mark 7: In this passage, the Pharisees and some scribes criticize the disciples for not following all the dietary rules. Jesus draws on the words of Isaiah challenging hypocrites who speak religious words but don't act justly because their hearts are not right with God. The Mark passage combined with passages in Isaiah could lead to a strong Labor Day message.

Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9: Chapter 16 discusses the need to have judges and officials who "follow justice and justice alone." As was mentioned above, the following week's Torah portion, which includes Deuteronomy 24:14–15, is particularly strong: "Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy...."

Ephesians 6:10–20: The first few verses in this passage often are used to discuss struggling against unjust systems and evil in the society. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Please note this passage is not in most of the lectionary texts.

Fairness in the Workplace

Islam is a religion that believes in freedom, justice and equality. Islam is an Arabic term meaning peace and submission to the Will of Allah (God). Islam is a way of life that encompasses every aspect of a Muslim's life at home and abroad, at all times. Fairness and equity are a part of that way of life. Allah (God) said in the Holy Qur'an, "Give full measure when you measure out and weigh with a fair balance. This is fair and better in the end." (17:35)

Islam is not a religion that is against individuals seeking financial wealth. In the Holy Qur'an, God said, "And when the prayer is ended, disperse abroad in the land and seek of God's bounty." (62:10) But the Holy Qur'an is also clear that wealth will not save a person who has strayed from the path of submission and righteousness.

For men and women to earn an honest living is honorable, regardless of how great or minimal the work appears. "Every man must earn his own living and every profession is therefore honorable, even that of a hewer of wood. A person may follow any worldly pursuit that he likes, but duty to Allah shall take precedence of all other duties," said one Muslim scholar. "No one eats better food than that which he or she eats out of the work of their hand," the Prophet reportedly said. This simply means that the humblest work carries with it dignity.

Islam is against discrimination, intolerance and injustice in the workplace. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "When you hire, compensate the workers and treat them fairly." And on another occasion, the Prophet said, "Compensate the worker before the sweat dries."

There is a heroic aspect of Islam that compels Muslims to fight to ensure that people can work with dignity, free from oppression. "O you who believe, Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin; and whether it be against rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that you do." (4:135)

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him (PBUH), established Islam as a revolutionary force. The Prophet fought against injustice wherever he found it. He was a man for the oppressed, for the poor, the orphan and the widow; he spoke up for the rights of

women and pulled down leaders who ruled in selfish avarice and greed. He fought valiantly even against his own family members when necessary.

In Islam, no person is better due to status or wealth. No matter whether rich or poor, Muslims are encouraged to treat everyone equally, with justice and fairness, because only Allah (God) is great. "None of you has faith unless you love for your brother what you love for yourself," said the Prophet.

Regardless of creed, class or color, Islam demands that people treat each other justly, equally, truthfully and with dignity, honor and respect.

Some Selected Verses from the Holy Qur'an and Hadith on Fairness in the Workplace

"O you who believe, Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin; and whether it be against rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (Holy Qur'an 4:135)

Allah (God) said in the Holy Qur'an: "Give full measure when you measure out and weigh with a fair balance. This is fair and better in the end." (Holy Qur'an 17:35)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "When you hire, compensate the workers and treat them fairly." And on another occasion, the Prophet said, "Compensate the worker before the sweat dries."

"I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another." (Hadith 24 of Forty Hadith by An-Nawawis)

"None of you has faith unless you love for your brother what you love for yourself." (Hadith 13 of Forty Hadith by An-Nawawis)

"Do not envy one another; do not inflate prices one to another; do not hate one another; do not turn away from one another; and do not undercut one another, but be you, O servants of God, brothers...." (Hadith 35 of Forty Hadith by An-Nawawis)

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and Jewish Traditions

“In the organization of workers for the purpose of protecting their working conditions, there is an element of justice and tikkun olam. Unorganized labor works for lower wages and longer hours, and this is thus to the detriment of the working conditions of the organized worker and causes him economic loss. Such losses can be claimed through a lawsuit, and therefore both the employer and the unorganized worker can be summoned to a beit din...”

Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, 1933

“So we find at various stages of Jewish history examples of such organizations covering many different types of artisans and workers. In Talmudic times, there are references to organizations of weavers and dyers, bakers, drivers and sailors....In Jerusalem during Temple times, there existed special synagogues for each trade and craft, while in Alexandria special sections were reserved in the Great Synagogue for different types of workers...”

With All Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life, by Meir Tamari

“The Jewish community in the United States has been supportive of worker and trade union rights for many years, even as it evolved from a predominantly working-class community in the first part of the century to a collective memory of an earlier period of mass Jewish immigration to the United States, when an overwhelmingly immigrant community toiled in difficult and often desperate conditions in the garment industry and other trades....”

Labor Rights in the Jewish Tradition, by Michael S. Perry

“You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and urgently depends upon it.”

