

# **WORK IN WORSHIP**

**(Revised edition 1997)**

**A COLLECTION OF MATERIAL  
FOR THOSE COMPILING "WORK THEME" SERVICES**

**Compiled and edited by David Welbourn**

INDUSTRIAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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# INTRODUCTION

The previous edition of *Work in Worship* was published in 1985. It has served its purpose well, but now looks considerably dated - for example in the way it assumed that work is typically male, full-time and in manufacturing industry, as well as in its use of gender-exclusive language. A new edition is now needed, one that takes into account the very changed - and ever-changing - work scene of today. The opportunity is also taken to incorporate some of the valuable new material produced since 1985.

The retention of our original title, however, indicates that we still stand four-square behind the aims of the first *Work in Worship*; that is, our purpose is to provide material which will assist clergy and others in the task of compiling "work theme" church services. The most significant differences from the 1985 edition are that (1) we now include whole "sample" services (presenting, as it were, complete meals not just individual dishes); and (2) we offer the material in electronic format.

We provide Prayer Material for Services under various headings – Opening, Thanksgiving etc – which are intended as building-blocks for a work-theme service. But before going any further, let us briefly consider some basic principles of service compilation, and ask ourselves what purposes should be served in services of worship. In its essence, worship is about praise and adoration of God, recognition of what he is and what his purpose is in relation to us and the world. It is also about orienting ourselves to the divine purpose, equipping ourselves to be more effective agents in carrying that purpose out. In much lower order of priority, it is about presenting our wishes to God, but always in the context of acknowledging God, his purpose and his claims. A service of worship is not primarily a vehicle for imparting information, although this will have its place if, again, it is part of our orienting ourselves towards God and his purpose.

Other important questions to ask are, Who is this service for? What are their needs and circumstances? What is their experience of the world of work, or unemployment? How much can they reasonably be expected to take of what is new or unfamiliar? To what extent should a work-theme service be based on worship frameworks to which members of the congregation are already accustomed? Or (given that such a service may be especially intended to accommodate non-regulars from the world of work), to what extent should the normal congregation be prepared to suspend their normal habits and expectations?

## **Sections 2 – 6**

Worship services as well as involving the saying of prayers of different kinds, will normally contain Hymns, Readings and a Sermon. Suggestions for these are contained in Sections 2 to 4. Section 5 provides Sample Services which are, for the most part, based on services that have actually taken place. The aim here is to give some examples of how the principles outlined above can be applied in a number of different settings. Some of these services have been considerably revised because as originally offered they were liturgically unbalanced. One, in particular, was over-didactic and its intercessions were too geared to imparting information; a Eucharistic

service had an overlong Ministry of the Word, and some had too much new material for an average church congregation to absorb.

The main point in including the sample services is to demonstrate overall structures. A service compiler may wish to emulate a particular structure. Perhaps, when putting on a subsequent work-theme service, he or she will wish to use the basic structure again, but with alternative "openings", prayers of thanksgiving, confession etc., hymns, readings.

Also, as in the 1985 edition, we include - as our final section - material for private prayer. Its arrangement is various sections should be self-explanatory

### **Using lay people in the preparation of services**

When it comes to preparing work-theme services it should be borne in mind that working lay people are likely to know more about working life than the average clergyperson or minister. This is true even of clergy who have themselves had experience of the world of work, for that world has changed so much in recent years that even comparatively recent experience could be out-of-date. There is therefore an important role for lay people in the preparation of work-theme worship, particularly with regard to sermons. While the clergyperson, who by training possesses theological and liturgical skills, will normally take final responsibility for the theology and structure of the service, the actual content should be decided collaboratively.

### **A note on copyright**

Some of the material we use in this publication is copyright, and where we are aware that this is the case we indicate so. But as was bound to happen with material taken from a range of sources, e.g. "work theme" service sheets, individuals' private compilations, there will be inadvertent infringements of copyright. In these instances we can only crave the original authors' and/or publishers' indulgence. Similar considerations apply also, of course, to the compilers'-of-services own use of our material.

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**PRAYER MATERIAL FOR SERVICES**

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# OPENING

## INTRODUCTIONS

We have gathered here this day to give thanks and praise to Almighty God for his love and gifts given to us day by day. We praise him for the gifts of creation and the work we are called to do, and we offer in thanksgiving all the work of our County.

We remember those without work; and it is our hope for them that, in God's love and in our dedication and service, they may find support and opportunity to use their skills.

So as we give our thanks and praise, we join in the prayer our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ taught us saying:

### **Our Father...**

\*\*\*\*\*

Human enterprise is not simply an end in itself; it is the means and the medium through which people fulfil their ultimate destiny.

We are here today to give thanks to God for all that Commerce and Industry mean to our country, our economy and our lives.

We thank God for the value that our businesses create, which can secure the public services we and our families need.

We thank God for the network of international contacts that mean that never again will Europe be devastated by war. The new Europe is being built by people in different countries working together towards common goals.

We thank God for the opportunity to contribute to the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, to the ultimate benefit of all the citizens of Europe as a whole.

We thank God for the difference that industry can make to the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, our nation's transport and communications infrastructure.

We thank God for the ability to develop and apply the most advanced technology in the cause of peace, and to improve the quality of life for all.

We thank God for our colleagues: their competence, capacity, commitment and comradeship. Business is about ordinary people working together, often in very difficult circumstances, to achieve extraordinary things.

And we pray to God that we will be able to meet adequately the responsibilities and obligations of management.

This we do in the name of him who taught us that to lead is to serve, and whose service is perfect freedom, Jesus Christ our Lord.

\*\*\*\*\*

Let us give thanks today for the work of our (town, city, region, county etc.) and for the privilege of sharing in that work.

Let us give thanks today for the providence of God and for the gift of work.

We have gathered here this day to give thanks to Almighty God for his love and gifts given us day by day. We praise him for the gifts of creation and the work that we are called to do, and we offer in thanksgiving all the work of our (town, city, region, country etc.).

\*\*\*\*\*

The world is God's and if we are to be effective as the body of Christ, we need to bring together the often separate worlds of work and church, to know about that which forms so much of our everyday lives and to look afresh at that experience in the light of God's purposes. In the words of David Adam, We need to reveal that our God is in all the world and waits to be discovered there... Typing pool and workshop, office and factory are all as sacred as the church.

\*\*\*\*\*

A lot of people enjoy their work. Many do not. Yet without the world of work our society would collapse. All of us depend on industry, commerce and the services offered to us by national and local government, banking, insurance, medical and social welfare, education, scientific research and a host of other activities.

The majority of people spend most of their adult life in some sort of work, and we consider full employment to be one of the measures of a contented society - so that those who have no work are seen, and feel themselves, to be disadvantaged.

The odd thing is that this world that affects us all is rarely thought about or offered up in church. We may pray for hospitals and schools, but rarely for factories and hotels. We certainly make little connection between the life of work and the life of the spirit, between what we earn in the market place and what we spend on creating a just and merciful society.

This service is designed to help us re-connect the world of work to God, who is the maker of all things and judge of all people, that we may learn better how to live in it to his glory.

(From the preamble to 'The Offering of the World of Work' Rogationtide service, May 1991 at St.Martin-in-the-Fields, London)

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Our Lord Jesus Christ grew up in the village of Nazareth in Galilee. From an early age he would have watched Joseph at work and learnt from him the trade of a local builder and carpenter.

Today, we have come together to celebrate the skill of craftsmen, to give thanks and praise for the industrial and commercial life of our village, and to pray for all who work in this community.

\*\*\*\*\*

Human enterprise is not simply an end in itself; it is the means and medium through which people fulfil their ultimate destiny. We are here today to give thanks to God for all that commerce and industry mean to us, our town, our economy and our lives.

We thank God for the value that our businesses and our work create, which can secure the public services we and our families need.

We thank God for our colleagues; their competence, capacity, commitment and comradeship. We pray to God that we will be able to meet adequately the responsibilities and obligations of management.

This we do in the name of him who taught us that to lead is to serve, and whose service is perfect freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

Human work is part of God's providence for the world. Most of the goods and services which people need are provided through our work in homes, schools, hospitals, factories, offices and shops. These daily activities which sustain life and keep the world going, which create wealth, give service and make provision for human needs, are part of God's good providence, and something for the church to celebrate.

So let us thank God for his goodness and pray for all who, by their work in manufacturing, the service industries and commerce, sustain the quality of life for our society.

\*\*\*\*\*

AT A ROGATION SUNDAY SERVICE

Today, the 5th Sunday after Easter, is Rogation Sunday. Traditionally Rogationtide was the time when God's blessing was asked on the newly sown crops. Rogationtide was the "before" of which Harvest Thanksgiving was the "after". As is the case with Harvest Thanksgiving, Rogation Sunday is a good time to think about human work, and the theme of this service is "Offering our Work to God" - not just agricultural work but all work, and in particular the work done by members of this congregation and people living in this community. And in this service of Holy Communion [Mass, Lord's Supper] we shall be using the bread and wine as symbols of our work offered to God for use in his service.

\*\*\*\*\*

AT A HARVEST OF WORK SERVICE

The worship leader explains why a "more-than-agricultural" harvest is being celebrated. S/he could make the following points: Less than 2% nationally work in agriculture [in our area it is x %]. This service enables all the work done by our congregational members to be offered to God. Tokens of our work will be brought up during the service [or placed at the front beforehand] and put beside the more traditional harvest exhibits. [Alternatively, or in addition, we have an exhibition of the work of local firms, and this symbolises our offering to God all the goods and services produced/provided in our own locality.]

\*\*\*\*\*

AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

We come together to worship God. We stand in his presence. We open ourselves to his goodness and his love. We come to confess our sins, and those of our nation, against those who are unemployed. We come to pray for all those who bear the burden of unemployment, for those who serve them, and for our nation. We pray for a new willingness to bear one another's burdens; a new determination to value one another. We come in the hope that God will show to us, and to our nation, how together we may overcome this great evil.

\*\*\*\*\*

As Christians we will want to discover God's attitude to work. We are told God is creative, active, working - and that we are made in his image. We human beings have, however, made problems for ourselves, and for the rest of creation, by the way we work in the world. But God has plans for us, our work and our social relationships.

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## SENTENCES

The earth is filled with the gifts of the Lord; wine and oil and bread, to strengthen us and cheer our heart.  
(Ps 104:13,15)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.  
(Colossians 3:23 NIV)

Work is the creative activity of God within us, working through us in the world for the glory of him and to the benefit of all.  
(Ken Hawkings)

Without purposeful, rewarding, creative work, one loses one's orientation, self-confidence and self-respect; becoming a prisoner and an outcast in one's own subjective world.  
(Christian Schumacher - adapted)

To accept the Incarnation (the coming of Jesus) is to accept that God is at work in his world as it is, and that Christians are called to co-operate with him there.  
(Jack Keiser)

You yourselves know that I have worked with these hands of mine to provide everything that my companions and I needed. I have shown you in all things that by working hard in this way we must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus himself said, 'There is more happiness in giving than in receiving'.  
(Acts 20: 34f)

What we have somehow to do in the present age is to combine goodness and cleverness; to learn somehow to permeate the vast impersonal world organisations with the love of God and of our neighbour. We have to learn to harness the scientific mind in the service of the merciful heart.  
(A.D.Lindsay)

Work is the expenditure of energy (manual and mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfilment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God.

(John Stott)

At the centre of Christian redemption stands the resurrection. This is first of all the work of God and it is God who takes our work and accepts it for his own. So the work of Christ was not wasted.

(Paul Ballard)

Technology and industry create the context within which we must search for meaning in life.

(Margaret Kane)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

'Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment'.

(UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

'Work is an obligation, that is to say a duty, on the part of each human being. This is true in all the many meanings of the word. People must work, both because the creator has demanded it and because of their own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Each person must work out of regard for others'.

(Papal Encyclical 'Laborem Exercens' 1972 [c.] )

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### **BIDDINGS AND OPENING PRAYERS**

Almighty God,  
sustainer of daily life and work,  
and provider of all our needs.  
Open our hearts to your creative power  
so that we may know your will,  
praise your name,  
and share your vision for the creation of your kingdom.  
In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

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Let us be silent before God. Let us open our hearts to the Spirit that blows across all the earth, and may that Spirit kindle the flame of hope throughout the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

We meet together to thank God for his gifts of raw material and human skill, and for the high standard of living to which he has brought us: to offer to him our work in industry and commerce, and to pray that he

may guide us in the right use of all that is entrusted to us. Let us in silence remember his presence and pray that this service may be to his glory.

*(After a short silence:)*

O Lord God, we worship and adore you. Fill our minds with such devotion that all unworthy thoughts may be driven from us, and that through this service we may hear your voice and be obedient to your will.  
**Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AT A HARVEST SERVICE

Lord God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, glorious in majesty, wonderful in love, rich in mercy, we praise and we worship you as Lord of the Harvest.

**You have crowned the year with your goodness:  
You have blessed us with your gifts.**

We look around us with gratitude for our harvest display, giving thanks for the way you have provided us with all we need, and for your gifts shown here in the skill of flower-arrangers, artists and those who have worked together in your sanctuary in fellowship.

**You have crowned the year with your goodness:  
You have blessed us with your gifts.**

We are reminded, through these harvest gifts, of our human skill and inventiveness: by toil and imagination we have brought forth a harvest from the earth - of coal, oil and gas for heating and power - of crops and produce which we need for life - of minerals for healing, industry and craftsmanship.

**You have crowned the year with your goodness:  
You have blessed us with your gifts.**

We remember the natural world, with its provision for our needs: rain on the land; the sea for journeys, for food, for recreation: sunlight and warmth for growth; wind for power; water for thirst.

**You have crowned the year with your goodness:  
You have blessed us with your gifts.**

And above all this, we remember your greatest gift: the harvest of your forgiveness and love seen in Jesus Christ, who died that we might be set free from the prison of guilt and sin, and who has enabled us to live in freedom and joy. Father, we worship you with gratitude and adoration for this: your gifts, your harvest beyond words.

**You have crowned the year with your goodness:  
You have blessed us with your gifts.**

(Slightly adapted from Clifford Wilton, in YMCA 'Windows into Worship', green section p.22.)

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## HARVEST

God our creator,  
you have made us one with this earth,  
to tend it and to bring forth fruit;  
may we so respect and cherish  
all that has life from you,  
that we may share in the labour of all creation  
to give birth to your hidden glory,  
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

(From 'All Desires Known' by Janet Morley [c.] )

## FOR A SERVICE WITH ENVIRONMENT AS THE THEME

Brothers and sisters in creation, we covenant this day  
with you and with all creation yet to be:  
with every living creature and  
all that contains and sustains you;  
with all that is on earth and with the earth itself;  
with all that lives in the waters  
and with the waters themselves;  
with all that flies in the skies  
and with the sky itself.

We establish this covenant, that all our  
powers will be used to prevent your  
destruction.

We confess that it is our kind who put  
you at the risk of death.

\*\*\*\*\*

You, Lord, were there at the beginning of all things, shaping the world, preparing it for us.  
We praise you for the wonder of creation  
for the variety of landscapes which we use in our work and play;  
for the seas that link the people of the world; that provides us with power and nourishment;  
for the air surrounding the earth, giving life to all things.  
The earth and all of creation reminds us of your care for us all.  
When we too care for all of creation we give you praise.

# THANKSGIVING

(including Prayers of Adoration)

Lord of the Universe, we praise you for your creation, for the wonders of space, the beauty of the world, the value of the earth's resources, and the skills of hand and brain which enrich our lives.

We thank you for humanity in all its diversity, for the unique individuality of every child, woman and man, for the gathered communities of home, work and leisure; of village, city and nation.

We thank you for offering us the chance to share in creation through the work of hand and brain; for the opportunity to plan and design, to manufacture and grow, to service and conserve, and to care for one another in the places where we work.

We thank you for giving us special gifts and responsibilities, for enabling us to stand upright and make choices, for presenting us with opportunities to promote justice and truth.

And because he shared with us our humanity and our world, we thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ, our beginning and our end, who carried out your work to your praise and glory and for the renewal of your creation. So we make our prayer to you in his name, who died and rose again for us. **Amen**

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In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks every day for everything to God our Father.

Let us there render thanks to Almighty God in the words of the General Thanksgiving.

**Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble of hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to everyone.**

**We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be genuinely thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, Creator and Lord of all things, we thank you for the vast resources of the earth and the sea, and for the hidden forces of nature now brought within our control by scientific discovery. We thank you again for the different abilities and skills which you have given us and which we use in daily work. Help us to use all your gifts wisely and faithfully for benefit of humankind, that all may rejoice in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, we praise you for all your gifts to us in creation. We acknowledge the skills with which we have been endowed, the materials available for our use and the opportunities to meet the needs of others. We thank you for what agriculture, industry, commerce and local government have achieved and for their contribution to our lives. May our gratitude to you be plain in all we do. Help us to use all your gifts wisely and for the good of all, in the knowledge that through our daily work we contribute to your loving purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Let us thank God

- for the gift of life and the resources of the world;
- for our share in the continuing work of creation;
- for human skill and inventiveness, enterprise and hard work;
- for industry, commerce and administration and its many products of food, transport, roads, houses, clothing, medicines, machines, fresh water, sewage disposal.

Let us thank God

- that we are made in the image of his Son, called to share in his reconciling work; to resist evil, transform nature and to proclaim his concern for people;
- for those who work to maintain the fabric of our community, in shops, offices, factories and farms;
- for engineers and technologists, for technicians and sales people, for those who work in finance and research and development, and for those who plan and manage;
- for those who provide food and water, heat and light, milk and mail;
- for those who are not employed but still contribute - housewives, the retired, the disabled and children;
- for the principal organizations of industry, for companies, for professional associations, for employers' organizations and trade unions.