Deuteronomy 24:14,15

“The Torah includes four negative precepts and one positive commandment enjoining the prompt payment of wages. Though they were originally phrased in terms of a daily wage, they embrace weekly and monthly payments as these become prevalent....In addition to monetary wages, remuneration can also take the form of nonfinancial benefits accruing to a worker through his working conditions and fringe benefits. Important as they were in early periods of Jewish history, such benefits would seem to be of greater importance today....Halakhic sources see the accepted fringe benefits prevalent to a given time or place, or in a given industry, as having the legal status of part of the total reimbursement of the employee.... Regarding hours of employment, the same source tells us that ‘one cannot compel his employees to come earlier or depart later than is customary at that place.’ ”

With All Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life, by Meir Tamari

“He who withholds an employee’s wages is as though he deprived him of his life.”

Baba Metzia 111a

“A handmill or an upper millstone [one’s means of livelihood] shall not be taken in pawn, for that would be taking someone’s life in pawn.”

Deuteronomy 24:6

Six Ways You Can Make a Difference

I'm Gary De Clute, vice president of United Faculty and Academic Staff at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I'm here on behalf of the Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice. I'd like to thank Pastor Bobb for the invitation to speak today.

I was a union member as I worked my way through college. When I graduated I became a manager, and I was a manager for 20 years. I've departed now from management, and once again I'm in the labor movement, this time as a leader.

I know how management works, and I know how the labor works, and I can tell you that the essence of the labor movement is maintaining a reasonable balance of power between the employer and the workers.

Unions are just as important today as they were in the past when they fought to win us the eight-hour day, the 40-hour week and many other things that the average worker benefits from, whether they're members of a union or not.

Unions are necessary because even today when we've come so far, there are too many workers who don't receive justice and fair treatment. The Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice is helping recent immigrants and other low-income workers achieve the basic level of justice and fairness that the general population takes for granted. These are people with no power, and those without power are easy to exploit, and they're being exploited.

But it isn't just migrant farm workers or recent immigrants that suffer injustice. It can happen to anyone. I've seen it.

I know a woman with a slowly progressing disability who was forced out of her job because managers would not accommodate her need for retraining.

I know a person of color who was singled out for ostracism because he didn't fit the mold. It was arrogance that led his tormenters to demand that everyone be like them.

I know a woman who was sexually harassed and dared to say no, who was denied a promotion and dared to ask why. She stood up for her rights, and her supervisors found ways to punish her.

None of these victims were perfect employees. They made mistakes. Everyone does, but I'm quite certain they didn't deserve what happened to them. When problems spin out of control, the powerful become the oppressors, and the powerless become the oppressed. There needs to be a balance of power between employers and workers.

I've known the oppressors as well. They're not monsters. They're just like you and me. They go to church. They're otherwise admirable people. It's like a blind spot. You can see it in others but you can't see it in yourself, or if you get a glimpse of it you turn away because you don't want to see it.

Managers feel tremendous pressure to conform to the norm of their organization. When that norm accepts injustice and cruelty it creates managers who are unjust and cruel. You start with little compromises. It doesn't quite seem right, but that's what's expected, so it must be OK. This builds on itself over the years, and eventually people become capable of astounding cruelty.

But it doesn't seem astounding to them. When you walk down that path, the most recent compromise feels no worse than the one before it, or the one before that. I've been a manager, and I can truly say, there but for the grace of God go I.

God has told us about the path we should walk. The prophet Micah writes: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

That was written 2,500 years ago. Are we making progress? Yes we are, and people of faith and workers in the labor movement were part of it and are still part of it today.

I'd like to share with you six ways you can make a difference. Here's the first three:

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God. You're people of faith, and I know that each of you is already walking on the path of justice, kindness and humility. What I'm saying is: Look into that blind spot so you can do even better.

Here are the other three ways:

When you see injustice, when you see cruelty, when you see arrogance, don't let it pass. Do what you can. Some

can oppose the oppressor. Some can support the oppressed. The labor movement can help you do these things. It's about maintaining a reasonable balance of power between the employer and the workers.

No two of you will see the same things or have same opportunities. That's why I'm not giving you a list of organizations or causes. When the time comes, you'll know what to do. I thank God for you, because you can make a difference.

Thank you.

*Gary De Clute
Vice president of United Faculty and Academic Staff at the
University of Wisconsin, Madison*

'Rejoice with Those Who Rejoice, Weep with Those Who Weep'

It's almost too easy today to talk about corporate corruption—the news is everywhere. Sure it offends our basic sense of decency. But why is this such big news—and why now? Could it be because all this greed and all these scandals are damaging confidence in our economy, hurting investors, hurting the stock market, hurting those in power?

It certainly wasn't big news when corporate greed was only hurting workers. Those of us in the labor movement, like you—and like other allies who deal with the realities and dreams of this nation's working class and middle class—know it is workers and their families who have been paying the real price as corporate power has grown. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say we truly need to pray for the fulfillment of the promise given to Jeremiah in today's Old Testament lesson: "I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

As Pastor Rogers mentioned in his introduction, my name is Michael Kuchta. I'm a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. But I stand before you today because I'm also a member of a labor union—Local 37002 of the Communication Workers of America. In my working life, I'm editor of *The Union Advocate*, the AFL-CIO union newspaper here in St. Paul.

On this Labor Day weekend—like union members in 40 other congregations here in the Twin Cities (and hundreds of congregations nationwide)—I am speaking as part of a program called *Labor in the Pulpits*. I thank you for giving me the opportunity not so much to preach but to point out how and why, in our calling as Christians, we

can act—must act—as a force for workplace and economic justice in our city, our state, our nation.

What I'm asking is that we take seriously what today's reading from Romans instructs us to do—"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." What I'm asking is that we essentially do what Jesus did—to literally walk with people whom society prefers to ignore, to walk with those society treats as invisible, or worse.

What I say today might sound like an idealistic, naive civics lesson, but it's not. I hope to show that there are some very real, very direct actions we can take, that there are issues on which we can hold our lawmakers accountable to the ideals they claim they have, hold our businesses accountable to standards of decency and fairness and hold ourselves accountable to making a real difference in people's lives.

What I say today, at times, may sound political. I don't intend to be partisan. But I do intend to be political with a small "p"—emphasizing the personal politics we exercise every day in our roles as consumers, in our roles as citizens, in our lives as active Christians.

At companies such as Enron and WorldCom, top executives get multi-million dollar retention bonuses and lenders get first priority in bankruptcy courts. Meanwhile, workers who lost their jobs—and savings—have to sue to try to get the severance pay, vacation pay and other money their companies owe them. What kind of justice is it when workers are last in line—not first in line—under our own nation's law?

Workers at Qwest, our local phone company—workers in my union—watch in disbelief as their retirement savings vanish. Their retirement security is vanishing because Qwest paid 401(k) benefits almost entirely with company stock—stock that has lost 90 percent of its value since last year. Retirees, many who gave 30 and 40 years to the company, now fear Qwest will further break its commitment to them and eliminate their health insurance, too. Newer workers wonder if they'll even have a job next month as Qwest teeters on the edge of bankruptcy. Meanwhile, the CEO who ran the company into the ground received a \$39 million severance package and continues to be paid \$1.5 million a year in "consulting" fees. Somebody find me the justice in that.

Another example close to home: How many of you know that last year Best Buy paid \$5.4 million to settle a U.S. Labor Department investigation? Investigators found Best Buy was not paying overtime to more than 71,000 employees at more than 400 stores nationwide. In other

words, Best Buy wasn't paying its workers what the law said it was supposed to. And that's one of Minnesota's top corporations.

Or let's talk about welfare reform. Behind all the good intentions of welfare reform, I think, is the basic belief that if someone works hard, works 40 hours a week, works year-round, they will be able to earn a living.

The truth is it's not happening that way. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the average wage of a Minnesota resident moving from welfare to work is \$7 an hour. That's nowhere near a living wage—nowhere near a wage that would allow them to become self-sufficient, that would actually allow them to support themselves and their families. At \$7 an hour, a parent with one child trying to afford a “no frills” life in the Twin Cities would have to work 87 hours a week. Somebody find me the justice in that.

Seven dollars an hour, by the way, is a typical starting wage in popular, nonunion retail stores such as Target and Wal-Mart.

Let's look at the other end of the economic spectrum. *Business Week*—a magazine that certainly holds a more flattering opinion of corporations than I do—nonetheless documents a flagrant example of greed. In 1980, *Business Week* says, the average CEO in top American corporations made 42 times the average worker's pay. In 1990, the average CEO made 85 times what the average worker made. In 2000, the average CEO made 531 times what the average worker made. Somebody find me the justice in that.

For comparison, if the nation's minimum wage had risen at the same rate as CEO pay, the minimum wage today would be \$14.60 an hour, not \$5.15. If you made \$30,000 five years ago, and your pay increased at the same rate as CEO pay, you'd now be making \$92,000 a year. Congratulations!

Corporations have become increasingly bold in other ways, too. One of the most blatant examples is how they deny workers the ability to form unions. Whether you're in favor of unions or against them, the fact is, the right to form a union has been the law of this land for almost 70 years. It's a basic human right under international treaties. Yet in the United States, 80 percent of companies hire outside consultants to run anti-union campaigns. That's right: 80 percent of companies hire outside consultants to deny workers their legal rights. And they get away with it. Twenty-five percent actually fire a worker involved in a

union organizing campaign. Sure, it's illegal. But to many companies, it's worth the risk. Somebody find me the justice in that.