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord God Almighty, we offer you thanks for the chance to work, for the benefits of working life, for the opportunity to create and add value, to improve the quality of life by meeting the needs of others.

O Lord accept our thanks:

**Accept our heartfelt thanks.**

We are thankful for those occasions of solid achievement, for the ability to produce, for the opportunity to serve others' needs, and to change our methods of work.

O Lord accept our thanks:

**Accept our heartfelt thanks.**

We are grateful for previous generations who laid the foundations of our society, for the facilities that educate and train us for the future, and for all those who care for our present welfare.

O Lord accept our thanks:

**Accept our heartfelt thanks.**

We have relished the chances to deepen our relationships with colleagues at work, to welcome newcomers, to be open to all, and to be present at meetings.

O Lord accept our thanks:

**Accept our heartfelt thanks.**

\*\*\*\*\*

We give thanks to God the Father, Maker of the Universe  
for the unity and order of created things;  
for the resources of the earth;  
for the gift of human life;  
for our share in the continuing work of creation;  
for creative vision and inventive skill;  
for industry and commerce.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

We give thanks to God in Jesus Christ,  
for his obedience fulfilled on the cross;  
for his bearing of the sin of the world;  
for his victory over evil and death;  
for his care for people;  
for the value he gave to human labor;  
for all our opportunities of work and leisure.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

We give thanks to God the Holy Spirit,  
for his continuing presence and power in the world;  
for the harvest of the Spirit in the lives of people -  
for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;  
for the strength of the Spirit, which enables and inspires us  
to persevere through troubles and difficulties.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

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For the beauty of the earth,  
The raw materials that come from it,  
And the mystery of life and growth.  
**We thank you O God.**

For science and craftsmanship,  
For skill and patience,  
And for the opportunity of serving our fellows.  
**We thank you O God.**

For the work we are enabled to do,  
For the truth we are permitted to learn,  
For whatever good there has been in our lives,  
And for hopes and resolves which lead us to better things.  
**We thank you O God.**

For home and family,  
For friends and fellowship,  
And for all the happiness in life.  
**We thank you O God.**

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Let us give thanks to God for all the good things of life; for the world in which we live; and the universe beyond it.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for those who through the ages have pioneered along new paths of thought and knowledge, opening human minds to new adventures of truth.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for the heritage of our common life, for wise government and good laws, for education, art, science and technology, and all their benefits to us.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for the comforts and pleasures of life, for our homes and our friends, for goodwill and companionship; for the help, sympathy and advice of those who are wiser than ourselves.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for this community, for what we owe to industry and to the commercial life of this [village] and to all who have helped build it up.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for those on whose work we depend for the necessities of life, all those engaged in industry, whether manufacturing goods or providing services, and in commerce.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for all those scientists and doctors whose researches and devoted work have bettered the health of the human race, and those who today in hospitals and laboratories fight to free us from disease.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for all who have helped lighten the load of drudgery at work and at home, and who have enriched the possibilities of our leisure time.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

Let us give thanks for men and women of all ages who have worked to improve the quality of human life.

**For these and all good things, we give thanks.**

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Let us give celebrate today the providence of God and the gift of work.  
We give thanks to you, God our Father, Maker of the universe,  
for the unity and order of created things;  
for the resources of the earth;

for the gift of human life;  
for our share in the continuing work of creation.

O Creator and Lord of all, we thank you for the hidden forces of nature now brought within our control by scientific discovery. We thank you for creative vision and inventiveness, and for the different abilities and skills which you have given us and which we use in daily work. Help us to use all your gifts wisely and faithfully, for the benefit of humankind, that all may rejoice in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We thank you for humanity in all its diversity, for the unique individuality of every child, woman and man, for the gathered communities of home, work and leisure, of village, city and nation.

We thank you for the work of hand and mind; for the opportunity to plan and design, to manufacture and grow, to service and conserve, and to care for one another in the places where we work.

Above all we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ, who carried out your work to your praise and glory and for the renewal of your creation. We make our prayer to you in his name, who died and rose again for us. **Amen.**

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#### AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Thank you, Lord, that you turn the values of the world on their head. What people call great, so often in your eyes is little, or mean. In what many call little, you see greatness, and eternal value. Thank you for people involved in looking again at what work is, what it means to be creative and how we can make a difference in the world, in our neighbourhood, in our families - without necessarily getting paid for it. Especially we pray for retired people and those bringing up families at home. We give you thanks for all the creative projects that have been set up to help the unemployed.... We give you thanks for all who have seized the chance to do some worthwhile and creative work while they have waited for a paid job. **Amen.**

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#### POST-COMMUNION PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Father of all, we thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son to humanity, for his sharing of our earthly life; for his work as a carpenter; for his understanding of those whose jobs made them outcasts but also of those who held positions of honour; for his own ministry and that of his disciples. And now, above all, we thank you for feeding us with his body and blood. Send us back into the world, refreshed by this heavenly food, to work as he did, and, by the power of your Spirit, to live our lives as witnesses to his life, death and resurrection. **Amen.**

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#### AT A SERVICE WITH ENVIRONMENT AS THE THEME

We give you thanks, most gracious God,  
for the beauty of earth and sea;  
for the richness of mountains, plains and rivers;  
for the song of birds and loveliness of flowers.

We praise you for these good gifts,  
and pray that we may use them for our posterity.  
Grant that we may grow in our grateful enjoyment  
of your abundant creation;  
to the honour and glory of your name,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**

(WCC quoted in YMCA Windows into Worship, blue section p1)

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We give you thanks, God, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea;  
for the richness of mountains, plains and rivers,  
for the song of birds and the loveliness of flowers.  
The beauty of your creation is all around us, yet so often we take it  
for granted.  
Open our eyes to the beauty all around us.  
Open our eyes also to the goodness in other people and in ourselves.  
Teach us to use your creation well, to safeguard its beauty for  
others to enjoy also.  
More importantly, teach us to love and respect your creation in  
each person we meet.  
**Amen.**

(YMCA Windows into Worship, pink section p 16/17)

# CONFESSION

## INVITATION TO CONFESSION

We who have received much have not always been grateful. We who have been called to work with God for the good of others as well as ourselves have often been selfish. We who have been called to live in the light often choose darkness. We who have been called to be salt to the world often prove to have no taste. In the knowledge of our weakness, ignorance and deliberate choice, let us confess our sins to Almighty God.

## CONFESSION

Almighty God, with sorrow we confess that the gifts you have given us are spoiled by our selfishness and lack of regard for your sovereign will. We have failed to love you or your creation. We have failed to see you in our daily work, or in those who share it with us. We have taken for granted those who serve us through the gift of their labour. We are sorry for our failures, which have been hurtful to us as well as to others. Release us from the burden of our guilt so that we can step into the future unafraid, and, strengthened by the knowledge of your abiding love, follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Priest/minister shall pronounce:*

## ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you [us], pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Let us confess our sins, in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all people:

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you, through our own fault, in thought and word and deed, and in what we have left undone. For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.**

## ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord of the universe, we praise you for your creation, for the wonder of space, the beauty of the world and the value of the earth's resources. We praise you for the many different skills of hand and brain.

We recognise that we often spoil these gifts by our selfishness, and because we are sometimes distrustful and destructive.

Forgive us we pray. Help us to use all that you give to us for the good of all people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gracious Lord, we bring before you our personal failures in our daily work. We have been poor stewards of your gifts; we have not given you the glory, nor laboured in your love. We confess too the faults of our industrial society: continuing injustice, lack of harmony, the inability - and worse - the unwillingness to seek the paths of reconciliation. Have mercy upon us, and grant that, as the workshop at Nazareth was blessed through the labour of the Christ, so the workplaces of this land may be enriched by the work of those who call him 'Lord'. We ask this in his name. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, you support those who stumble and raise those who are oppressed. Forgive our indifference and our lack of compassion.

Father, forgive us, we have wronged our neighbour, we have condoned injustice, we have marred your image in us. Help us to hunger and thirst to see right prevail, so that all people may be free to live and praise your name. **Amen.**

May God show us mercy by forgiving our sins and confirming us in his goodness. May we continue to share Christ's risen life and so bring life to others. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Spirit of God,  
you are the breath of creation,  
the wind of change that blows through our lives,  
opening up new dreams and new hopes,  
new life in Jesus Christ.

Forgive our closed minds  
which barricade themselves against new ideas,  
preferring the past  
to what you might want to do  
through us tomorrow.

Forgive our closed eyes  
which fail to see the needs of your world,  
blind to the opportunities of service and love.

Forgive our closed hands  
which clutch our gifts and our wealth  
for our use alone.

Forgive our closed hearts  
which limit our affection  
to ourselves and our own.

Spirit of new life,  
forgive and break down the prison walls  
of our selfishness,  
that we might be open to your love  
and open for the service of your world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Janet Morley)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, the world as you created it was very good. Forgive us all for the mess which humankind has brought upon the earth. Forgive our greed, which strips the earth of its natural resources and concentrates wealth in the hands of a few people and a few nations. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

For the presence in our world of poverty and inequality, injustice and exploitation, by individuals, by countries and by powerful economic blocs...

**Forgive us Lord.**

For the times we are motivated by getting more for ourselves, while our neighbour goes in want...

**Forgive us Lord.**

For the long-term unemployed, especially those who see others around them again finding employment...

**We pray to you O God.**

For those forced to do overtime to keep their jobs, and for their families...

**We pray to you, O God.**

For [particular local concerns].....

**We pray to you, O God.**

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Let us confess to God those things that are wrong in our work:

- That the presence of God at work is often overlooked;
- That creative people are often subjected to long, boring and unrelenting routines;
- That skills are undeveloped through lack of training;
- That resources are wasted in shoddy work and the production of unwanted goods;
- That the maximisation of profit often excludes concern for people;
- That men and women are discriminated against because of age, race, gender, disability, lack of skill and length of employment;
- That the poor stand so little chance against the power of the rich, and the world's destitute are forgotten.

Lord, have mercy upon us. Forgive us our sins and help us to amend our lives. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, you have searched us out and known us,  
and all that we are is open to you.

We confess that we have sinned:  
we have used our power to dominate  
and our weakness to manipulate;  
we have evaded responsibility  
and failed to confront evil;  
we have denied dignity to the whole of Creation,  
to ourselves and to each other.  
We have failed to celebrate life  
and refused to challenge death.

**We turn to you, O God;  
we renounce evil;  
we claim your love;  
we choose to be made whole.**

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#### A PRAYER FROM SOUTH AFRICA

You asked for my hands that you might use them for your purpose,  
I gave them for a moment  
Then withdrew them, for the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice,  
I gave you a whisper  
That I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty,  
I close them, for I did not want to see.

You asked for my life that you might work through me,  
I gave a small part of it, that I might not get "too involved".

Lord, forgive me for my calculated efforts to serve you  
Only when it is convenient for me to do so,  
Only in those places where it is safe to do so,  
And only with those who make it easy to do so.

Father, forgive me, renew me;  
Send me out as a usable instrument,  
That I might take more seriously the meaning of your cross. **Amen.**

(From YMCA 'Windows into Worship' beige section p.5)

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Let us be assured of God's power to relieve sin, to take away our burden and debt.  
We bring before you, Lord, all the failure of our daily work;  
We have fallen short of your demands upon us;  
We have not given you the glory, nor worked in your love.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us, Lord.**

We confess the faults of the industrial society in which we work,  
the inequalities, the injustices of all systems  
and the difficulties we have in changing them.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us, Lord.**

We have not worked together as brothers and sisters of your family.  
There have been differences,  
lack of co-operation and chances of reconciliation missed.  
We have not brought out the best in others.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us, Lord.**

We have wasted and misused the raw materials of the earth,  
and scarred the beauty of nature.  
We have not made best use of the time and skills you have given us.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us, Lord.**

We have not met the needs of the hungry and impoverished of the world.  
We have not been able to meet the demands of those without work.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us, Lord.**

\*\*\*\*\*

We are to be regarded as Christ's servants and as stewards of God's  
creation.  
We know that we have fallen short of what is required of us.

So let us confess our sins, in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments, and to  
live in love and peace with all people.

We confess our sin, and the sins of our society  
in the misuse of God's creation.

God our Father, we are sorry  
for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly,  
and acted as though we were not grateful.  
Father, in your mercy  
**forgive us and help us.**

We enjoy the fruits of our work  
but sometimes forget that you have given them to us.

Father, in your mercy  
**forgive us and help us.**

We belong to a people who are full and satisfied  
but ignore the cry of the hungry.

Father, in your mercy  
**forgive us and help us.**

We are thoughtless,  
and do not care enough for the world you have made.

Father, in your mercy  
**forgive us and help us.**

Some of us store up goods for ourselves alone,  
as if there were no God and no heaven.

Father, in your mercy  
**forgive us and help us.**

The Lord enrich you with his grace,  
and nourish you with his blessing;  
the Lord defend you in trouble and keep you from all evil;  
the Lord accept your prayers  
and absolve you from your offences,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

For our incapacity to feel the sufferings of others,  
and our tendency to live comfortably with injustice,  
**God forgive us.**

For the self-righteousness which denies guilt,  
and the self-interest which strangles compassion,  
**God forgive us.**

For those who live their lives in careless unconcern,  
who cry 'Peace, peace' where there is no peace,  
**We ask your mercy.**

For our failings in community,  
our lack of understanding,  
**We ask your mercy.**

For our lack of forgiveness, openness, sensitivity,  
**God forgive us.**

For the times we are too eager to be better than others,  
when we are too rushed to care,  
when we are too tired to bother,  
when we don't really listen,  
when we are too quick to act from motives other than love,

**God forgive us.**

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Spirit of truth and judgement,  
who alone can exorcise  
the powers that grip our world;  
at the point of crisis  
give us your discernment,  
that we may accurately name what is evil,  
and know the way that leads to peace,  
through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Spirit of new life,  
forgive and break down the prison walls of our  
selfishness,  
that we might be open to your love  
and open for the service of your world,  
through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

God, you heap your love upon us  
like a mother providing for her family's needs,  
embracing her child with tenderness.

Forgive us  
when, like spoilt children,  
we treat your generosity as our right,  
or hug it possessively to ourselves.

Give us enough trust to live secure in your love  
and to share it freely with others  
in open-handed confidence  
that your grace will never run out. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Praise the Lord, O my soul!  
**While I live I will praise the Lord.**

Lord, you support those who stumble and raise those who are oppressed. Forgive our indifference and our lack of compassion.

**Father, forgive us, we have wronged our neighbour, we have condoned injustice, we have marred your image in us. Help us to hunger and thirst to see right prevail, so that all people may be free to live and praise your name. Amen.**

May God show us mercy by forgiving our sins and confirming us in his goodness. May we continue to share Christ's risen life and so bring life to others. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

God of creation, the earth is yours  
with all its beauty and goodness,  
its rich and over-flowing provision.

But we have claimed it for our own,  
plundered its beauty for profit,  
grabbed its resources for ourselves.

God of creation, forgive us.  
May we no longer abuse your trust,  
but care gently and with justice for your earth. **Amen.**

# CREEDS

We believe in One God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,  
Source of human skills, Provider of the earth's riches.

We believe in God who is love, and judge of all, who claims our service and our worship,  
who longs for our help in creation, to fulfil his purpose on earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the Light of the world,  
the Lord of all life, the man for others;  
our fellow-worker for good, our Redeemer, neighbour and friend,  
with the power to make all things new.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, God's inspiration to men and women,  
revealer of the truth, the giver and director of life,  
the promoter of peace and patience, our Comforter in times of trouble,  
and supplier of vision and hope. **Amen.**

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## STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*(To be said together or alternately by different groups)*

We believe  
in a God of justice,  
tender to the poor and oppressed  
who hears their cries;  
creating, loving, redeeming  
throughout history.

We believe  
in the Son of God,  
made human.  
He suffered and died,  
because he challenged and upset  
the powers of his day.

We believe  
in the Spirit of God,  
the Spirit who gives life and joy,  
who moves us, touches us  
and keeps us going.

We believe  
that people are born  
to lead fulfilling, creative  
and productive lives.  
We believe that unemployment  
and frustrating work  
are a denial of God's image in us.

We believe  
that we have to search for the truth,  
be brave enough to proclaim it,  
and realise that we need each other  
to build community.

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#### A CONTEMPORARY CONFESSION OF FAITH

We are not alone, we live in God's world.  
We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus  
the Word made flesh  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

(Herts and Beds Industrial Mission)

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#### A WORKER'S STATEMENT OF BELIEF

I believe in God the Father, Maker of the Universe.  
He gives unity and order to all created things.  
He gives us the resources of the earth to sustain human life.  
He enables us to share in the continuing work of creation, as we exercise our vision and our skill.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.  
He worked as a carpenter and gave value to all human labour.  
He cared for people at their point of need.  
He died because of human hatred and jealousy.  
He rose to new life and is alive today.

I believe in the Holy Spirit.  
He makes Jesus Christ real to us.  
He inspires us to follow the pattern of Jesus' life.  
He helps us through the tension and uncertainty of our daily work.  
He gives us hope for the future along with other Christians

(No 83 of *Work in Worship* 1985)

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A CREED  
(by Dorothea Solle)

I believe in God  
who didn't create the world as something finished,  
as a thing which has to remain the same forever,  
who doesn't rule by eternal laws  
which are irrevocable,  
nor by the natural order of poor and rich,  
experts and uninformed,  
rulers and helpless.

I believe in God  
who wants conflicts among the living  
and the transformation of the existing  
by our work,  
by our politics.

I believe in Jesus Christ  
who was right when he  
'an individual who cannot do anything'  
like ourselves  
worked on the transformation of all things  
and perished in doing it.  
Looking at him I realise  
how our intelligence is crippled,  
our fantasy suffocated,  
our efforts wasted,  
because we don't live the way he lived.  
Every day I fear  
that he died in vain,  
because he is buried in our churches,  
because we have betrayed his revolution,  
in obedience and fear  
of the authorities.