Even when workers win a union election, one-third of companies refuse to negotiate a contract. There's a notorious example in South St. Paul right now. In July 2000—not this July, not last July, but July 2000—workers at Dakota Premium Foods voted to unionize. After the company lost the election, it challenged the results. It lost the challenge. It lost an appeal. It lost another appeal. Yet the company continued to delay and to ignore federal rulings ordering it to negotiate with its workers. Finally last month—more than two years after workers first won their election—the company finally sat down to begin—*begin*—bargaining a contract. Most workers at Dakota Premium are immigrants. They work in meatpacking, one of our nation's most dangerous industries. Whether they actually get a contract that guarantees them decent wages, decent benefits and safer working conditions remains to be seen.

It is cases such as Dakota Premium where unions and people of faith are finding common ground in their work for justice. The Twin Cities Religion and Labor Network has been visible in demonstrating public support for Dakota Premium workers and for other workers courageous enough to exercise their rights on the job—school bus drivers, hotel workers, nurses.

People of faith have been involved because they realize that unions create respect. Respect that the foreman, supervisor or INS agent won't offer on their own. Respect, because unions insist that the jobs workers do be recognized for the value they provide. Respect by treating these workers—people—with dignity, especially those who are taken advantage of, exploited or marginalized. People who some say should be shipped back where they came from.

Unions offer dignity just as Jesus offered dignity for women, for lepers, for blind beggars, for foreigners, for tax collectors and others who were outcasts, who were invisible. Unions offer dignity because they, like people of faith, refuse to see fellow workers as commodities, or numbers, or simply consumers who should spend more money to demonstrate their patriotism.

But unions can't do it alone. We need more clergy, more congregations, more students, more community activists, more workers, more citizens in this democracy to realize that social justice and workplace justice can't be separated.

I invite you to do two things to commemorate Labor Day. First, please feel welcome to attend the free Labor Day picnic tomorrow at Harriet Island. We will have food and music and plenty of speakers and workshops and organizations to help you learn more about some of the issues I've talked about today.

Second, I encourage you to actually see the people behind these issues. Think about the people you see behind the counter at your favorite big-box retail store—and the children and women in Central America and Asia who make so many of the items we buy there. If you appreciate the low prices you pay at Wal-Mart or Target, maybe it's because the people who work there and supply the products on the shelves there already have paid the higher price.

Think about the Mexican immigrants who pick so many of our fruits and vegetables, or the cooks and waitresses at the restaurants where we eat. Think about the janitors who clean the buildings where we attend school or work, the nursing home aides who care for our aging friends and family members.

Think about what a good job that truly pays a living wage might do for the people enrolled in the Daily Work program this congregation helps sponsor. Think about the students learning English in the ESL program you have here—what conditions and exploitation they face in their jobs because of the color of their skin, their language skills or their immigration status. They have rights in this country, but do they know that? Do your English classes teach these rights?

Think about the immigrants who sit in these pews every Sunday, those in the SEAM ministries you offer in this building, those you advocate for as part of your involvement in ISAIAH. Think about the jobs they find in this country—jobs that rarely resemble the vocations they had in their homelands or the aspirations they might hold in their new land. Think about how much good a Twin Cities Workers Center could do if the Religion and Labor Network succeeds in opening one next year. Think about all of this, and think about what all of us—individually and together—can do about it.

We are blest to live in a land where we still can make a difference. The choices we make can support the *status quo* or, like Jesus, challenge it—and help change it.

*Michael Kuchta, Editor of The Union Advocate
Temple Talk at Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill in
St. Paul, Minn.*

'Open Your Hand to Them'

In this week's portion, we find two famous verses that appear to contradict each other. Concerning canceling of debts every seven years, we first are told "There will be no poor among you, for G-d will greatly bless you." But in regard to "Not closing one's hand and hardening one's heart to the giving of charity," we learn that "The poor will never vanish from the land." No poor, but poor will never vanish? How do we reconcile these two? Simply, for "There will be no poor among you" is not a promise given to us, but rather a demand on us. We should not trust poverty just to disappear, as the Psalmist praises to the one who "Opens his hand and satisfies the need of every living creature."

PoTaYaCH eT YaDeCHauMaSBiyah L 'KhoL Chai RaTZoNRather, as to the needy brethren and sistren amongst us. "Ki FaToaCH TiFTaCH et YaDCHa Lo"

For it says, "You shall surely open your hand unto him or her." Listen to the Hebrew, the doubling of the root for opening. What has this to do with our celebrated "Last Day" of summer vacation [as] we barbecue on this Labor Day Monday? Plenty! The Lord's blessing in this week's portion is conditional on us doing everything we are obliged and able to do in order to get rid of poverty, hazardous working conditions, oppressive hours and subsistence wages. We don't have to travel to Indonesia to see sweatshop scenes, just merely peer down the street where Rabbi Allen and I live, on Belmont, in Lakeview. Two months ago I would have thought that the "Deaf Mexicans" was an off-color named rock band instead of a group of poor immigrants subjected to slave labor and forced to beg for money on public transit lines under threat of reporting to the immigration authorities. Few of us here have no connection to the labor movement. Our parents, friends and even some of us at the Makom Shalom have been proud and loyal union members. For example, Cary and I both belong to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3315. And as we relax on our day off on Labor Day, let us recall with praise and admiration the important victories labor has won for all of us. Perhaps part-time workers of all types will benefit from the recent Teamster-UPS settlement. Labor's hard-fought efforts have attempted to fulfill the Lord's mandate of bettering the worst-off of us, and it is this that we should celebrate come Labor Day Monday, so that we can truly enjoy the great blessing that flows from it.

"For surely, you should open your hand to them."

*Robert Drizin, AFSCME Local 3315
Host: Makom Shalom Grace Place, Chicago*

Dignity, Justice and Fairness Belong in the Workplace

My name is [name of speaker], and I'm honored to be with you this morning as we celebrate Labor Day. I am a member of [name of union] and am representing [name of central labor council or state federation]. The Labor Day holiday came about through the struggles of working people for the eight-hour day and the right to organize unions. These efforts resulted in many other benefits we now enjoy and take for granted, such as workers' compensation, overtime pay, pensions, health and safety laws, Social Security, Medicare, unemployment compensation, a restriction on child labor and the minimum wage.

Over the years, as a matter of tradition, unions and religious institutions have joined together in efforts to make life better for workers and their families. Union members and people of faith are guided by common values—a belief in the dignity of work, the right to a living wage and a safe work environment, the advantages of working together to achieve what individuals cannot achieve alone and, perhaps most of all, the pursuit of justice and fairness for those who do the world's work.

By joining unions, working families lift themselves out of poverty through the dignity of work. They are better able to contribute to their communities and to society as a whole, and to be fairly compensated for the contributions they make. They are more likely to have health insurance

and be better able to care for their families and provide opportunities for their children.

The freedom to join a union is a basic American right. When this fundamental right is violated—through activities designed to coerce, intimidate or deliberately confuse workers in their decision to form a union—workers are denied the chance to be rewarded for hard work and to be treated fairly and with respect.

In America today, the pursuit of profits takes precedence over the pursuit of justice—and working families and communities are suffering the consequences. America has the biggest gap between haves and have-nots in the industrial world, and the gap is growing. Nearly one-third of America's workers today are in temporary or part-time jobs with no benefits or security. Young Americans earn 25 percent less than their parents did at the same age. And more than 40 million Americans have no health insurance.

By supporting workers who are trying to form unions, congregations can put their faith into action. By urging employers to embrace ethical teachings in the workplace—and grant the right to freely form unions without fear of reprisals—people of faith can help restore justice in the workplace and in the economy.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you this morning, and I hope each of you has a great Labor Day.

Prayers for Labor Day Services

God our Creator, we are the work of Your hands. Guide us in our work, that we may do it, not for self alone but for the common good. Make us alert to injustice, ready to stand in solidarity that there may be dignity for all in labor and in labor's reward.

Almighty God, source of all life and creativity, You have given each person unique abilities which can contribute to the common good. On this day honoring labor, guide each of us to work in Your own Spirit for the fulfillment of community and justice.

God of history, You created humankind in Your own image to be fruitful and carry on the work of Your hands. Help us each day that we labor to bring Your Spirit to all that we do. May Your own justice spread throughout the economies of the world.

Intercessory Prayers

On this Labor Day, we pray for all workers and employers that the workplace be guided by the principles of human dignity and economic justice. Let us pray...

On this Labor Day, we pray that God's spirit will guide all those who make decisions about our economy that concerns for justice and the common good will shape our national priorities. Let us pray...

Developed by the Cincinnati Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice

*The Posture of Discipleship***Scripture: Matthew 16:21–28**

I don't know if was intentional or not, but there seems to be a common theme running through the lectionary readings for this morning. In today's readings, doing what is right leads directly to your own unhappiness and suffering. In our Old Testament lesson, Jeremiah tells God that allowing God's word to guide his life has, thus far, led to unceasing pain and a wound that won't be cured. In the gospel, Jesus makes the announcement to the disciples that not only will he suffer and die at the hands of enemies, but so will those who take up their cross after him.

Now, these would not be easy texts to preach on at any time, but especially for me, they present some difficulty. You see, I'm speaking with you today as part of a national program called *Labor in the Pulpits*. Part of the purpose is to inspire congregations to do justice in the workplace. It seems to me there must be some other text I could find that has the message that seeking justice is easy and it will make you happy. Wouldn't that be more inspirational? In any case, that is not what the word is saying to us today.

Instead, what we have is Jesus's teaching on the correlation between discipleship and suffering, between the way of Jesus and the way of the cross. Jesus turns away from his period of teaching the crowds to teach those closest to him about his own death that is to come. This is Jesus's first warning of his death, which will loom closer and closer as we move through Matthew. The disciples, particularly Peter, do not understand why such a violent end would happen to their Messiah, and so Peter sets out to dissuade Jesus.