I believe in Jesus Christ  
who rises into our lives  
in order that we may be freed

from prejudice and arrogance,  
from fear and hatred,  
and may carry forward his revolution  
towards his kingdom.

I believe in the Spirit  
who came with Jesus in the world;  
in the community of all nations  
and in our responsibility  
for what will become of our earth,  
a valley of misery, starvation and violence  
... or the city of God.  
I believe in just peace,  
which can be achieved;  
in the possibility of a meaningful life for all  
in the future of this, God's world. Amen.

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#### CREED OF CAMILLO TORRES

We believe in a loving God  
whose Work sustains our lives  
and the work of our hands in the universe.

For he is Life.  
We believe in his Son among us  
who brought the seed of life's renewal.  
He lived with the poor to show the meaning of love;  
He is the Lord.

We believe in the Spirit of Life,  
who makes us one with God;  
Whose strength and energy renews our fight  
for she is Love.

We believe in the Church of God  
at the service of all people,  
so that we may see the truth on earth;  
She bears his Word.

We believe in this new life  
which bread and wine give to us,  
to work for God in unity.  
this is our glory.

We believe in everlasting life  
and the future of a new world,  
where the word of God will be the truth to all  
in Christ our Lord.

# OFFERTORY

## MATERIAL FOR USE AT A SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION/MASS/LORD'S SUPPER

During the offertory hymn the money collection will be offered, together with offerings of the tokens of different types of work. (Members of the congregation can be invited to bring to the service tokens (portable ones!) of their own work. A selection of these could be brought up as part of the Offertory Procession and offered immediately after the offerings of money and the bread and wine. And/or a work exhibition could be displayed in the church. This could include examples of the work of local industry etc. These would be 'offered' at this point.)

*After this the following prayer will be used.*

**We offer you, Lord, ourselves and our work. Please accept it as a token of our gratitude to you, and in the hope that it will contribute to the building of your kingdom on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*At the offering of the bread, the president may say*

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the Bread of life.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

*Similarly at the offering of the cup*

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

*The minister, accepting the alms, says*

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. All things come from you and of your own do we give you.

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O Lord God, in and with these gifts of bread and wine - the products of human labour - we offer you our daily work. And as it is your will to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ, so we ask you also to transform our work, that it may better contribute to your saving purpose; to your praise and glory. **Amen.**

(David Welbourn)

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## OFFERTORY PRAYER FOR AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Lord Jesus, we bring before you the impoverishment of unemployment:

the waste of human potential

the undermining of relationships

the devastation of communities.

We bring before you the great injustices of our industrial society.

We bring before you our nation,  
with all its divisions between rich and poor,  
powerful and powerless,  
north and south,  
employed and unemployed.  
Lord Jesus, we bring before you all these weighty concerns.  
We offer them with these our gifts of bread and wine,  
praying that as the bread and wine are transformed into your Body and Blood,  
so our nation may be transformed,  
so that your grace may flow into our world,  
bringing hope and healing, reconciliation and peace,  
joy and understanding. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

We come with offerings - our skills, our symbols, our time,  
our hopes, our pleasure in one another's company.  
All these things we bring to God in dedication, and for use  
in the glory of the realm of God.

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## MATERIAL FOR GENERAL USE

### THE OFFERING OF WORK [Medway Towns]

*The President of the [Medway] Chamber of Commerce will say:*

We have brought these tokens of our products to our Cathedral Church, as a sign that all things come from God, and that it is he who gives the skills of mind and hand.

*The Dean will say:*

These tokens of your work and tools of your trade have been placed around God's altar in your Cathedral Church of... Will you now ask his blessing on all your labours, and on all who work with you.

*All will say:*

We dedicate to you, O God, the industries of our towns, that all who work in them, by hand or brain, may serve to your glory and the good of others, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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### AN OFFERTORY PRAYER

*All say*

**Living God**  
**We come with no great gifts to offer,**  
**We are ordinary people**

**Yet what we have we bring to you  
To make your love felt in other people's lives.  
We offer you our time and our talents  
At home, at work and in the market place.  
Use us fully so that your love may shine through us  
And the light of your kingdom  
May illuminate the world. Amen.**

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AT THE OFFERTORY

*Minister*

For the places where we work, and for all who work with us.

*All*

**We ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

*Minister*

For those who use or enjoy the things that we make.

*All*

**We ask you to hear us, good Lord.**

*Minister*

And now, O Lord, accept and bless our labours, represented by these tokens which we offer at your altar, and grant that all our work may be offered for your glory and the service of our fellows; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

What do you bring to Christ's table?

**We bring bread,  
made by many people's work,  
from an unjust world  
where some have plenty  
and most go hungry.**

At this table all are fed,  
and no-one is turned away.

**Thanks be to God.**

What do you bring to Christ's table?

**We bring wine,  
made by many people's work,  
from an unjust world  
where some have leisure  
and most struggle to survive.**

At this table all share the cup  
of pain and celebration,

and no-one is denied.

**Thanks be to God.**

These gifts shall be for us  
the body and blood of Christ.

**Our witness against hunger,  
our cry against injustice,  
and our hope for a world  
where God is fully known  
and every child is fed.**

**Thanks be to God.**

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#### A PROCESSION OF SYMBOLS

*The representatives of the people assemble at the rear of the church, just before the Offertory Hymn*

#### AGRICULTURE

*Minister*

O Lord, we receive in your name this .... as a symbol of all that you have given us from field and garden.  
We commit ourselves to co-operate with you in your environment.

*People*

**Lord of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for your love and offer you our praise.**

#### BUSINESS

*Minister*

O Lord, we receive in your name this ... as a symbol of all that you have given us in factory, office, shop  
and the caring services. We commit ourselves in the market-place to co-operate with you.

*People*

**Lord of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for your love and offer you our praise.**

#### WEALTH

*Minister*

O Lord, we receive in your name this ... as a symbol of the wealth our work has produced. Change our  
hearts that we may give to others what you have given to us.

*People*

**Lord of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for your love and offer you our praise.**

#### HOMES

*Minister*

O Lord, we receive in your name this ... as a symbol of both the joy and the sadness, the comfort and the  
pain that comes to us in family life. May our homes be a demonstration of your peace.

*People*

**Lord of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for your love and offer you our praise.**

## LEISURE

*Minister*

O Lord, we receive in your name these ... as symbols of your re-creation in us through the gift of leisure, the challenge and excitement of sport and the relaxation of hobbies. We rejoice in your gifts to us.

*People*

**Lord of heaven and earth, we give you thanks for your love and offer you our praise.**

*During the offertory hymn the bearers of the symbols return to their seats.*

[Used at a Harvest Festival in a group of rural parishes]

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## HARVEST

### THE HARVEST OFFERING

#### The Offering of Soil

*Reader*

We bring the top soil of our fields, symbol of that which you have created and sun and rain have nurtured. You have laid the foundations of earth: and the heavens are the work of your fingers.

*Precentor*

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it;

**The compass of the world and those who dwell therein.**

#### The Offering of Seed

*Reader*

We bring the harvest of seeds for next year's crops;  
For clover, for hay and corn.  
You bring forth grass for the cattle, and all things green for use.

*Precentor*

That they may sow their land to yield them fruits of increase

**He blesses them so that they multiply greatly.**

#### The Offering of Grain

*Reader*

We bring the harvest of our cornfields, oat and wheat, rye and barley.  
You prepare their corn, for so you provide for the earth.

*Precentor*

We cannot live by bread alone:

**But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**

#### The Offering of Animal Produce

*Reader*

We bring the produce of our dairies, together with wool and leather.  
You cause grass to grow for the cattle.

*Precentor*

You open wide your hand  
**And fill all things living with your bounteous gifts.**

The Offering of Fruit

*Reader*

We bring the harvest of apples and pears and the fruits of bush and hedgerow;  
The tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine yield their strength.

*Precentor*

He gives food to all flesh:  
**For his mercy endures for ever.**

The Offering of Vegetables and Root Crops

*Reader*

We bring the harvest of vegetables: peas, potatoes, mangolds, turnips and sugar beet;  
O Lord, you preserve both man and beast; how excellent is your mercy O God.

*Precentor*

When you open your hands:  
**They are filled with good.**

The Offering of Flowers and Vineyards

*Reader*

We bring the harvest of flowers and of our vineyards.  
The trees bear their fruit, the fig tree and vine yield their fruit.

*Precentor*

You bring food out of the earth:  
**And wine that makes glad the human heart.**

The Gift of Resourcefulness

*Reader*

We bring symbols of the machinery we use,  
thanking you for your gifts of knowledge and invention, enabling us to use more adequately the resources  
of nature.  
God gives food to those who fear him, he remembers his covenant for ever.

*Precentor*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:  
**Those who keep his commandments are of good understanding.**

The Offering of Bread

*Reader*

In this loaf of bread we bring the harvest of our lands.  
For bread is the source of human strength and the fruit of human hands.

*Precentor*

To God, Creator, Redeemer, Judge, we offer back with thanksgiving that which he has given.  
**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty: for everything in  
heaven and earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.**

*The precentor receives the loaf, and facing the people says:*

Brothers and sisters; do not forget that the judgement of God is upon us, for any misuse of our stewardship; for any neglect of our land, for all waste and adulteration of our food, and for all injustice in its distribution that we can prevent.

With our thanksgiving therefore let us ask pardon for all failures in our stewardship, and pray God to accept this loaf of daily bread, as a sign of our thankfulness, and of our desire to dedicate both our work and our lives to his obedience.

*As the precentor places the bread upon the altar, all sing:*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise him all creatures here below,  
Praise him above, angelic host,  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

*Remain standing*

O God our Father, we thank you that once again you have fulfilled your gracious promise that, while earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not fail. We bless you for the kindly fruits of the earth which you have given for our use. Teach us, when we pray, that it is not by bread alone that we live; and grant us evermore to feed on him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. **Amen.**

*Precentor*

As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven...**

*Precentor*

May God who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the sky, who leads the lambs to pasture and the deer to water, who multiplied the loaves and fishes and changes water into wine,  
Lead us, feed us, multiply us, and change us to reflect the glory of our Creator through all eternity.  
**Amen.**

(From the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association's Harvest Thanksgiving, Norwich Cathedral, September 1995  
c. All Year Round (1996), The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.)

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Receive these gifts which you have moved us to make, as now we dedicate them all to your service; that they, with us your people, may be used to glorify you and to make your name be praised.

We dedicate ourselves again to your service, that our worship may be not only in word, but our whole lives, renewed in worship, may be living testimony to your love for the world, and your gift to the world of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name we make our prayer.

And to you our God, Creator, Saviour and Holy Spirit, be all praise, glory and dominion and power, now and for ever;

(Hugh Cross, c All Year Round (1996), The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland)

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## A PRAYER OF DEDICATION

O God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we offer and present to you our souls and bodies, our thoughts and desires, our words and deeds, to be a living and continual sacrifice; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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We offer you our daily work,  
that we may do it to your honour and glory.  
We offer you our leisure time,  
that we may use it wisely and well.  
We offer you our life together in your Church,  
that we may believe and worship, serve and witness as we ought.  
May we always be trustworthy, dependable, unselfish and kind,  
following the example of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

(From 'Companion to the Lectionary, Vol.3', c. Neil Dixon, Epworth 1983)

# INTERCESSIONS

## COMPLETE SETS OF INTERCESSIONS

O God the Father, Creator of all things:

**Have mercy upon us.**

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world:

**Have mercy upon us.**

O God the Holy Spirit, Giver of life:

**Have mercy upon us.**

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

**Have mercy upon us.**

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

**Good Lord, deliver us.**

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

**Good Lord, deliver us.**

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

**Good Lord, deliver us.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

Lord, when we are deciding how to make money, how to steward it, and what to do with it; help us to  
look hard at our motives, our aims and our prejudices - honestly, as in your sight.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake became poor; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. For your name's sake. Amen.

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#### A LITANY

For the riches of your creation, giving us the materials of the earth:

**We thank you, Lord.**

For the labour of our hands and minds, developing invention and skill:

**We thank you, Lord.**

For agriculture, industry and commerce, providing work and wealth and goods for the world:

**We thank you, Lord.**

For all who work in transport and distribution, service industries and local government, that in giving service they may find reward:

**Hear our prayer.**

For those in management and the trade unions, that mutual respect and good relations may always be maintained:

**Hear our prayer.**

For the unemployed and the handicapped, that they might not lose hope, and may find a positive role in life:

**Hear our prayer.**

For young people at work and those who educate and train them, that they may find promise and aspiration fulfilled:

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord the Creator, whose great goodness has provided for our needs; help us so to use, develop and preserve the resources of the earth that, through our industry, the needs of all may be fulfilled, human dignity enhanced, and our people live in true prosperity and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Eternal Lord God, to whom belong all power and dominion, we seek the guidance of your Spirit for all on whom is laid the responsibility of government. We pray for Members of Parliament and all others in authority in our land, that they may have wisdom to order the affairs of our nation in accordance with your will. Especially we pray for those wrestling with the economic difficulties we currently face, that through their endeavours there may be created a just and loving society to which all may feel they belong.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Almighty God, from whom all good gifts come, grant to those who hold office in our county the spirit of justice and truth, of wisdom and charity; that, mindful of their responsibility and the needs of those they

serve, they may promote the true welfare of all our people. May they have skill in dealing with the often-conflicting demands made on them, and wisdom in allocating the limited resources at their disposal. May they at all times give protection and help to those in special need.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

O God our Father, as we acknowledge our dependence on your bounty for our daily food, so we also seek your blessing on those engaged in agriculture. We pray that you will so prosper their work that the earth may yield to us its full harvest. At this time of great change and uncertainty for those who work on the land, we ask you to guide all who are planning the future shape of the agricultural industry.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray, too, Lord, for all who work in industry and commerce. We thank you for creating women and men in your own image, giving them the ability to turn raw material into objects of use and beauty. May they not forget their indebtedness to you, nor that their creative efforts are performed to your honour, the enrichment of humankind and the benefit of the earth.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

In you, Lord, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We pray for all engaged in the work of education and training. Bless the work of our universities, colleges, schools and training institutions, that in them your name may be honoured and from them may come men, women and young people you seek and love the truth as it is revealed in your Son Jesus Christ.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

We thank you, O God, for all who work in the social services, caring professions and in voluntary work. Help them combine sympathy with firmness and love with understanding. Uphold them when they grow weary, guard them from despair when human problems seem intractable, and renew them daily in your love.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Father we pray for the casualties of our economic life:  
for those whose work is monotonous or stressful,  
for the low-paid and those struggling to make ends meet,  
for the unemployed and those threatened with redundancy,  
for failed businesses and all victims of the recent recession,  
for those in debt, those who are ill, those who are homeless  
for those who are anxious or in despair.

May we all work together to strengthen the weak and empower the powerless.

Lord hear us:

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Let us say together the words of the Grace....

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AT HARVEST

God has made the earth fruitful and fertile  
**Rich in minerals and natural energy.**

God makes plants grow for us to harvest,  
**Producing enough food for all to be fed.**

God gives us wisdom and insight  
**To discover the secrets of the atom and the gene.**

We are able to design ingenious inventions  
**Which can transform people's lives.**

We receive all God's gifts with thanksgiving  
**And offer our work to God's glory.**

O Lord Jesus Christ  
who through your work as a carpenter  
shared the stress of daily life  
and knew its satisfactions and frustrations,  
strengthen us in our work  
that whatever we do, we may do it wholeheartedly  
to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

Almighty God, who has made us  
so that each of us is dependent on the work of many others,  
we pray for those with whom we work,  
for those who find it hard to do their work,  
that they may have strength.  
for those who are worried about their work,  
that they may have peace,  
for those who are difficult to work with,  
that we and they may have patience,  
that we may work together  
in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(c.Christine Allen, David Durston, Chris Powell and Wendy S Robins, SUNDAY, MONEY Resources Book,  
Cassell and Scripture Union, 1995)

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O Saviour of the world, who by your Cross and precious Blood have redeemed us.  
**Save and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.**

O Lord our governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations upon earth.

To our Queen and Government and all in authority, grant wisdom and foresight in the exercise of their duties, that they may provide for the needs of all our people, and fulfil our obligations to the community of nations.

Teach us as citizens of this country to rely on your strength and to accept our responsibilities to one another, that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honour your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Look mercifully, O Lord our God, upon the world of our day, and heal the sorrows and sufferings of humankind. Save the nations from the lust of power, from racial hatred and jealousy, from the worship of material things; and grant that in every land the rule of tyranny may be broken, the cause of righteousness may triumph, and all peoples may learn to serve you in the peace and freedom of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O merciful and loving Father of all, look down on the many millions who are hungry in the world today and are at the mercy of disease and famine. Grant that we who have lived so comfortably and gently all our lives many have true sympathy with them and do all in our power, as individuals and as a nation, to help them to that abundant life which is your will for them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God you have bound us together in this bundle of life; give us grace to understand how our lives depend upon the courage, the industry, the honesty and integrity of our fellow men and women; that we may be mindful of their needs, grateful for their faithfulness, and faithful in our responsibilities to them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us commend to Almighty God the Single European Market, that it may serve rather than dominate, persuade rather than insist, and come to realise its place in the Order of Things set forth in Christ. In the knowledge of ourselves, our abilities and limitations, we pray in words first used by Sir Francis Drake:

**O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory. Amen.**

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#### FOR CIVIC LEADERS

Almighty and eternal God, you know the desires and needs of your people: keep watch, in your goodness, over all those in authority who hold public office. Give them a keen sense of justice, a true spirit of service, and a true love and respect for all those whom they serve. Give them the wisdom to discern and the courage to do what is right, and save them from the snares of expediency; that people everywhere may enjoy freedom, security and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

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Creator God,  
in this beautiful and dangerous world in which you have placed us,

we pray today for all who, in your name, seek to bring order out of chaos.

Where the forces of darkness and fear are mustered, we know you are present in power.

O Jesus, you walked this way when you came in human form.  
You have known the tension, the heartache and the hurt.

Through your work and ministry lead us in the real world,  
where evil has to be confronted, and lights have to puncture the darkness.

Stimulate us to give active support to those who are in the firing line,  
by prayer, by word, by letter,  
greeting them as your children and encouraging them by our own faithfulness.

(YMCA)

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Lord, we thank you for all those people who have struggled for justice and peace in their generation.  
May we rejoice with them by continuing that struggle until the world reflects your glory.  
Lead us out of darkness to walk as children of light.  
Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son.  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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#### A RESPONSIVE PRAYER

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

Whether we work alone, or with others,  
with hand or brain,  
in a shop or a hospital,  
**we give out work to you, Lord God.**

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

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

Whatever we do,  
give us a sense of wonder.  
Whatever we make,

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

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

(Greater Manchester Industrial Mission)

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O Christ, you are within each of us. It is not just the interior of these walls, it is our own inner being you have renewed. We are your temple not made with hands; we are your body. If every wall should crumble and every church decay, we are your habitation. Nearer are you than breathing, closer than hands and feet. Ours are the eyes with which you look out in compassion on the world. Yet we bless you for this place, for your directing of us, your redemption and your indwelling. Take us outside, Lord, out to where the forces of this world clash with one another. So shall this building continue to be justified. We ask this for your name's sake. **Amen.**

O God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope, from fear to trust, from hate to love. Let peace fill our hearts and the universe. **Amen.**

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Living God,  
when we feel the shaking of the foundations  
and try to retreat into the security of the past,  
**teach us that you are the God of the future.**

Living God,  
when we are tempted to despair,  
when events move so quickly  
and it seems there is no way forward,  
**teach us that you are the God of hope.**

Living God,  
when things happen beyond our understanding  
and we find our trust in you is threatened,  
**teach us that you are the God of faith.**

Living God,  
in a fast-moving world, when we find our values questioned  
and it is not easy to perceive what is right,  
**teach us that you are the God of all wisdom.**

So that we may learn to live each day  
in company with you  
**and to follow you wherever you will lead us. Amen.**

(Nigel Collinson, President of Conference 1996-97, in For the Healing of the Nations: (Methodist) Prayer Handbook, 1996-1997)

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Lord, you have set us an example: you have shown us how we should treat one another. Yet in so many situations and places people relate to one another with greed, with grasping, with violence, with hatred, with violence and injustice. We pray for people throughout the world who are in positions of leadership and responsibility. May they know the way of servanthood. May all who hold political and monetary power use that power to serve with integrity those for whom they are responsible.

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

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We pray for all doctors, nurses and emergency workers. May they rejoice in the skills you have given them which enable them to bring hope, healing and wholeness to those in their care. May they also know guidance and support in times of pain and frustration when their skills are not enough to prevent permanent injury, disability or death. Bless each one of them, that they may be a blessing to others.

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

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## EDUCATION SUNDAY

Father God, in the power of the Holy Spirit we bring our concerns and worries about education and all people involved in this work.

Father God, we give you thanks for:  
our education system  
all teachers  
all who work in education  
the joys of teaching.

We pray that all who are involved will use their skill wisely, feel themselves to be valued and help the students in their care to learn and grow.

Father God, we remember the work of teachers, the men and women who have trained hard, and now use their skills in educating others. We acknowledge their work, and we want to understand the joys, the stresses and the strains they feel in their daily work.

Father God, we pray for:  
dedicated teachers  
teachers who feel inadequate or stressed.

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

Father God, we pray for:  
struggling or unsupported teachers

teachers who feel overwhelmed by their workload.

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

Father God, we pray for teachers in:

special needs schools  
infant and junior schools  
secondary schools  
colleges and universities  
adult education.

**Lord God, we remember of these people in their various tasks; give them energy, commitment and a sense of purpose in their work.**

Father God, we pray for:

Schools learning how to be responsible for their own budgets  
Governors learning how best to support and motivate school workers  
Head teachers trying to motivate themselves and others  
Teachers whom we know personally.

**Lord God, we remember of these people in their various tasks; give them awareness, sensitivity and a sense of purpose in their work.**

Father God, we pray for:

People training to be teachers  
People considering a career in education.

**Lord God, we remember all these people in their various situations, give them a clear sense of direction.**

Lord, we know that teaching can be a thankless task. Help us to be aware of the needs of those who have the responsibility for educating others. May we as a community be supportive and caring, offering a listening ear and practical concern whenever we can; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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

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AT HARVEST

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

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

Lord God, we pray for your Church throughout the world.

May there be a harvest of freedom, places where your Spirit moves in and through us, your people, that we might be all that you call us to be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Eternal God, you call us to be in the world but not of the world, and sometimes it is hard for us to find the right balance. We know we have a responsibility to be salt and light for society, and we pray for this aspect of our Christian commitment.

Eternal God, this is our prayer and our desire, to serve you in serving others. Equip us for this service and motivate us to action.

We remember and pray for:

- chaplains to institutions, industry, places of education, prisons, hospitals and the armed forces
- those involved in the work of urban and rural mission
- those involved in industrial mission
- those involved in local broadcasting.

Eternal God, there are so many initiatives seeking to bring a Christian perspective to life. Enable each person involved in these initiatives to shine with the light of Jesus, and find ways to share the gospel with love and sensitivity, in word and deed.

**Eternal God, this is our prayer and our desire, to serve you in serving others. Equip us for this service, and motivate us to action.**

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

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#### STEWARDS OF OPPORTUNITY

(For use at Holy Communion)

As bread is broken for the world  
**May we see the world's brokenness.**

As we share the bread with others,  
may we share our time and money.  
Make us good stewards  
of what we leave in our pockets,  
as well as accountable for what we give.  
In our common life,  
may we remember the God of Creation,  
the mothering, enfolding, naming God,  
the God who never abandons us.

As wine is poured out for the world  
**may we see the world's pain.**

As we share the cup of suffering  
with our neighbour,  
may we also share our experience.  
May we be good stewards of opportunity  
to listen, to confront, to work  
for healing, peace and community.  
In our common life,  
may we remember the God of redemption,  
the saving, salving, suffering God,  
the God who never forgets us.

Thanks be to God,  
whose broken hands  
are inscribed with our names  
and whose Spirit calls us to account.

(Kate McIlhagga, from URC Prayer Handbook 1993)

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#### INTERCESSIONS AT HOLY COMMUNION

(based on the framework provided by the Anglican Alternative Service Book 1980)

We praise and thank you for your work in Creation, for the wonder, the order and the unity of our world.

Lord, we thank you for calling us to work for you to bring other people to know you and to love you.

We ask your blessing on all those who follow you, for all of us who are your Church throughout the whole world.

We pray that we may all give ourselves to your service in our schools, our work, our homes and in all that we do.

Lord in your mercy:  
**hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for all those who have difficult and unpleasant jobs:

For those who collect rubbish, those who maintain the sewers, for those who clean very dirty places, for those working in slaughter houses.

Let us pray for those whose jobs can be unpopular:

For those who assess and collect our taxes, debt collectors, club doormen, traffic wardens, prison officers.

Let us pray for all those whose jobs are very dangerous:

For firefighters, for fishermen, for those in the security forces, and for all who risk their lives that we may live safely.

Lord in your mercy:  
**hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for families where young people are preparing for their working life, that they may be given good career guidance.

Let us pray for wisdom and commitment on the part of careers officers and training agencies.

Let us pray that in choosing their jobs young people may be moved by the ideal of service for others.

Let us pray that all people in their work may find that right balance between family and work.

Let us pray for all families where work necessitates unsocial hours, long commuting journeys daily, and frequently moving house.

Help us to value and appreciate all the work which is done to create and to run our homes and to care for our families.

Lord in your mercy:  
**hear our prayer.**

Now let us pray for those who are finding life difficult because of the worries and uncertainties they have about their work.

For those who over-drive or pressurise others, or themselves.

Lord, we remember before you all those who have to face redundancy, those who are unemployed and all who are helping them to return to employment.

We pray for those who find it difficult to keep pace with the tempo which is expected of them in their work, those beginning to fail physically or mentally.

We ask your mercy on those who break others.

We pray for all who have become ill through the stresses and strains, the risks and the dangers of their work, and we pray also for all those engaged in occupational medicine.

For Health and Safety officers, for factory inspectors, for all responsible for removing or improving dangerous work situations.

Lord in your mercy:  
**hear our prayer.**

We thank you for the wealth of knowledge brought to us through medical research, and for the healing ministry of doctors and nurses.

Strengthen them for their tasks and give them the joy of knowing that they are part of your own purpose of healing in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Lord in your mercy:  
**hear our prayer.**

Let us remember all who have died in the faith of Christ, especially giving thanks for their contribution to the life and work of our world.

Lord, now that their work on earth is done, grant them your peace and eternal rest.

We remember before you the members of our own families who have died former work mates and colleagues.

We commend to you all who have died as a consequence of their work, whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Merciful Father,  
**accept our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

(From 'Work in Worship', Peterborough Diocese People and Work Programme)

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#### AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Lord, help us to remember  
that work in industry is the principal way in which we provide for our material needs and the needs of others, and helps to maintain our social services and leisure;  
that work is for people, not people for work;  
that money, machines and materials are things, while workers, suppliers and customers are people;  
that in our type of society, those who cannot find work feel their dignity is diminished;  
that life is more than work.

So let us pray  
for those who seek work but cannot find it;  
for those who over-work and neglect others;  
for those who should work but avoid it;  
for those who do work but resent it;  
for those who exploit work and demean it;  
for efficient production, honest marketing and responsible use of resources;  
for more justice in the sharing of this world's goods in our own community and between nations;  
for the unemployed, their families, and other victims of economic forces;  
for all Christians at work, that they may look on their employment as ministry, and feel supported in it by their local church;

for the whole world, as it faces the challenge of change and the impact of new technologies.

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#### AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Lord, we pray for your Church:  
for those who lead us...  
for those who teach us...  
for all who break bread with us...  
Help those of us who are unemployed  
to share with those in work  
in the struggle for justice  
for all men and women.

Lead us out from darkness  
**to walk as children of light.**

We pray for our national leaders...  
for those who advise them...  
for the leaders of industry and commerce...  
for writers and broadcasters...  
May they work together  
to strengthen the weak  
and empower the powerless.

Lead us from darkness  
**to walk as children of light.**

Father, be with all of us who are in work...  
those facing redundancy...  
those in training...  
those whose work is unpaid, or undervalued...  
and those without a job...  
May we support and love one another  
as Christ loves and values us.

Lead us out of darkness  
**to walk as children of light.**

Father, we pray for the casualties of our economy...  
for those whose work is monotonous...  
for those poorly paid...  
for those suffering discrimination...  
for unemployed people and their families...  
for those living in poverty...  
for those who are homeless...  
for those who are ill...  
for those in despair...

Help us reject the notion that some have the right to wealth  
at the expense of others.

Lead us out from darkness  
**to walk as children of light.**

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#### AT AN UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Unemployed... redundant... laid off... unqualified... surplus labour.

These words cut into me, severing all feeling of usefulness.  
What kind of body-part am I now?  
What sort of foot or hand, eye or ear, can I be if I don't work?  
Does the body still need me?

Creator God,  
I've got this ideas I must be active and busy,  
doing big things in your name;  
prophesying to the world,  
eradicating poverty.  
Yet it is the everyday struggles  
that can be so demanding:  
just about making ends meet,  
maintaining some dignity.  
I might not have been the greatest worker  
but now I've been put on the scrap heap.

Teacher Christ,  
We need to learn a new way of being.  
Show us how to be prophets in every situation,  
Employed or unemployed,  
Underpaid or overworked,  
so that the justice of labour shared  
may truly build up your body  
in honour and rejoicing.

(Janet Lees & Bob Warwicker, from URC Prayer Handbook 1994)

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#### PRAYERS FOR PARTICULAR SECTORS.

(A). WATER [for use on Sea Sunday, for example.]

We pray  
For all who work at sea;  
For all those who give service to the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, and its work;  
For Naval Chaplains, and Missions to Seamen chaplains;

For those sailing under flags of convenience;  
For those working on the cross-channel ferries, and the ferries in Scotland;  
For those working to bring us food: fishermen and fish farmers;  
For those drilling for oil and natural gas;  
For all divers.

We remember that all these face difficulty and danger.  
We give thanks for their knowledge of the sea, their courage on putting out into the deep, their patience and their skill.

We pray:  
For all those who cause pollution or environmental or ecological damage through negligence, carelessness, greed or accident, remembering that as we benefit from their harvest, so we share the responsibility for its side-effects.  
For those anxious about over-fishing and those trying to protect whales and dolphins;  
For those who have lost their boats or their jobs because of problems in the fishing and shipbuilding industries;  
For those whose hobby is angling, sailing or boating.

We give thanks:  
For the work of the National Rivers Authority;  
For the beauty of our waterways and coasts;  
For time for recreation.

We pray for those without clean water or with no water supply at all.  
We remember the women whose back-breaking task it is to fetch water.  
We pray for those facing drought, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.  
We pray for those whose homes or work places or fields have been destroyed by floods.  
We remember the poverty that forces people to live on marginal land.  
We pray for those who are sick or dying because of dirty water.

We give thanks for those who work in the water industry, who deal with sewage, who supply us with clean water - the technicians, engineers, pipelayers... all those who work for [Anglian Water - or name other area water authority.]

We give thanks for those who monitor the cleanliness of our beaches.  
We remember all those who have died at sea.  
We remember our own death and resurrection in the waters of baptism.

(From 'Work in Worship', Peterborough Diocese People and Work Programme)

## (B). INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Lord, we pray for those making international and national decisions about the 'Information Super-Highway';  
that the whole range of considerations - political, economic, personal, sectional, communal - may be properly taken into account.

Lord, we pray for those setting up and administering national data-banks; we give thanks for the good they can do in co-ordinating information. We remember those who misuse the information they hold.

Lord, we pray for those involved in Research and Development in computers; we remember the power and responsibility they have for making changes in our world and our lives. We remember those who have lost their jobs as a result of new technology.

Lord, we pray for those who have boring keyboard jobs, those who suffer from Repetitive Strain Injury, or eyestrain. We pray for willingness to deal with the causes of such problems.

Lord, we pray for those in small computing businesses; the difficulties they face in chasing creditors; the stress on them, the risks they have to take - perhaps even with their own homes.

Lord, we pray for those who write computer games: some which are used to do much good at school, others to encourage people to gamble, some which are used just to make money. We pray for those who are addicted to computer and arcade games, and for their families; and for those who are anxious about the violence of some computer games.

Lord, we pray for those frightened of computers and other sorts of new technology; those who feel they cannot master using them; those who feel old or who lose their confidence in the face of change and new things.

Lord, we pray that technology may be the servant, not the controller of our lives.

(From 'Work in Worship', Peterborough Diocese People and Work Programme)

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#### INTERCESSIONS ON THE THEME OF VOCATION

Remember how Jesus called fishermen to be his disciples and to become fishers of men. Give thanks for their skills as fishermen, their readiness to put out into the deep to face danger and failure.

Pray for ourselves and our daily work.

Give thanks for the God-given skills we already have; pray for wise and good use of these skills in building his kingdom.

Pray for those thinking about changing their jobs - especially those unhappy or insecure at work; those feeling undervalued or unfulfilled; those who can't wait for 5pm on Friday; those who are in the wrong job.

Pray for those with no sense of direction or purpose or vocation;  
for those drifting;  
for those wanting to do a particular job, but unable through disability, illness, lack of confidence or lack of opportunity;  
for those who are unemployed.

Pray for those at school or college now making decisions which will affect their working lives.

Pray for all Careers Advisers.

Pray for those who taught us our jobs;

for our colleagues,  
for our managers.

(From 'Work in Worship', Peterborough Diocese People and Work Programme.)

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Let us pray for this community; for its officers and elected representatives, magistrates, police and social workers, all who have influence and authority and make decisions that affect the lives of others. Particularly let us pray for those who hold together community life in shops and offices, schools, churches and clinics, in homes and clubs and on the streets.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for industrialists and employers coping with financial difficulties and forced to make decisions that affect the lives of so many.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for those whose work is dull and monotonous, and for those whose work is dangerous, or threatens their family life by difficult hours or enforced absence for long periods.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Above all let us pray for those who cannot find work and for whom redundancy and unemployment undermines their confidence in themselves, and reduces life to dull monotony.

Lord in your mercy,  
**Accept our prayers and praises for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

A LITANY

For the riches of your creation, giving us the material of the earth:  
**We thank you, Lord.**

For human ability to unlock the secrets of nature and to develop science and technology:  
**We thank you, Lord.**

For those engaged in scientific research, applying their skills to life-enhancing projects:  
**We thank you, Lord.**

For agriculture, industry and commerce, providing work and wealth and goods for the world:  
**We thank you, Lord.**

For all who work in transport and distribution, service industries and local government, that in giving service they may find reward:

**Hear our prayer.**

For those in management and the trade unions, that mutual respect and good relations may obtain:

**Hear our prayer.**

For the unemployed and the handicapped, that they may not lose hope, and may find a positive role in life:

**Hear our prayer.**

For young people at work, and those who educate and train them, that they may find promise and aspiration fulfilled:

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord the Creator, whose great goodness has provided for our needs; help us so to use, develop and preserve the resources of the earth that, through our science, technology and industry, the needs of all may be fulfilled, the dignity of all enhanced, and the well-being and safety of the planet ensured; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### RESPONSORY

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has given us freedom and strength to squander his gifts or invest them.