And why should Jesus have to die? Why did the one who came to show us the kingdom face such a terrible backlash? This has been a question debated by the church for centuries, and I don't claim to be an expert. But I do believe that Jesus's call to break the yokes of oppression, to have greater consideration for the poor than for the rich, played a large part in so angering the ruling authorities that they decided to kill him. Labor leader and social reformer Eugene Debs had an interesting answer to these questions over 100 years ago. Debs said that when Jesus turned over the tables of the money changers in the tem-

ple, "he told the robbed and misruled and exploited and driven people to disobey their plunderers, he denounced the profiteers, and it was for this that they nailed his quivering body to the gates of Jerusalem, not because he told them to love one another. This was a harmless doctrine. But when he touched their profits and denounced them before their people, he was then marked for crucifixion."

Jesus did not seek out suffering on purpose. But neither did he avoid denouncing his society's worship of wealth and power, even when it would endanger his own life. Remember Jesus's first sermon in Luke, where his words to the folks in his hometown caused them to try to throw him over a cliff? Unlike Peter, and unlike us, Jesus didn't try to save his skin by suppressing God's pronouncements and judgments of the way we've ordered our world. To quote my own father, which I don't often do, "faithfulness leads to suffering, not because suffering is good. Rather we suffer because faithfulness inevitably encounters resistance from those persons and institutions threatened by the gospel's liberating power."

I can't be harsh on Peter, because I identify with him so much. You see, one of my worst fears is that I will make someone upset with me by what I do or say. I like people to approve of my actions, to confirm that I'm doing the right thing. And it became exceedingly clear to me during seminary that this attitude was going to be a problem if I was really going to respond to the call to be in social justice ministry. Like Peter, I want to question the status quo in settings that won't cause myself trouble or pain or harm my reputation as a pleasant person. I want to ask God, isn't there a way to get to the resurrection without passing through the cross? Human thoughts come so much easier than divine ones.

If anything is clear in the gospels, it is that Jesus did not skip the cross, and neither can we have abundant life without the pain. After Peter suggests such a scheme, Jesus says to him "get behind me Satan!" While there is definitely a harshness in these words, that is not all that is there. Eugene Boring (a totally different person than Eugene Debs, whose words I shared earlier) points out that "behind me" is the posture of a disciple. We follow Jesus in the shadow of the cross. Peter, the disciples and Christians today can see things in the divine light, if we are willing to get behind Jesus.

I know of many courageous people today who have chosen to get behind Jesus, even when it means they may suffer as a result. What is interesting is that even though I have met some of them through the church, I have met many of them through the labor movement.

Next door to my office is the office of the Furniture Workers union here in Memphis, where a woman named Ida Leachman is president. She is fairly quiet and unassuming, and I did not know too much about her, except that she worked hard and had been organizing workers for many years. The other day, I picked up a book called *Black Workers Remember*, which is an oral history of the union movement among African Americans here in Memphis. Imagine my surprise at finding a whole chapter about Ida. I learned by reading there and talking to her afterwards that this brave woman, still working even though she is in her 70s, has devoted her life to speaking up for other workers, especially black women, who couldn't get respect on the job or decent wages until they had a union. When Ida was organizing workers in Coldwater, Miss., and was threatened at gunpoint by the racist company owner, she told him he would have to shoot before she would stop standing up for the workers.

She has risked all this, because, as she puts it, "I believe we all have a God-given purpose in this life. Through the labor movement, I am carrying out my duty to help my sisters and brothers by representing them in the workplace, for the Lord requires us to do justly, love mercifully and to walk humbly with God."

I pray that with God's help, I can grow to have the kind of hope and courage that people like Ida have. There are many other people like her, ordinary workers who seek dignity and a living wage, those in the labor movement who represent those workers and brave people of faith who are their allies. All these folks, in taking a stand for justice, have taken on the posture of discipleship. As we takes steps ever closer to following Christ, as we get behind him, our fear of rejection, suffering or even death grows more and more dim. Behind the crucified and risen Christ, may we set our minds not on the human things, but on the divine. Amen.

Rev. Rebekah Jordan
Executive Director, Mid South Interfaith Network for Economic Justice, Everett Memorial United Methodist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

The next few pages are printed as half-pages to use as double-sided bulletin or newsletter inserts. For copying, the left side is the front; the right side is the back.

1. Place page face down on your copy machine and make one-half the total number of copies you will need.
2. Remove the copies you have just made and place the paper back in the paper tray so you can copy on the blank side. Important: Make sure the front and back are aligned properly. You may want to do a test run on one page.
3. Cut down the center, and you will find you have two piles of bulletin inserts, each with a front and a back.