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has given us talents and skills to multiply good in the world.

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has given us various virtues to help build the life of the whole.

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has shown us the way to true riches by the self-giving love of his Son.

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

Heavenly Father, by your Son Jesus Christ you taught us that all that we have comes from your generosity. Help us to be faithful stewards of our time, our talents and our wealth; that by diligent pursuit of profit we may create prosperity, not for our ease alone, but for the building up of your kingdom of justice and peace, where you reign one God, now and for ever. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, we remember  
that work in industry is the principal way in which we provide for our material needs and the needs of others, and help to maintain our social services and leisure;  
that work is for people, not people for work;  
that money, machines and materials are things, while workers, suppliers and customers are people;  
that in our type of society, those who cannot work feel their dignity is diminished;  
that life is more than work.

*The Leader announces what the response is after each bidding*

Let us thank God  
for the gift of life and the resources of the world;  
for our share in the continuing work of creation;  
for human skill and inventiveness, enterprise and hard work.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God  
for industry, commerce and administration and its many products of food, transport, roads, houses, clothing, medicines, machines, fresh water, sewage disposal, heat and light, milk and mail;  
for those who work to maintain the fabric of our community, in shops, offices, factories and farms.

Let us thank God  
for engineers and technologists, for technicians and sales people, for those who work in finances, and industrial research and development;  
for those who plan and manage;  
for the principal organisations of industry, for companies, for professional associations, for employers' organisations and the trade unions.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God  
that we are made in the image of his Son;  
called to share in his reconciling work, called to resist evil, to transform nature and to proclaim his concern for people.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God  
for those who are not employed but still contribute to the life and well-being of society - for housewives, the retired, the disabled, the unemployed, and children.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

*Leader announces new bidding and response*

Let us pray

for those who seek work but cannot find it;  
for those who over-work and neglect others;  
for those who should work but avoid it;  
for those who do work but resent it;  
for those who exploit work and demean it.

Lord in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray  
for efficient production, honest marketing and responsible use of resources;  
for the unemployed, their families and other victims of economic forces;  
for more justice in the sharing of the world's goods in our own community and between nations;

Lord in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray  
for all Christians at work, that they may look on their employment as ministry and feel supported in it by  
their local church;  
for the whole world, as it faces the challenge of change and the impact of new technologies.

Lord in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

\*\*\*\*\*

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and  
discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and  
destruction.

**This is true: "I have come that they may have life,  
and have it abundantly".**

It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last  
word, and that war and destruction have come to stay  
for ever.

**This is true: "For to us a child is born, to us a son  
is given in whom authority will rest, and whose name  
will be Prince of Peace".**

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of  
evil that seek to rule the world.

**This is true: "To me is given all authority in heaven  
and on earth, and lo, I am with you to the earth of the  
world".**

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are  
specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church,  
before we can do anything.

**This is true: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions and your old folk shall dream dreams".**

It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of humankind, our dreams of justice, of human dignity, of peace, are not meant for this earth and this history.

**This is true: "The hour comes, and is now, that true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth".**

God of history,  
You share our joys and our crushing sorrows,  
You hear the cries of the afflicted,  
You fill the hungry,  
And you set free the oppressed.  
We pray for the end to all injustice.  
Inspire us with the all-embracing love of God,  
Challenge us with the sacrificial love of Jesus,  
Empower us with the transforming love of the Spirit,  
That we and all God's people may live and be free.  
Amen.

(c. 1991 Wild Goose Resource Group, Iona Community)

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## **MISCELLANEOUS INTERCESSORY PRAYERS**

For the potential you have given us  
For the possibilities that lies before us  
**We thank you, heavenly Father.**

For our plans and their fulfilment  
For your promises and their enjoyment  
**We thank you, heavenly Father.**

In the problems that await us  
In the perils that will meet us  
**Protect us, heavenly Father.**

In the pains of our achievements  
In the powers that would control us  
**Protect us, heavenly Father.**

In our purposes and leisure  
In our passions and our pleasure  
**Protect us, heavenly Father.**

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

#### COVENANT AND CONTEXT

Lord of all creation, alive in the health and wealth of your world,  
You invest in humanity a profound trusteeship.  
Instil in each of us at our work new attitudes to your economy,  
That we may generate wealth, distribute it with justice  
and enhance the well-being and common good of communities and nations;  
while renewing the capacity of this awesome earth;  
through Jesus Christ, our example and our living Lord.

(Peter Challen)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Almighty God, you have made us in your own image  
and given us power over the rest of your creation.  
Enable us to develop the economy of this nation  
In a way suited to the needs of its people.  
Provide, we pray, the financial resources required.  
Help us to make good use of all our human resources,  
to develop the land with crops and livestock,  
and to plan wisely in industry and commerce.  
Show us the dangers we face in our current practices  
and help us to learn from our mistakes.  
May we not impoverish our country,  
destroy its natural wealth and beauty,  
pollute its environment,  
or lose sight of you;  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Adapted from 'Prayers for Today' by W N Richards and J Richardson, Uzima Press, Nairobi 1977)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### THE INTERESTS OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Almighty God, creator and sustainer of all things,  
Inspire all who are in positions of authority and responsibility  
in every aspect of industry and commerce,  
that they may be aware of their responsibilities in all their decision-making,  
not only for justice towards their customers, their suppliers, their fellow employees and their  
shareholders,  
but for the well-being of the wider community.

May they also remember their responsibility for stewardship of all the resources you have given us in your creation;  
this we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord.

(James Siddons)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO OTHERS

O God, the creator of the universe and for all the resources therein;  
endow us with the wisdom and will to use them to our best ability  
to create wealth for the benefit of all communities and peoples.  
Keep us from the temptation to divert them for personal gain only;  
rather may we ensure a more equitable distribution to all humankind.  
Keep us from abdicating our responsibilities to others  
and make us truly accountable for all our activities, not least to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

(Fred Bonner)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### CONTRACT OR COVENANT

O God, our freedom,  
who sent Moses to those required to make bricks without straw,  
Help us to empower those who are overloaded by oppressive contracts or conditions of work,  
that they may share in the freedom of your good purposes,  
and may know once again the dignity of those made in your image;  
through Jesus Christ whose work was to restore our full humanity.

(Ian Yearsley)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### THE BLESSING OF THE TEAM

O Christ, whose risen presence gave abundance to the everyday task of the disciples at Tiberias,  
We give thanks for the fellowship of every place where work is shared.  
We pray that all may know that they share in your creative task,  
in fellowship with you and one another.

(Ian Yearsley - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, our companion in the wilderness,

we pray for the early-retired, those made redundant or whose businesses have collapsed,  
that they may find new opportunities to labour, and a new sense of their own value.

(Ian Yearsley adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

## STRUCTURAL SIN

Lord God our redeemer,  
who heard the cry of your people,  
and sent your servant Moses to lead them out of slavery:  
Help us to work now with those enslaved by structures, institutions, poverty or power,  
That led by your Spirit we may journey with them into the land of Promise;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Christine Latham)

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for the abundance of your creation,  
For our part in making and shaping it.  
May our work fulfil our needs and the needs of others,  
Through it, may we be able to enjoy our lives and give joy to others.

(Pam Ware)

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for rest and play,  
but above all for our work,  
which gives us purpose,  
fills our days,  
tests our mettle,  
develops our skills.  
Thank you for shared endeavour,  
which binds us together,  
breaks down boundaries,  
enhances our achievements.

(Tony Lucas - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Father, we offer you our human enterprises,  
with all their aspirations,  
with all their failures.  
Thank you for those whose ambitions are matched by integrity, who strive for justice as well as their own  
advancement.  
Thank you for those whose long-range vision eschews short term solutions.  
For those who reject conventional wisdom and speak unpopular truths.

(John Cribb - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

## INNER LONGINGS

Lord of this world  
We work  
We watch  
We wait for you.  
Come down  
Come in  
Come among us.

Lord of this life  
We labour  
We look  
We long for you.  
Come down  
Come in  
Come among us.

Lord of this second  
We strive  
We serve  
We search for you.  
Come down  
Come in  
Come among us.

That we may dwell in you  
And you in us  
For ever.

(David Adam)

\*\*\*\*\*

## A LITANY

O Son of Mary:  
**Consecrate our homes.**

Son of David:  
**Cleanse our politics.**

Son of Man:  
**Rule the affairs of nations.**

Son of God  
**Give us eternal life.**

Jesus the carpenter  
**Hallow our daily work.**

Jesus the Christ:  
**Deliver a world which waits for you.**

Jesus the Saviour:  
**Save us from ourselves.**

Jesus the life-giver:  
**Renew your Church.**

Word of God:  
**Perfect your creation.**

Lord exalted at the Father's side:  
**Raise us to live with you in God.**

(SCM 1924)

\*\*\*\*\*

This is the day that the Lord has made  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

We will not offer to God  
**offerings that cost us nothing.**

Spirit of God,  
brooding over the waters  
of our chaos,  
**inspire us to generous living.**

Wind of God,  
dancing over the desert  
of our reluctance  
**lead to the oasis of celebration.**

Breath of God,  
inspiring communication  
among strangers  
**make us channels of your peace.**

that we may give  
in deep thankfulness,  
placing the overflowing basket  
**of our gifts on the table of rejoicing.**

(Kate McIlhagga, in URC Worship Handbook 1983)

\*\*\*\*\*

IN THE LIGHT OF THE CITY AT NIGHT...

... The Spirit is suffering, striving, creating,

Blessings, guidance and fierce and tender love  
for those who wake while others sleep:  
on night shifts in factories...  
watching over buildings...  
traveling through the city...  
cleaning offices...  
stocking supermarket shelves...  
in ambulances, police cars, fire engines...  
observing and researching...  
alert of power stations and waterworks...  
at telephone exchanges...  
at parties and night clubs...  
driving taxis, buses, coaches, trains...  
flying over the city in planes...  
speeding by the city on motorways...  
thieving and attacking in the dark...  
searching out the secrets of others...  
hustling and walking the streets...  
huddling in doorways...  
listening to those in despair...  
crying out in loneliness...  
suddenly taken ill...  
trying to sleep but cannot...  
restless and awake in hospital...  
coping with crises...  
watching and caring...  
awake with young children...  
calming the confused...  
dying at home, in hospice or hospital...  
keeping vigil with them..  
... and those on the other side of the world for whom it is day.

(c. Jim Cotter)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord we pray,

That people may increasingly work together in agreement,  
doing things which are sane to do,  
with mutual helpfulness and tolerance;

That the great masses of humanity  
may rise out of dwarfing pressures and cramped surroundings

To understanding and participation;

That the resources of the earth  
may be husbanded and harvested,  
economised and used  
with scientific skill for the maximum of human benefit;

That towns and cities may be finely built  
and men and women finely taught and trained;

That there may be open ways  
and peace and freedom  
from end to end of the earth;

That through the great body of humankind  
may go evermore  
an increasing common understanding,  
an intensifying fellowship. **Amen.**

(Prayers for the City of God - slightly adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Behold, O Lord God, our strivings after a truer and more abiding order. Give us visions that bring glory to the earth, and dreams that foreshadow the better order which Thou hast prepared for us. Scatter every excuse of frailty and unworthiness; consecrate us all with a heavenly mission; open to us a clearer prospect of our work. Give us strength according to our day gladly to welcome our tasks and gratefully to fulfil them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Bishop Westcott - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Grant us O God,  
a vision of our world, fair as it might be;  
a world of justice where none shall prey on others;  
a world of plenty, where vice and poverty shall cease to fester;  
a world of fellowship, where success shall be founded on service, and honour given to worth alone;  
a world of peace, where order shall not rest on force, but on the love of all for God and for each other.  
**Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord,  
We pray for industrial peace and goodwill.

May we, and others, learn to seek first your Kingdom and righteousness,  
caring for justice more than gain,  
for fellowship more than domination.

May we have courage and energy

to think for ourselves strongly and clearly,  
to seek for truth  
and to follow it whatever the cost.

And Lord,  
we pray for deliverance from prejudice,  
and for a desire to appreciate what is true and just  
in the opinions of those who differ from us.

May we believe that whatever is right is possible.

Lord, we pray.  
that we may become trustworthy  
so that suspicion may give place to trust,  
and bitterness to goodwill. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Creator Lord,  
Breathing your own life into our being,  
You gave us the gift of life:  
You placed us on this earth,  
With its minerals and waters, flowers and fruits;  
Living creatures of grace and beauty!  
You gave us the care of the earth.  
Teach us, O Creator of all things,  
That the earth and all its fullness are yours,  
The world and those who dwell in it.  
Call us yet again to safeguard the gift of Life.

\*\*\*\*\*

O Christ, the Master Carpenter, who at the last through wood and nails purchased our whole salvation;  
wield well your tools in the workshop of your world, so that we who come rough-hewn to your work  
bench may be fashioned to a truer beauty by your hand. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

O God of all power and all love, you have created us to depend on one another. Make us aware of our  
reliance on the work and integrity of our fellows. Make us sensitive to their needs and their requirement  
of us, and by your grace enable us to serve them faithfully and wisely. Father, we commit our lives to  
your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

May the goodness of God be upon us:  
**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has given us freedom and strength  
To invest his gifts or squander them.

May the goodness of God be upon us:

**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has given us talents and skills  
To multiply good in the world:

May the goodness of God be upon us:  
**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

God has shown us the way to true riches  
By the self-giving love of his Son.

May the goodness of God be upon us:  
**May he prosper the work of our hands.**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### LITANY OF CREATION

Leader: In the beginning, God made the world:  
Women: Made it and mothered it,  
Men: Shaped it and fathered it,  
Women: Filled it with seed and with signs of fertility,  
Men: Filled it with love and its folk with ability.  
Leader: All that is green, blue, deep and growing  
All: God's is the hand that created you.  
Leader: All that is tender, firm, fragrant and curious,  
All: God's is the hand that created you.  
Leader: All that crawls, flies, swims, walks or is motionless,  
All: God's is the hand that created you.  
Leader: All that speaks, sings, cries, laughs or keeps silence,  
All: God's is the hand that created you.  
Leader: All that suffers, lacks, limps or longs for an end,  
All: God's is the hand that created you.  
Leader: The world belongs to the Lord,  
All: The earth and its people are his.

(From 'A Wee Worship Book', Iona Community)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

God bless the earth  
And all living creatures  
God bless the earth  
With its rugged features  
God bless the earth  
Every town and city  
God bless the earth

With all its industry  
God bless the earth  
Atmosphere and air  
God bless the earth  
Keep it in your care  
God bless the earth  
Protect the living soil  
God bless the earth  
May nothing despoil  
God bless the earth  
And its daily light  
God bless the earth  
Preserve it by your might

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

Eternal Father,  
source of life and light,  
whose love extends to all people,  
all creatures, all things:  
Grant us that reverence for life  
which becomes those who believe in you;  
lest we despise it, degrade it ,  
or come callously to destroy it.  
Rather let us save it,  
secure it, and sanctify it,  
after the example of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Robert Runcie)

\*\*\*\*\*

God our creator,  
you have made us one with this earth,  
  
to tend it and to bring forth fruit;  
may we so respect and cherish  
all that has life from you,  
that we may share in the labour of all creation  
to give birth to your hidden glory,  
through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Enjoy the earth gently  
Enjoy the earth gently  
For if the earth is spoiled

It cannot be repaired  
Enjoy the earth gently.

(David Adam)

\*\*\*\*\*

We're so glad we matter to you, Lord; that we are made in your image, and that you have given us a special place in creation to care for your earth. Give your strength of purpose to organisations involved in conservation and development - Christian Aid, TEAR Fund, Cafod, Save the Children, Help the Aged, War on Want, Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund among others. Help them - and us - to develop your earth for the health and quality of life of all people, and to share it in peace with the rest of creation, so that we won't damage the earth by selfish deforestation or river-damming or use of harmful chemicals. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, who ordained that your Son Jesus Christ, should labour with his hands to supply his own needs and the needs of others; teach us that no labour is without worth and that all labour to which you call us in divine; to the glory of your holy name. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Let us pray for the world of technology and scientific research.

Lord, you have endowed human beings with the ability to search out your laws and have given them the freedom to apply their knowledge as they choose. We ask your blessing on all engaged in scientific research and technology and on those who provide the resources for such work; that choice may be made of projects which both enhance human life and have regard to the safety and well-being of the natural order. May we thus be true stewards of your bounty, to our own inner satisfaction and your greater glory. **Amen.**

(David Welbourn)

\*\*\*\*\*

We remember that there are some who find themselves working on projects whose value they doubt or whose likely outcome they disapprove. Help them, Lord, to decide whether to stay on in the hope of effecting change or whether to leave. Especially we pray for those forced by economic necessity to remain in uncongenial work. May they know your forgiveness, and may the world of science and technology be ever open to your redeeming Spirit, that your will may be fulfilled in all that we do. **Amen.**

(David Welbourn)

\*\*\*\*\*

WORLD DEVELOPMENT

God our Father, in your care you have provided food for all your human family, but we have been careless with the resources of the earth and in distributing them fairly. Our hearts are touched by pictures of starving children, and we may even be moved to give, yet we do not urge governments to make changes in our economic and political life to remove the causes of hunger. Make us willing to share all that we have that others may have enough to eat. Help us to overcome the selfishness and apathy which stops us from helping others. You have provided for the needs of all your human family; do not let us frustrate your purpose by holding on to more than our fair share of the earth's goodness.

(From 'More Contemporary Prayers' - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, we live in a world divided between the overfed and the hungry, between the comfortable and the homeless, between those entrenched in privilege and those demanding their basic human rights. We see goodwill made ineffective by selfishness, and peacemakers trampled on because progress towards justice seems too slow. Yet also in our world, we see Jesus and we see his cross - not as they were long ago, but as they are now - wherever we allow his Spirit to govern human actions and to purify human motives. And so we renew our faith about the world, and through faith we find hope. You, Lord, are the source of this faith and hope, and you alone are the source of the love which can make this faith and this hope come alive. May we learn how to avoid obstructing your love. May we make haste to promote justice and to practice compassion - to overcome the strength of evil with the power of good; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(From 'More Contemporary Prayers' - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Give us, Father, a vision of our world as your love would make it:  
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;  
a world whose benefits are shared, so that everyone can enjoy them.  
a world whose different peoples and cultures live with tolerance and mutual respect;  
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is fired by love.  
And give us the courage to build it;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

IN INDUSTRY

God be in my hands and in my making

IN THE ARTS

God be in my senses and in my creating

IN THE HOME

God be in my heart and in my loving

IN COMMERCE

God be at my desk and in my trading

IN HEALING

God be in my skill and in my touching

IN GOVERNMENT

God be in my plans and my deciding

IN EDUCATION

God be in my mind and in my growing

IN RECREATION

God be in my limbs and in my leisure.

(Coventry prayer for the hallowing places in the old cathedral)

\*\*\*\*\*

Let us begin this new day with Christ, thanking him for all he has brought us, and asking him to bless us.

**Lord, accept and bless our work today.**

You offered yourself to the Father on our behalf; join our offering with yours.

**Lord, accept and bless our work today.**

You are gentle and humble of heart; teach us to receive others as you did.

**Lord, accept and bless our work today.**

As each day begins, may your light rise in our hearts; may it shine out in charity to the world.

**Lord, accept and bless our work today.**

Show your mercy on those who are sick; may each new day increase their trust in you.

Lord, accept and bless our work today.

(Phil Aspinall)

\*\*\*\*\*

We pray for all who are working today; be with them at home, in the city, in the factory and in the fields.

**Lord, help us as we work.**

We pray for all who plan and build our cities; give them respect for every human value.

**Lord, help us as we work.**

Pour out your Spirit on artists, craftsmen and musicians; may their work bring variety, joy and inspiration to our lives.

**Lord, help us as we work.**

We pray for those who have no work; we pray for the disabled and the sick, for those who cannot find work, and for those who are retired.

**Father, give them your strength.**

(Phil Aspinall - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, our heavenly Father, we ask you to hear us on behalf of all who live by strength of arm or skill of hand. For men who face peril. For women who suffer pain. For those who till the earth. For those who tend machinery. For those whose business is in the deep waters, for sailors and seafarers. For those who work in offices and warehouses. For those who buy and sell. For those who labour at furnaces and in factories. For those who toil in mines. For those who keep house, for those who train children. We pray for all women-workers. For all who control, rule or employ. For all who are poor, the broken and oppressed. For all whose labour is without honour. For all whose labour is without interest. For those who have too little leisure. For those who are underpaid. We pray for all who work in dangerous trades. For those who cannot find work. For those who have no home. For all prisoners, refugees and outcasts. For all who are sick, hungry or destitute. We pray, O Father, for all people everywhere, that it may please you to comfort, sustain, protect and support all for whom we desire to pray; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

From chaos and emptiness  
From loneliness and lifelessness  
**Come, Creator, come.**

From darkness and shapelessness  
From the abyss and dreadfulness  
**Come, Creator, come.**

From fearfulness and hopelessness  
From weariness and fruitlessness  
**Come, Creator, come.**

Come to your creation  
As we wait  
And watch  
and wish for you.  
Come and re-create us in your likeness,  
O God, who can create from nothing  
And bring order out of chaos.  
Come and re-fashion us in your glory.

(David Adam)

# CLOSING

May God the Father, the Creator and Lord of all, who calls you to share in his creative purpose, enable you to create after the pattern of his Son and in the power of his Spirit. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you in your work and in your homes, this day and for evermore. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Let us go to our work and into our relationships  
stimulated by hope,  
strengthened by faith,  
directed by love,  
to play our part in the liberation of all people,  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

## CLOSING RESPONSES

This is the day that the Lord has made  
**We will be glad and rejoice in it.**

We will not offer to God  
**offerings that cost us nothing.**

Go in peace and serve the Lord.  
**We will seek peace and pursue it.**

In the name of the Trinity of love  
**One God in perfect community. Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, you have called us to proclaim your gospel in word and deed.  
Help us to use our skills in your service, always seeking new ways of fulfilling our calling and learning to trust in you more and more.  
Your Church, the Body of Christ, is called to reach out to others.  
May we take seriously the task of mission, that all people may hear of your love for them,

**Lord, you command us to go: let us go in strength.**

With the power of the Holy Spirit to aid us and with the presence of Christ to guide us, we dedicate ourselves to your work. **Amen.**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord, you have called us to journey with you.  
You have promised to provide for our needs.  
We go forward into an unknown future, certain of your guiding hand, aware of your presence, and trusting in you for all that may come.  
In the name of him who trusted completely to your will, our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, by whose command alone we become your messengers, and whose grace enables us to give you the service that is acceptable: make us ever sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that we may heed your call and make the ready and worthy response of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord God Almighty, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ prayed for his disciples that in all the conflicts of the world you would keep them from the evil one: strengthen us to withstand every assault and temptation, and to follow you, the one true God; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage, hold fast to that which is good, render to no-one evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted, help the afflicted, honour all persons, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you always. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God our Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: give us grace to follow his example and unite us in the service of your Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God, who has given you the will, also grant you the strength to complete the work which he has begun in you, to the honour and glory of his name.

And the blessing....

(Slightly adapted, with the blessing added: From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

Make all our words fit for your hearing  
Make all our deeds acceptable in your sight  
Sanctify all our thoughts and desires  
And grant that, being pure in heart, we may see you; through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lived and died that we might have life. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, our Father, in Jesus Christ your Son you have called us to true discipleship and service.  
Help us to be always watchful of our attitudes, so that when Christ comes in glory to receive us we may be prepared to enter with him into his Kingdom.  
Help us to be faithful in all our relationships and diligent in all our work, so that we can be trusted to be and to do what you expect of us.  
Help us to be peacemakers wherever we are, so that as we strive for truth and justice we may do so with humility as children of your Kingdom.  
Help us to be so Christ-like on earth, that finally we may reign with Christ in heaven. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, since without you we are unable to please you; mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord,  
Whatever we build,  
Give us a glimpse of your glory.  
Whatever we make,  
Give us a sense of wonder,  
Wherever we travel,  
Give us a sense of reverence.  
Whoever we meet,  
Give us a sense of awe.

Whatever we do,  
Give us a sense of achievement.  
Whatever our situation,  
Give us knowledge of you.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

Mighty God,  
Holy and strong one,  
Give us strength  
To do what you would have us do;  
Deliver us from lack of purpose.  
Free us from confusion of mind;  
Save us from loss of integrity.  
Maintain in us visions and ideals.  
Sustain our openness and generosity.  
Help us to continue to work for you,  
That we may serve you all our days,  
Mighty God  
Holy and strong one.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

Be in love with life,  
wrestle with the chaos and the pain,  
with yourself and with others,  
spirit echoing Spirit,  
trusting in the victory of the vulnerable,  
glimpsing the peace, the wholeness,  
the spaciousness, the justice and the joy  
that comes from following the Pioneer  
made perfect in suffering,  
striving and yearning and crying out  
from the depths and the heights  
of the world's anguish and the world's bliss,  
and so becoming friends and partners of God  
in the divine creating.

(Jim Cotter)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord of all,  
You made us for yourself  
And for your great glory.  
Bless us body and soul,

Shield us, keep us whole.  
Bless all our intention  
By your intervention.  
Bless our words and all our deeds,  
Guide us where our action leads.  
Bless the workings of our mind,  
Make us sensitive and kind.  
Make us gentle in our dealings,  
Bless our hearts with finer feelings,  
Fill our lives with joyous laughter  
And with glory ever after.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord,  
Extend our vision,  
Our clearness of sight;  
Open our eyes to see  
Beyond the obvious,  
To perceive that this is your world;  
You are in it,  
You invade it,  
You pervade it,  
You enfold it,  
It is immersed in you.  
Here we encounter you,  
Here we meet you,  
Here you come to us,  
Here your present waits to be revealed.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

## BEYOND OURSELVES

Grant us a vision, Lord,  
To see what we can achieve  
To reach out beyond ourselves  
To share our lives with others  
To stretch our capabilities  
To increase our sense of purpose  
To be aware of where we can help  
To be sensitive to your Presence  
To give heed to your constant call.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord our God,  
Who has called us to serve you,  
In the midst of the world's affairs,  
When we stumble, hold us;  
When we fail, lift us up;  
When we are hard pressed with evil, deliver us;  
When we turn from what is good, turn us back;  
And bring us at last to your glory.

(Alcuin, ca.735-804)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
alive and at large in the world,  
help me to follow and find you there today,  
in the places where I work,  
meet people,  
spend money,  
and make plans.  
Take me as a disciple of your kingdom,  
to see through your eyes,  
and here the questions you are asking,  
to welcome all others with your trust and truth,  
and to change the things that contradict God's love,  
by the power of the cross  
and the freedom of your spirit.  
Amen.

(John V Taylor)

\*\*\*\*\*

Support us, O Lord,  
All the day long of this troublous life,  
Until the shades lengthen,  
And evening comes,  
The busy world is hushed,  
The fever of life is over,  
And our work done.  
Then, Lord, in your mercy,  
Grant us safe lodging,  
A holy rest,  
And peace at the last;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(The Office of Compline)

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord, our Saviour, who has warned us that thou wilt require much of those to whom much is given;  
grant that we, whose lot is cast in so goodly a heritage, may strive together the more abundantly to extend

to others what we so richly enjoy; and as we are entered into the labours of others, so to labour that in their turn others may enter into ours, to the fulfilment of your holy will, and our own everlasting salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(St Augustine - adapted)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord of all life and power,  
who through the resurrection of your Son  
overcame sin and evil  
to make all things new;  
may we return to our work  
knowing your risen presence is with us  
and your love is within us. Amen.

(YMCA 'Windows into Worship', grey section p.6)

\*\*\*\*\*

Give us, God, a vision of our world as your love would make it,  
a world where the weak are protected rather than exploited, and none go hungry or poor;  
a world where the benefits and resources of the earth are shared,  
and everyone can enjoy them;  
a world where different nations, races and cultures  
live in tolerance and mutual respect;  
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.  
And give us courage and inspiration to build it;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(YMCA 'Windows into Worship', pink section p.6)

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, you have set before us a great hope that your kingdom will come on earth, and have taught us to pray for its coming; make us ever ready to thank you for the signs of its dawning, and to pray and work for the perfect day when your will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
We have put our lives in your hands,  
But you have put your creation in our hands  
Take us,  
Shake us,  
Transform us.  
No longer is what we have been,  
what we have done, important;  
It is what, with you, we might be,

what we might do.  
Starting not tomorrow, but now. **Amen.**

(YMCA 'Windows into Worship', blue section p.6)

\*\*\*\*\*

For the potential you have given us  
For the possibilities that lie before us  
**We thank you, heavenly Father.**

For our plans and their fulfilment  
For your promises and their enjoyment  
**We thank you, heavenly Father.**

In the problems that await us  
In the perils that will meet us  
**Protect us, Heavenly Father.**

In the pains of our achievements  
In the powers that would control us  
**Protect us, Heavenly Father.**

In our purpose and leisure  
In our passions and our pleasure  
**Protect us, Heavenly Father.**

(David Adam)

\*\*\*\*\*

You are salt for the earth, O people,  
salt for the kingdom of God;  
share the flavour of life, O people,  
life in the kingdom of God.

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,  
bring forth the kingdom of peace,  
bring forth the kingdom of justice,  
bring forth the city of God.

You are the light on the hill, O people,  
light for the city of God;  
shine so holy and bright, O people,  
shine for the kingdom of God

Bring forth the kingdom of mercy,  
bring forth the kingdom of peace,  
bring forth the kingdom of justice,  
bring forth the city of God.

\*\*\*\*\*

Almighty God,  
sustainer of daily life and work,  
and provider of all our needs.  
Open our hearts to your creative power  
so that we may know your will,  
praise your name,  
and share your vision for the creation of your  
kingdom. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### AN ACT OF DEDICATION

We dedicate to you, O God, the industries of our towns; that all of us who work in them, whether by hand or brain, may serve to your glory and the good of others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

May God, the giver of all good gifts, fill you with his wisdom and the understanding of his will.  
May he fulfil your just desire for the prosperity of your industries.  
May his Spirit reign in these towns and in all places and in all places of your employment.  
And may he give peace in our time.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

With listening ears and hearts,  
With open minds, obedient feet,  
We journey on with Christ,  
And choose again the pilgrim way.  
In new obedience to the vision we have caught,  
We offer time and talents, energy and love  
To serve the Prince of Peace  
In worship, in active partnership, in hope.  
Help us to take the risk of reaching out  
For peace and justice in your name. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Teach us, good Lord,  
To serve thee as thou deservest;  
To give and not to count the cost;  
To fight and not to heed the wounds;  
To toil and not to seek for rest;  
To labour and not to ask for any reward

Save that of knowing that we do thy will.

(St Ignatius Loyola)

\*\*\*\*\*

Into your hands, Lord, we commit our lives, our work and the tasks that await us, our homes and our families, our loved ones, and especially those in need. Bless all who work in our county, in whatever capacity or occupation, and may we all, through your grace, play our part in building your kingdom on earth. We offer these prayers in the name of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

May the God who dances in creation,  
who embraces us with human love,  
who shakes our lives like thunder,  
bless us and drive us out with power  
to fill the world with justice.  
In the name of Christ. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord God, we confess our lack of faith especially when we have doubted your power to achieve your purposes. Help us to put our trust in your strength, and to know that you still work through those committed to you.

(From 'Companion to the Lectionary, Volume 3', c. Neil Dixon, Epworth 1983)

\*\*\*\*\*

We thank you, Lord, that our life and ministry  
are set in a time of challenge;  
that our faith is tested,  
our ways rough and uncharted;  
and we thank you for the promise  
to save us in the time of trial.  
Thus you teach us to depend on your grace,  
and to live close to you  
in humility and hope. **Amen.**

(From 'Companion to the Lectionary, Volume 3', c. Neil Dixon, Epworth 1983)

\*\*\*\*\*

We thank you, Father, that you have called us together  
to build the city of God.  
Grant us a vision of your world as it might be:  
a world of justice, fellowship and peace,  
founded not on force but on love.  
Lord, hear the prayer of our hearts  
as we pledge our time and our energy and our thought

to make this world what you intend it to be. **Amen.**

(From 'Companion to the Lectionary, Volume 3', c. Neil Dixon, Epworth 1983)

\*\*\*\*\*

God our Father, Lord of all the world, we thank you that you have called us into the fellowship of your universal Church. Hear our prayer for all your faithful people, that in our vocation and ministry each may be an instrument of your love;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Be with us, O Lord,  
as we now pray in your holy house;  
and go with us as we return  
to take up the common duties of life.  
In worship and work alike  
let us know your presence near us;  
till work itself becomes worship,  
and every thought be to your praise;  
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. **Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Christ our partner,  
you invite us to bear your yoke,  
so that sharing in your work,  
we may find our true selves  
in relationship with you  
and with those  
we would bring to your friendship.

\*\*\*\*\*

## ENVIRONMENT

*Leader:* Let us go now to enjoy and care for God's good creation.

*All:* Lord, in our grateful enjoyment of your creation may we come to know and love you more each day.  
**Amen.**

(From 'Celebrating Work' by Corrymeela [c.] )

\*\*\*\*\*

As we prepare to leave  
and embrace the challenges  
of our lives and our world,  
let us ask for God's blessing:  
May God bless us with strength to seek justice.  
**Amen.**

May God bless us with the wisdom to care for our earth.  
**Amen.**

May God bless us with love to bring forth new life.  
**Amen.**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### FURTHER ALONG THE PILGRIM ROAD

Lord God,  
we thank you for calling us  
into the company of those  
who trust in Christ  
and seek to obey his will;  
we are strangers no longer  
but pilgrims together  
on the way to your kingdom.  
May your Spirit  
guide, strengthen and send us out  
in mission and service to your world,  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory. **Amen.**

(The Pilgrim Prayer – adapted. c. All Year Round, 1996, The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland)

\*\*\*\*\*

We commit ourselves  
to hold the truth as it is in Jesus,  
to support each other in good and ill,  
to challenge evil with the power of love,  
to offer the kingdom in political and economic witness,  
to work for the new community of all humanity,  
and to risk ourselves in the lifestyle of sharing.

(Sheffield Eucharist Congregation, in ed. John Vincent, 'Community Worship', Ashram Community Trust)

\*\*\*\*\*

The one who believes in Christ  
will do the work he does.

Christ the bridge-builder,  
help us to work with you and for you.  
Help us to choose hope  
and through the power of the Spirit  
help us to rebuild  
God's community of divine purpose  
in partnership with all your people.

(Kate McIlhagga, in URC Prayer Handbook 1993)

\*\*\*\*\*

Eternal God,  
make our spirits open to the moving of your Holy Spirit,  
that being in tune with you at all times,  
we may carry out your will  
each day of our lives. **Amen.**

(Bob Garner, in 'For the Healing of the Nations', (Methodist) Prayer Handbook 1996-1997)

\*\*\*\*\*

Gracious God,  
let us be partners in shaping the future  
with a faith which quarrels with the present  
for the sake of what might be.