LABOR DAY, 2004

Speaking up for the Poor

Leader: We gather this Labor Day weekend to celebrate the work that people do and the gift of work that God has given us.

All: We give thanks for our jobs and the opportunity to work.

Leader: We know that to work can be an opportunity to do God's will.

All: We pray that those of us with jobs will find how to do God's will in our jobs.

Leader: We pray for those without jobs. This Labor Day weekend there are over

All: ___ million Americans who are officially unemployed—without jobs,

Leader: And we know that millions more are not included in the official rolls of the unemployed because they have become discouraged and given up working or accepted part-time work instead of desired full-time work.

All: Creator God, give special encouragement and blessing to those looking for work. Help them find good jobs—jobs that pay family-supportive wages and provide health care for their families.

Leader: We lift up all employers and bosses,

All: That they may be just and fair with all their employees.

Leader: We know that God's word is clear on treatment of workers.

Deuteronomy 24:9 says, "Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it.

All: Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Leader: We ask God's special protection on those who toil in sweatshops.

All: We know that God hears the cries of the poor.

Leader: Touch the hearts of those who

All: Trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed. (Amos 2:7)

Leader: In less than two months, we will go to the polls to elect leaders for our nation. We know that our leaders are under tremendous pressures. We pray for all our elected leaders and those who would seek to be elected leaders.

All: We pray for both our legislative and administrative leadership. Give our leaders wisdom in decisions.

Leader: We know that God has concern for the poor in the society. Proverb 29:14 says that if a leader, "judges the poor with fairness," the leader's position will be secure. But the leader who "oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops." (Proverbs 28:3)

All: Help our leaders judge and treat the poor with fairness.

Leader: Help us become a society that cares for the poor, a society that cares for sweatshop workers, a society that cares for immigrants. We serve a God who is "mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes." Our God "defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10: 17-19)

All: We pledge to "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." (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Leader: This Labor Day weekend, we pledge anew to:

All: Celebrate work as a gift from God.

Leader: Seek to become a honest and trustworthy employee.

All: Seek to become an honest and fair employer.

Leader: And for all those who toil in sweatshop conditions,

All: We will seek new ways to stand up for your rights.

Leader: And as we review the priorities of the nation, we will ask our leaders to

All: Defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Leader: We will encourage our friends and family to become faithful citizens by registering to vote.

All: We will encourage our friends and neighbors to participate in the electoral process by going to the polls to vote on Nov. 2, 2004.

Leader: And we will pray that our leaders seek justice for workers,

All: Across the land and throughout the world. Amen.

National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice

1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660, 773-728-8400

SAMPLE INTERFAITH SERVICE

Re-Creating Solidarity Between Religion and Labor

Musical Selections

Call to Worship and Solidarity

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 65:17–25

Hymn: Praise to the Lord (please stand, if able)

Personal Witnesses to Our Solidarity

Charge to Worshipers

Hymn: We Lift Our Hands, O God, in Praise

Unison Benediction: As You anointed kings and called prophets of old, lead us to recognize our true representatives and authentic leaders: men and women who love Your people and can walk with them, who feel their pain and share their joys, who dream their dreams and strive to accompany them to their common goal.

In Your fire, with Your Spirit, embolden and commission us to transform our political and economic system to serve Your people justly and to bring real glory to Your name. Amen. (Modified prayer from the Philippines)

Praise to the Lord

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, who made the creation!
O my soul, praise God, for God is your health and salvation!
Let all who hear, now to the temple draw near,
Joining in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is wondrously reigning,
And, as on wings of an eagle, uplifting, sustaining.
Have you not seen, all that is needful has been
Sent by God's gracious ordaining.

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you.
Surely God's goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.
Ponder anew, what the Almighty can do
If with God's love God befriends you.

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore God.
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before God.
Let the amen sound from the people again.
Gladly forever adore God.

We Lift Our Hands, O God, in Praise

We lift our hands, O God, in praise, our grateful voices ring.
The hopeful purpose of our days builds joy from which we sing.
Your hands have made the universe and all that is within.
When all our days have run their course, Your time will just begin.

The hands that shaped our mortal clay for Your immortal plan
Seek righteousness from day to day, and justice in all lands.
And while oppression's bonds are strained and hunger's victims grieve
Your mercy finds the prisoner's pain, and hunger You relieve.

The poor, the blind, the powerless find comfort in Your care.
Those wandering with hopelessness instead find purpose there.
Your love takes shape within our lives, through us Your work is done.
Oh, may we put away our strife to see Your justice won.

We lift our hands, O God, as we work for Your Kingdom's plan.
The justice of the Jubilee will bring peace to the land.
Your tender mercy finds its place in ministry to all.
We lift our hands, O God, in praise and follow then Your call.

National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice

1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60660, 773-728-8400

Act Now to **Protect Your Vote**

So Much Is at Stake Nov. 2...