(From Taiwan, in 'For the Healing of the Nations', (Methodist) Prayer Handbook 1996-1997)

\*\*\*\*\*

Loving and holy God, walk with us we pray,  
that in the midst of change we may feel guided and held in love  
and that in familiar routine  
we may see now things to light up our way;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(Robin Hutt, in 'For the Healing of the Nations', (Methodist) Prayer Handbook 1996-1997)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord God, your goodness never changes  
While you make all things new.  
Give us such faith in your goodness  
That we may remain secure  
As we share in your continual activity  
And rejoice in the new creation you are bringing into being;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(John Sampson, in 'For the Healing of the Nations', (Methodist) Prayer Handbook 1996-1997)

\*\*\*\*\*

God, who calls men and women to follow,  
enlarge our vision of you.  
Let your Spirit move through us, filling us with light and life.  
Make us clear channels of your love and grace

that we might serve you in serving others.  
Jesus, the light of the world, goes with us. **Amen.**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord our God, King of the universe  
who has given us the opportunity to work  
and in our work, to provide for our families  
and to serve other men and women,  
give us the vision to see our daily work as the work of your kingdom  
and do it in a spirit of willing service;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(c. Christine Allen, David Durston, Chris Powell and Wendy S Robins, SUNDAY, MONDAY Resources Books,  
Cassell and Scripture Union 1995)

\*\*\*\*\*

Give us the vision, O God our King,  
to see beyond the in-tray and the computer screen  
and to recognize our daily work  
as the work of your kingdom  
and to do it gladly to your glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(c. Christine Allen, David Durston, Chris Powell and Wendy S Robins, SUNDAY, MONDAY Resources Books,  
Cassell and Scripture Union 1995)

## SECTION TWO

# HYMNS, PSALMS & POEMS

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Psalms (biblical)	Page 105
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# HYMNS, PSALMS & POEMS

## HYMNS

### Note

It has been decided to omit hymn numbers since there are often several different editions of the major hymn books. In the case of well-known and/or easily accessible hymns we give just first lines, plus an indication of which of the main books include that particular hymn.

It has been impossible to refer to all hymn books currently in use. If the book used at your church is not included below, it is suggested that you check the index of your book and make a note of the hymns in the following list that are included there. Your books may also contain other suitable hymns not shown in our list.

As the list below clearly indicates, no one church's or denomination's books contain all the suitable material that is currently available. We can all increase our repertoire by pooling our local resources ecumenically.

### Abbreviations

A&M = Ancient & Modern (C of E)

BP&W = Baptist Praise & Worship

CHE = Celebration Hymnal for Everyone (RC)

CP = Congregational Praise

NEH = New English Hymnal (C of E)

EP = English Praise - a supplement to the English Hymnal, 1975 edition.

HHT = 100 Hymns for Today (C of E)

H&P = Hymns & Psalms (Methodist)

HO&N = Hymns Old & New (RC)

HTC = Hymns for Today's Church

MEP = Mission England Praise

MHB = Methodist Hymn Book

MMT = More Hymns for Today

R&S = Rejoice & Sing (United Reformed)

## BETTER KNOWN/READILY ACCESSIBLE HYMNS

All people that on earth do dwell (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P,  
HO&N, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)

All my hope on God is founded (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P,  
HO&N, MHB, NEH, R&S)

All that I am, all that I do (CHE, HO&N)

Almighty Father of all things that be (CP, H&P, R&S)

Almighty Father, who for us thy Son didst give (A&M, CP, H&P,  
HHT, R&S)

Angel voices ever singing (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&S, HTC,  
MHB, NEH, R&S)

As we break the bread (R&S)

Behold the servant of the Lord (H&P, MHB)

Behold us, Lord, a little space (CP, H&P, MHB)

Blest are you, Lord, God of all creation (CHE, HO&N)

Christ, be the Lord of all our days (HTC)

Christ for the world we sing (A&M, CP, H&P, MHB, R&S)

Christ is the world's true light (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, NEH,  
R&S)

Come, Lord Jesus, come (CHE, HO&N)

Come to us, creative Spirit (H&P, HTC)

Come, workers for the Lord (A&M, H&P, HHT)

Crown him with many crowns (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, MHB,  
NEH, R&S)

Do not be afraid (CHE, HO&N) [suitable for an unemployment service]

Do you know that the Lord walks on earth? (HO&N)

Father and life-giver (CHE, HO&N)

Father, hear the prayer we offer (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, NEH,  
R&S)

Father, I place into your hands (CHE, HO&N) [suitable for an unemployment service]

Father, in my life I see (HO&N)

Father, Lord of all creation (A&M, BP&W, HHT, NEH)

Father of glory, whose heavenly plan (BP&W)

Father, whose almighty word (BPW)

Fear not, for I have redeemed you (HO&N) [suitable for an  
unemployment service]

Fill thou my life (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&S, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)

For joys of service, thee we praise (CP, R&S)

For ourselves no longer living (R&S)

For the fruits of his creation (A&M, BP&W, CHE, EH, H&P,  
HTC, MEP, R&S)

For the healing of the nations (A&M, BP&W, H&P, R&S)

Forth in the peace of Christ we go (A&M, BP&W, CHE, HO&N,  
NEH, R&S)

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P,  
HO&N, HTC, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)

Gifts of bread and wine (HO&N)

Give me peace, O Lord, I pray (CHE, HO&N)

Give me the faith which can remove (CP, H&P, MHB)  
 God in his love for us lent us this planet (H&P, R&S)  
 God is working his purpose out (A&M, CHE, CP, H&P, HTC,  
     MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 God of concrete, God of steel (A&M, H&S, HHT)  
 God of love and truth and beauty (A&M, EP, H&P, HHT)  
 God our maker, mighty Father (CHE)  
 God who spoke in the beginning (A&M)  
 God whose farm is all creation (A&M, BP&W, H&P, HTC, R&S)  
 Good is our God who made this place (A&M, HHT)  
 Help us accept each other (R&S)  
 I give my hands to do your work (HO&N)  
 In bread we bring you, Lord, our bodies' labour (CHE)  
 Jesus calls us: o'er the tumult (A&M, CP, H&P, MEP, MHB,  
     NEH)  
 Jesus' hands were kind hands (H&P, R&S)  
 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&S,  
     MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Jubilate everybody (BP&W, MEP, R&S)  
 Judge eternal, throned in splendour (BP&W, CP, H&P, MHB,  
     NEH, R&S)  
 King of glory, King of peace (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P, HO&N, MHB, NEH,  
     R&S)  
 Kneels at the feet of his friends (BP&W, R&S)  
 Let all the world in every corner sing (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP,  
     H&P, HO&N, HTC, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Let us talents and tongues employ (A&M, HTC, R&S)  
 Lord, bring the day to pass (H&P, R&S)  
 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided (BP&W, MEP,  
     R&S)  
 Lord God, in whom all worlds (H&P)  
 Lord God, by whom all change is wrought (CP, H&P, MHB,  
     R&S)  
 Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to thee (A&M, H&P, R&S)  
 Lord of all hopefulness (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, NEH, R&S)  
 Lord of all loving (CHE)  
 Lord of all power I give you my will (A&M, HTC)  
 Lord in everything I do (CHE)  
 Lord, to you we bring our treasure (A&M, MHT)  
 Lord, your kingdom bring triumphant (BP&W)  
 My God accept my heart this day (CHE)  
 New every morning is the love (A&M, CP, H&P, MEP, NEH,  
     R&S)  
 Not what these hands have done (MHB)  
 Now join we to praise the creator (A&M, BP&W, H&P, MHT,  
     R&S)  
 Now let us from this table rise (A&M, BP&W, H&P, R&S)  
 Now thank we all our God (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P,  
     HO&N, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Now the Mass is ended, Lord (HO&N)  
 O Christ, the master carpenter (HTC)

O Jesus I have promised (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, HTC, MEP,  
 MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 O Lord of every shining constellation (A&M, BP&W, HHT)  
 O worship the king (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P, HO&N,  
 MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (A&M, BP&W, CP,  
 H&P, HTC, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Out of our failure to create, a world of love and care (R&S)  
 Praise and thanksgiving (A&M, H&P, HHT, R&S)  
 Praise God for the harvest of farm and of field (H&P)  
 Praise my soul the king of heaven (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP,  
 H&P, HO&N, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P,  
 HO&N, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the king of creation (A&M,  
 BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P, HO&N, HTC, MEP, MHB, NEH,  
 R&S)  
 Reap me the earth as a harvest to God (CHE)  
 Saint Joseph, God has chosen you (CHE, HO&N)  
 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God (BP&W, CHE, H&P, HO&N,  
 MEP, R&S)  
 Son of God, eternal Saviour (A&M, BP&W, CP, NEH, R&S)  
 Strengthen for service, Lord (A&M, BP&W, CP, H&P, HTC,  
 NEH, R&S)  
 Take my hands and make them as your own (CHE, HO&N)  
 Take my life and let it be (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P, HO&N,  
 HTC, MEP, MHB, R&S)  
 Teach me my God and king (A&M, CP, EH, H&P, MHB, R&S)  
 Tell out my soul (A&M, BP&W, H&P, HO&N, NEH, R&S)  
 The Church of Christ in every age (BP&W, H&P, R&S)  
 The law of Christ alone can make us free (BP&W, H&P)  
 The works of the Lord are created in wisdom (HTC)  
 There's a spirit in the air (A&M, BP&W, H&P, MHT, R&S)  
 Thou whose almighty word (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP, H&P, MEP,  
 MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 Through all the changing scenes of life (A&M, BP&W, CHE, CP,  
 H&P, MEP, MHB, NEH, R&S)  
 'Till the end of my days, O Lord (HO&N)  
 Upon thy table, Lord, we place (A&M, CHE, H&P, HHT, HO&N)  
  
 Walk with me, oh my Lord (CHE) [suitable for an unemployment service]  
 We find thee, Lord, in others' needs (A&M, HHT)  
 We give thee but thine own (MHB, CP, R&S)  
 We turn to you, O God of every nation (A&M, BP&W, H&P,  
 MHT, R&S)  
 What does the Lord require (A&M, H&P, HHT)  
 When the Church of Christ shuts its outer door (BP&W)  
 With open hands we come before you (CHE)  
 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (BP&W Elsewhere =  
 O worship...)

## SOME LESS FAMILIAR/LESS READILY ACCESSIBLE HYMNS

The following hymns are not included in any of the afore-mentioned books. Being possibly otherwise unobtainable (e.g. because they are found in rarer books or in books that are now out of print), we give the texts in full. Information about sources, dates, and copyright holders is provided where known. In some instances a suitable tune has been suggested. The hymns are in alphabetical order.

### ALL MY HOPE IS FIRMLY GROUNDED

All my hope is firmly grounded  
In the great and living Lord;  
Who, whenever I most need him,  
Never fails to keep his word.  
Him I must  
Wholly trust,  
God the ever good and just.

Tell me, who can trust our nature,  
Human, weak, and insecure:  
Which of all the airy castles  
Can the hurrican endure?  
Built on sand,  
Nought can stand,  
By our earthly wisdom planned.

But in every time and season,  
Out of love's abundant store,  
God sustains his whole creation,  
Found of life for evermore.  
We who share  
Earth and air  
Count on his unfailing care.

Thank, O thank, our great Creator,  
Through his only Son this day;  
He alone, the Heavenly Potter,  
Made us out of earth and clay.  
Quick to heed,  
Strong in deed,  
He shall all his people feed.

(Fred Pratt Green (1903- ).  
Suggested tune: Meine Hoffnung)

\*\*\*\*\*

## ALL WHO LOVE AND SERVE YOUR CITY

All who love and serve your city,  
All who bear its daily stress,  
All who cry for peace and justice,  
All who curse and all who bless.

In your day of loss and sorrow,  
In your day of helpless strife,  
Honour, peace and love retreating,  
Seek the Lord, who is your life.

In your day of wealth and plenty,  
Wasted work and wasted play,  
Call to mind the word of Jesus,  
'Work ye yet while it is day'.

For all days are days of judgement,  
And the Lord is waiting still,  
Drawing near to those who spurn him,  
Offering peace from Calvary's hill.

Risen Lord, shall yet the city  
Be the city of despair?  
Come today, our Judge, our Glory,  
Be its name, 'The Lord is there!'.

(Eric Routley c.1969 Galliard)

\*\*\*\*\*

## AS WE BREAK THE BREAD

As we break the bread  
And taste the life of wine,  
We bring to mind our Lord  
Man of all time.

Grain is sown to die:  
It rises from the dead,  
Becomes through human toil  
Our common bread.

Pass from hand to hand  
The living love of Christ!  
Machine and man provide  
Bread for this feast.

Jesus binds in one  
Our daily life and work:  
He is of humankind

Symbol and mark.

Having shared the bread  
That dies to rise again,  
We rise to serve the world,  
Scattered as grain.

(Fred Kaan c.1968 Galliard)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### BRING TO GOD YOUR GIFTS FOR HARVEST

Bring to God your gifts for harvest,  
Celebrate God's love with praise.  
God has filled the earth with good things  
in their seasons, year by year:  
Field and forest, mine and ocean  
yield their crops for all to share,  
given for human life's enrichment,  
tokens of our Maker's care.

Bring to God your gifts for harvest,  
Celebrate God's love with praise.  
Gifts of mind and hand and talent  
echo God's creative power.  
Human hands tend God's creation;  
body, mind and soul are fed.  
Work and rest and worship offer -  
at God's feet may all be laid.

Bring to God your gifts for harvest  
- every day's activity!  
Worship God in home and office,  
boardroom, classroom, factory.  
Join the song of adoration,  
Join the symphony of praise.  
Bring to God your gifts of harvest,  
Bring the fruits of all your days.

(Heather Pencavel, 1995. Suggested tune: Beethoven's Ode to Joy)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### GOD WHO SPOKE IN THE BEGINNING

God who spoke in the beginning,  
Forming rock and shaping spar,  
Set all life and growth in motion,  
Earthly world and distant star;  
He who calls the earth to order

Is the ground of what we are.

God who spoke through men and nations,  
Through events long past and gone  
Showing still today his purpose,  
Speaks supremely through his Son;  
He who calls the earth to order  
Gives his word and it is done.

God whose speech becomes incarnate  
- Christ is servant, Christ is Lord! -  
Calls us to a life of service,  
Heart and will to action stirred;  
He who uses man's obedience  
Has the first and final word.

(Fred Kaan c.1969 Galliard)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### INSPIRED BY LOVE AND ANGER

Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,  
Informed of God's own bias, we ask him once again:  
"How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?  
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?"

From those forever victims of heartless human greed,  
Their cruel plight composes a litany of need:  
"Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?  
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?"

From those forever shackled to what their wealth can buy,  
The fear of lost advantage provoke the bitter cry:  
"Don't query our position! Don't criticise our wealth!  
Don't mention those exploited by politics and stealth!"

To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,  
We offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:  
"When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come?  
When will the world be generous to all instead of some?"

God asks, "Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?  
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?  
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?  
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?"

Amused in someone's kitchen, asleep in someone's boat,  
Attuned to what the ancients exposed, proclaimed and wrote,  
A saviour without safety, a tradesman without tools  
Has come to tip the balance with fishermen and fools.

(Tune: Sally Gardens (Irish trad.) c. Wild Goose Publications,  
c/o The Iona Community)

\*\*\*\*\*

## LORD, LOOK UPON OUR WORKING DAYS

Lord, look upon our working days,  
Busied in factory, office, store;  
May wordless work thy name adore,  
The common round spell out thy praise?

Bent to the lot our crafts assign,  
Swayed by deep tides of need and fear,  
In loyalties torn the truth unclear,  
How may we build to thy design?

Thou are the workman, Lord, not we:  
All worlds were made at thy command,  
Christ, their sustainer, bared his hand,  
Rescued them from futility.

Our part to do what he'll commit,  
Who strides the world, and calls us all  
Partners in pain and carnival,  
To grasp the hope he won for it.

Cover our faults with pardon full,  
Shield those who suffer when we shirk:  
Take what is worthy in our work,  
Give it its portion in thy rule.

(Ian M Fraser c.1969 Galliard)

\*\*\*\*\*

## LORD OF OUR CITY

Lord of our city we bring you its pain,  
The muggings, the dole queues, the lift's bust again,  
The fear of each stranger and no-where to play,  
The waiting for buses at the start of each day.

Lord of our homeless we bring you their cry  
The waiting on promises - pie in the sky,  
The red tape and questions and sent on their way  
The sense of frustration at the noon of the day.

Lord of all races, all colours of skin,  
Please make us fight racism, help us begin

To see how our prejudice colours the way  
We treat friends and neighbours at the end of the day.

Lord of our whole lives, we bring them to you.  
We're powerless, defeated, 'til you make us new.  
Then powered by your Spirit, we go on once more  
With news of your wholeness, good news to the poor.

(Words: Jane Galbraith  
Tune: Slane  
c. Jane Galbraith)

\*\*\*\*\*

### PRAISE WITH JOY THE WORLD'S CREATOR

Praise with joy the world's creator,  
God of justice, love and peace,  
Source and end of human knowledge,  
Force of goodness without cease.  
Celebrate the Maker's glory,  
Power to rescue and release.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry,  
Frees the captive, finds the lost,  
Heals the sick, upsets religion,  
Fearless both of fate and cost.  
Celebrate Christ's constant presence -  
Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.

Praise the Spirit sent among us  
Liberating truth from pride,  
Forging bonds where race or gender,  
Age or nation dare divide.  
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure -  
Foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit,  
One God in Community,  
Calling us to leave behind  
Faith's ghettos and obscurity.  
Thus the world shall yet believe  
When shown Christ's vibrant unity.

(Tune: Praise my soul the king of heaven  
J Goss c. 1986 Wild Goose Publications)

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## THE EARTH, THE SKY, THE OCEANS

The earth, the sky, the oceans  
And all that they contain;  
The world with all its secrets,  
It is the Lord's domain.  
To rule his great creation  
God gives to humankind  
The gifts of strength and courage  
And an inventive mind.

For quest and exploration,  
Our God has given the key  
To free the hidden forces  
And wealth of land and sea.  
To new advance in science,

Research to conquer pain,  
To growth in skill and knowledge  
We are by God ordained.