On Election Day, your vote will help determine whether working families have good jobs, affordable health care, education, workplace rights, job safety, civil rights, retirement security and more.

Will Your Voice Be Heard?

Deliberate voting rights violations in Florida and around the country in 2000 stole the votes from thousands of working families, people of color, retirees, persons with disabilities, new citizen voters and the poor.

Make Sure Your Vote Is Counted.

Take a few simple steps now to make sure your vote is safe, secure and counted on Nov. 2:

- 1.** Contact your local election office to check that you are registered to vote and find out where you should vote. Register immediately if you are not. Register online at www.myvotemyright.com or contact your local election office.
- 2.** If you do not receive a registration card within three weeks of registering, call the election office to see if there is a problem. If there is, follow instructions to correct the problem or reregister.
- 3.** It is particularly important to check your registration or reregister if you have moved, changed your name or have not voted in recent elections.
- 4.** Find out whether you can vote early. If early voting is allowed in your community—do it.
- 5.** Check with your local election office about any new voting procedures or identification requirements and opportunities to practice using voting machines.

Visit www.myvotemyright.com
for information on

How to Protect Your Vote
and

Make Your Voice Heard.

For more information, visit www.myvotemyright.com.

C O N T A C T

I n f o r m a t i o n

AFL-CIO Regional Offices

To obtain the name and phone number of the AFL-CIO central labor council or state federation in your area, please call the AFL-CIO regional office listed for the places below:

AFL-CIO MIDWEST REGION

Phone: 312-492-6569; fax: 312-492-6610

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin

AFL-CIO NORTHEAST REGION

Phone: 212-661-1555; fax: 212-661-5213

Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland/D.C., Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia

AFL-CIO SOUTHERN REGION

Phone: 404-766-5050; fax: 404-766-2049

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

AFL-CIO WESTERN REGION

Phone: 206-770-7666; fax: 206-448-9250

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

Network of Local Interfaith Groups Concerned with Labor Issues

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c/o Labor Guild of Boston
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617-786-1822
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Contact: Patrice Critchley-Menor

Twin Cities Religion and Labor Network

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Minneapolis, MN 55406
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Contact: Bob Hulteen

MISSOURI**Faith-Labor Alliance of the Ozarks**

2501 W. Grand
Springfield, MO 65802
417-869-0633
Contact: Mark McCarty

Labor and Religion Committee of the Human Rights**Commission**

3519 N. 14th St.
St. Louis, MO 63107
314-241-9165
Contact: Rev. Rich Creason

MONTANA**Montana Community-Labor Alliance**

P.O. Box 8175
Missoula, MT 59807
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NEVADA**Las Vegas Interfaith Council for Worker Justice**

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NEW YORK**Albany, Capitol District Labor-Religion Coalition**

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Long Island, Labor-Religion Coalition

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631-589-3576
Contact: Candice Wetherell

New York City, Labor-Religion Coalition

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Southern Tier Labor-Religion Coalition

c/o Catholic Charities
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315-431-4040 ext. 40
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NORTH CAROLINA**Beloved Community Center**

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336-230-0001
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Eastern North Carolina Workers' Center

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Red Springs, NC 28377
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Western North Carolina Workers' Center

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 Morganton, NC 28680
 828-432-5080
 Contact: Francisco Risso

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Cleveland Jobs with Justice

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 440-333-6363
 Contact: Steve Cagan

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Eastern Oklahoma Labor Religion Council

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 Contact: Rev. David Fox

OREGON**Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network**

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Labor-Religion Coalition of Western Pennsylvania

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TENNESSEE**Knoxville, Religious Outreach Committee**

Central Labor Council
 311 Morgan St.
 Knoxville, TN 37917
 865-523-9752
 Contact: Rev. Jim Sessions

Mid-South Interfaith Network for Economic Justice

3035 Directors Row, Building B, Suite 1207
 Memphis, TN 38131
 901-332-3570
 Contact: Rev. Rebekah Jordan

Nashville, Middle Tennessee Jobs with Justice

P.O. Box 1475
 Nashville, TN 37202
 615-831-6736
 Contact: Rev. Dan Rosemergy

TEXAS**Houston Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice**

c/o Worklife Ministries
 7100 Regency Square, Suite 210
 Houston, TX 77036
 713-266-2456
 Contact: Rev. Diana Dale

WASHINGTON**Washington Religious-Labor Partnership**

c/o Washington Association of Churches
 419 Occidental Ave. South, #201
 Seattle, WA 98104
 206-625-9790
 Contact: Rev. John Boonstra

WISCONSIN**Faith Community for Worker Justice**

633 S. Hawley Road
 Milwaukee, WI 53214
 414-562-3539
 Contact: Bill Morris

Interfaith Coalition for Worker Justice of South Central Wisconsin

2300 S. Park St., Suite 6
 Madison, WI 53713
 608-255-0376
 Contact: Sarah Shatz

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