To us from birth is given  
Our stewardship and brief;  
To search for truth and purpose,  
To find the heart of life.  
God calls us to adventure  
With work of hand and brain,  
To share with all his people  
The profits we may gain.

We pledge ourselves to service,  
That with the help of Christ  
We may be able stewards  
Of all that does exist.  
Whate'er we may discover  
On earth, in outer space,  
God grant that we may use it  
To bless the human race.

(Fred Kaan c.1968 Galliard.  
Tune: Wolvercote)

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE HARVEST OF THE CITY

The harvest of the city  
We lift to you today  
Who calls us all to celebrate,  
To labour and to play.  
You only are the maker

In all we make and do  
You share with us the labour,  
You share the music too  
    Holy is the maker  
    Who lives in all we do,  
    And holy is the liberty  
    To be a maker too.

We share with you the river,  
We share with you the road,  
The driving of the lorry and  
The lifting of the load.  
We share with you the timber,  
We share with you the steel,  
The lifting of the hammer,  
The turning of the wheel.  
    Holy is the maker...

In hospital and harbour  
We meet you night and day.  
We share with you the writing and  
The acting of a play.  
We find you in the teaching  
And in the learning too.  
In all that we are making  
You are the maker too.  
    Holy is the maker...

The harvest of the city  
We bring to you today,  
And by the liberty you give  
We celebrate and play.  
You only are the maker,  
You live in all we do,  
We share with you the labour,  
We share the music too.  
    Holy is the maker...

(Sydney Carter c. Stainer & Bell)

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## WE LAY OUR BROKEN WORLD

We lay our broken world  
In sorrow at your feet,  
Haunted by hunger, war and fear,  
Oppressed by power and hate.

Where human life seems less  
That profit, might and pride,

Though to unite us all in you  
You lived and loved and died.

We bring our broken towns,  
Our neighbours hurt and bruised;

You show us how old pain and wounds  
For new life can be used.

We bring our broken hopes  
For lives of dignity;  
Workless and overworked you love  
And call us to be free.

We bring our broken loves,  
Friends parted, families torn;  
Then in your life and death we see  
That love must be reborn.

We bring our broken selves,  
Confused and closed and tired;  
Then through your gift of healing grace  
New purpose is inspired.

O Spirit, on us breathe,  
With life and strength anew;  
Find in us love, and hope and trust,  
And lift us up to you.

(Tune: Havergal  
Words: Anna Briggs  
c. Anna Briggs)

\*\*\*\*\*

WHEN GOD ALMIGHTY CAME TO BE ONE OF US  
(Suitable for use at Christmas)

When God Almighty came to be one of us,  
Masking the glory of his golden train,  
Dozens of plain things kindled by accident,  
And they will never be the same again.  
Sing all you midwives, dance all the carpenters,  
Sing all the publicans and shepherds too,  
God in his mercy uses the commonplace  
God on his birthday had a need of you.

Splendour of Rome and Local Authority,  
Working on policy with furrowed head,  
Joined to locate Messiah's nativity,

Just where the prophets had already said.  
Sing all you tax-men, dance the Commissioners,  
Sing civil servants and policemen too,  
God to his purpose uses the governments,  
God on his birthday had a need of you.

Wise men, they called them, earnest astrologers,  
Watching for meaning in the moving stars,  
Science or fancy, learned or laughable,  
Theirs was a vision that was brought to pass.  
Sing all you wise men, dance all the scientists,  
Whether your theories are false or true,  
God uses knowledge, God uses ignorance,  
God on his birthday had a need of you.

Sing, all creation, made for his purposes,  
Called by his providence to live and move:  
None is unwanted, none insignificant,  
Love needs a universe of folk to love,  
Old men and maidens, young men and children,  
Black ones and coloured ones and white ones too,  
God on his birthday, and to eternity,  
Took upon himself the need of you.

(Michael Hewlett c. 1969 Galliard)

\*\*\*\*\*

WORKER GOD WHO PLANNED CREATION  
(suitable for an unemployment service)

Worker God, who planned creation -  
complex splendour held in one:  
spoke out threads of light and matter  
weaving what your word has spun.  
Then, with proper satisfaction,  
rested when the work was done.

Who are we to spoil the pattern,  
make redundant hands and minds,  
tarnish pleasure in achievement  
which your pleasure undersigned,  
crushing lives, and wasting talent,  
uncreating humankind?

Many see the sudden ending  
of their deeply cherished plans  
through the failure of a system  
which no longer meets demands,  
and the fruit of years of effort  
slips away from helpless hands.

Helplessness fuels bitter anger -  
friends and loved ones bear the cost.  
Voices raised create a Babel,  
countermanding Pentecost,  
and by this disintegration,  
whole communities are lost.

Worker God within creation  
weaving what our hands have spun,  
give to us consistent strength  
to speak your word and see it done.  
So though humble human triumphs  
may your victory be won.

(Janet Wootton (1952- ).  
Suggested tune: Oriel or Rhuddlan)

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# PSALMS

## 1. Biblical Psalms

### PSALM 8

Human beings have a special destiny and responsibility as masters of creation.

### PSALM 15

The honest person is acceptable to God and obeys the divine laws.

### PSALM 19

God's creation bears witness to God's design of and plan for the world.

### PSALM 46

In times of trouble God is our strength and support.

### PSALM 65

God has ordered the world and given human beings enough to supply their needs.

### PSALM 67

God has blessed humankind.

### PSALM 90

God sees how human beings have misused his creation.

### PSALM 95

Thanksgiving is due to God for his creation and salvation.

### PSALM 96

Thanksgiving to God for creation.

### PSALM 100

What God has done is cause for rejoicing.

### PSALM 104:1-25

The vastness of God's creation and the glory of his works.

### PSALM 107: 23-32

God is active in his creation.

PSALM 8 (an alternative translation)

O Lord our God: the whole earth glorifies your name!  
Your praise stretches to the heavens on the lips of  
infants and children.

You tower over your enemies,  
and defeat all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky, the moon and the stars you  
created,  
how insignificant humans seem, and yet you cherish  
them.

You share your glory with men and women,  
as it they were gods beside you.

You have made them masters of creation:  
everything is subject to their authority,

Cattle and sheep, and every living creature,  
soaring birds, sea fish and the teeming life of the oceans.

O Lord, our God: the whole earth glorifies your name.

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## 2. Modern Psalms and Poems

### PSALM 23 FOR BUSY PEOPLE

The Lord is my pace-setter, I shall not rush;  
He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals;  
He provides me with images of stillness  
Which restore my serenity.  
He leads me in the way of efficiency,  
Through calmness of mind: and his guidance is peace.  
Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day  
I will not fret, for his presence is here.  
His timelessness, his all-importance will keep me in balance.  
He prepares refreshment and renewal  
In the midst of activity.  
By anointing my mind with the oils of tranquility,  
My cup of joyous energy overflows.  
Surely harmony and effectiveness  
Shall be the fruits of my hours,  
For I will walk in the pace of the Lord.

(Toki Miyashina)

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THE CLAIMANT'S PSALM  
(based on Psalm 69)

*Claimant:*

Look, all I want is some money so I can buy the kids some food for the week-end.

*Officer:*

I'm sorry, I can't authorise it. There's some problem with your file.

SAVE ME O GOD!

FOR THE WATERS HAVE COME UP TO MY NECK.

*Claimant:*

I haven't got any money. I need some money so I can feed the kids.

*Officer:*

Are you claiming under Regulation 4(1) of the supplementary benefits requirements regulations 1983, No 1399; or for an Urgent Needs Payment under Regulation 21, (Urgent Cases) regulations, No 1529?

I SINK IN THE DEEP MIRE

WHERE THERE IS NO FOOTHOLD;

*Claimant:*

I don't bloody know!

*Officer:*

You do know, though, that if you make a false claim you render yourself liable for prosecution, don't you?

I HAVE COME INTO DEEP WATERS,

AND THE FLOOD SWEEPS OVER ME.

*Claimant:*

Look, I don't care what you call it. I haven't eaten for two days. I just want something so that I can feed the kids.

I AM WEARY WITH MY CRYING;

MY THROAT IS PARCHED.

*Officer:*

Just wait here one moment, I'll go and fetch the supervisor.

MY EYES GROW DIM WITH WAITING FOR MY

GOD.

*Claimant:*

I've been here five hours already!

*Supervisor:*

Ah, Mr Scrounger, we were wondering when you'd come in.

MORE IN NUMBER THAN THE HAIRS OF MY HEAD

ARE THOSE WHO HATE ME WITHOUT CAUSE;

*Claimant:*

I was just saying to the other bloke that all I want is some money to feed the kids for the weekend.

*Supervisor:*

Your benefit has been stopped, Mr Scrounger. We've reason to believe you've been working while claiming.

MIGHTY ARE THOSE WHO WOULD DESTROY ME;

THOSE WHO ATTACK ME WITH LIES.

*Claimant:*

That's a bloody lie!

*Supervisor:*

I'm sorry, your benefit has been suspended until the matter can be properly investigated. We may find that you owe us some money!

WHAT I DID NOT STEAL MUST I NOW RESTORE?

*Claimant:*

It's a lie, it's a bloody lie!

*Supervisor:*

Mr Scrounger, acting on an anonymous phone call, we had our fraud people watch your movements. Last Monday morning you looked after a neighbour's children. We have reason to believe you were paid cash in hand.

O GOD, THOU KNOWEST MY FOLLY;  
THE WRONGS I HAVE DONE ARE NOT HIDDEN FROM THEE.

*Claimant:*

I can't believe this. You just can't be real!

*Supervisor:*

Good day, Mr Scrounger. We will be writing to you about the matter in due time. Now, if you wouldn't mind leaving, I don't think there's anything else to keep you here...

*Claimant:*

But I haven't got any money! What are the kids going to eat?

BUT I AM AFFLICTED AND IN PAIN;  
LET THY SALVATION, O GOD, SET ME ON HIGH!

*Claimant:*

What about the kids?

I WILL PRAISE THE NAME OF GOD WITH A SONG;  
I WILL MAGNIFY HIM WITH THANKSGIVING.

*Government spokesman:*

The Department of Social Security administers the income support system. This is a "safety net" scheme to ensure that no-one in our society ever need go hungry.

THIS WILL PLEASE THE LORD MORE THAN AN OX,  
OR A BULL WITH HORNS AND HOOFS.

*Spokesman:*

But sadly there always will be fraud, and we have a duty to our taxpayers to ensure the minimum of abuse of the system.

LET THE OPPRESSED SEE IT AND BE GLAD;  
YOU WHO SEEK GOD, LET YOUR HEARTS REVIVE.

*Spokesman:*

Of course, the country would be a lot better off if real wages were lower; people are just pricing themselves out of the market.

FOR THE LORD HEARS THE NEEDY,  
AND DOES NOT DESPISE HIS OWN THAT ARE IN BONDS.

*Spokesman:*

And also, as you know, part of the problem is that benefits are too high; it's often not worth people's while to get a job.

LET HEAVEN AND EARTH PRAISE HIM,  
THE SEA AND EVERYTHING THAT MOVES THEREIN.

*Spokesman:*

You know, we really are a caring Government.

FOR GOD WILL SAVE ZION AND REBUILD THE CITIES OF JUDAH;  
AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL DWELL THERE AND POSSESS IT;  
THE CHILDREN OF HIS SERVANTS WILL INHERIT IT,  
AND THOSE WHO LOVE HIS NAME SHALL DWELL IN IT.

*Claimant:*

I just want some money to feed the children over the weekend.

*Officer:*

It's alright, I've checked. Your giro's in the post.

(Christians' Unemployment Group 'An Unemployment Worship Book'  
[c.] )

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## SUNDAY BY SUNDAY

Sunday by Sunday  
the church gathers  
Women and men meet  
to worship  
to withdraw from the world?  
or to bring the world  
their living with them?

Women and men  
living with tensions  
struggling with dilemmas  
challenged by change  
oppressed by changes that are too rapid.

Is this the place  
is it together  
that they can affirm  
this is where life  
is given meaning?

Or do they sing uneasily  
because here is the place  
where no meaning is given  
to the context and the content  
of their daily lives?

Can I bring my anger with me  
Or must it be quelled before I enter?  
Can I bring my confusion  
Or should I simply pretend there is none?

What do I do with my contradictions  
of loving my family  
yet rarely seeing them?  
or with the pressure to raise  
excessive profits  
without the tempering of justice  
and compassion?

What do I do with the painful knowledge  
of failing to touch with understanding  
the urgent needs  
of my fellow human beings?

Soothing will not ease my burdens.  
Where do I find the courage  
to confront my problems? ...

(Rachel Jenkins)

\*\*\*\*\*

## IN PRAISE OF THE CREATOR

Creator God,  
let there be light  
to remind us that darkness has been conquered  
and love has filled the universe  
in the face of Jesus Christ.

Let there be sky  
to draw our gaze in fear and wonder  
displaying in cloud and thunder, rainbow and rain  
our dependence upon your overarching care.

Let there be sun, moon and stars  
to give us an appetite for eternity  
and to warn us of the limits of our knowledge and pride.

Let there be earth  
for us to respect and love  
as we seek to conserve its energy and resources  
for children yet to come.

Let there be fish and animals  
to be partners with us on the earth  
sharing our land, sea and air.

Let there be people  
who as your creatures  
have not lost their sense of dependence  
and who are creators and responsible protectors of life.

Let there be rest  
offering us the opportunity  
for reflection and worship, recreation and refreshment  
with time to remember  
that a new creation has been forgivingly provided  
in Jesus Christ.

\*\*\*\*\*

## EARTHQUAKE

Go tell the earth to shake  
And tell the thunder  
To wake the sky  
And tear the clouds apart.  
Tell my people to come out  
And wonder  
Where the old world is gone,  
For a new world is born,  
And all my people  
Shall be one.

So tell the earth to shake.  
With marching feet  
Of messengers of peace,  
Proclaim my law of love  
To every nation,  
Every race.

For the old wrongs are over,  
The old days are done;  
A new world is rising  
Where my people shall be one.

For the old world is ended,  
The old sky is torn  
Apart. A new day is born:  
They hate no more,  
They do not go to war any more.  
My people shall be one.

And say:  
The old wrongs are over,  
The old ways are done;  
There shall be no more hate  
And no oppression.  
The old wrongs are gone,  
My people shall be one.

(Thomas Merton, based on Isaiah 52)

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## LITANY OF CREATION

Leader: In the beginning, God made the world:  
 Women: Made it and mothered it,  
 Men: Shaped it and fathered it,  
 Women: Filled it with seed and with signs of fertility,  
 Men: Filled it with love and its folk with ability.  
 Leader: All that is green, blue, deep and growing  
 All: God's is the hand that created you.  
 Leader: All that is tender, firm, fragrant and curious  
 All: God's is the hand that created you.  
 Leader: All that it crawls, flies, swims, walks or is motionless  
 All: God's is the hand that created you.  
 Leader: All that speaks, sings, cries, laughs or keeps silence  
 All: God's is the hand that created you.  
 Leader: All that suffers, lacks, limps or longs for an end  
 All: God's is the hand that created you.  
 Leader: The world belongs to the Lord  
 All: The earth and its people are his.

(From 'A Wee Worship Book' c. Iona Community)

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#### PSALM OF MISSION

1. The flavour has gone out of our world:  
our childlike wonder has flown away.
2. God, it's your presence we miss:  
your aren't at the centre of our concerns.
3. The secular realm is all we can sense:  
our experience limited by material things.
4. Help us to relish true knowledge of you:  
so we can become ourselves again.
5. Our recognition of you has been stunted:  
we need salt to bring out the taste afresh.
6. "You are salt to the world" you said:  
so that is our task and vocation -
7. To bring back the taste of you to our world:  
to keep people consciously open to you.

(John Hammersley)

## **SECTION THREE**

### **READINGS**

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# READINGS

## 1. BIBLE

### OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS 1: 1-end

Creation, the world and its resources are ordered according to God's will.

GENESIS 1:1-10

God transforms chaos into creation.

GENESIS 1:26-28, 2:15

Human beings appointed managers and stewards of creation.

GENESIS 4:3-9

Human beings spoil creation through greed and jealousy.

EXODUS 1:8-14

Work that is experienced as oppressive runs counter to God's will.

EXODUS 18:13-23

The delegation of power is the right use of authority.

EXODUS 31:1-11

Craft skills are the gift of God's Spirit; all work is to be to the glory of God.

EXODUS 35:30-36:1

Human beings are fellow workers with God.

DEUTERONOMY 8:7-21

Spiritual dangers threaten a nation in times of material prosperity.

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-11

Thanks is due to God for all the good things he has given.

1 CHRONICLES 29:1-13

All good things come from God, so natural resources and wealth are to be used to glorify God.

2 CHRONICLES 5:1,13,14

Solomon builds God's temple; all work should be to the glory of God.

NEHEMIAH 4

To build and create is hard; there are always critics and detractors.

JOB 28:3-6, 9-15,20,23-28

The wise use of resources and technology.

PROVERBS 3:1-6

God is to be trusted in all things; self-interest and self-importance have no place in his kingdom.

ISAIAH 5:1-7

The requirement of justice in God's vineyard/

ISAIAH 44:6-23

The prophets tell how human beings in their pride make perverted use of God's creation and of their own talents.

ISAIAH 45:1-13

God uses secular agents in his purpose.

ISAIAH 55:1-13

God himself is the real satisfier of human need.

ISAIAH 58:7-10

Work is to be of benefit to the poor and disadvantaged.

JEREMIAH 29:4-7

The prophet instructs God's people to play their full part in the life of the world.

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

The Spirit of God breathes new life into things that are dead.

AMOS 5:6-15

The importance of justice and fairness in society.

AMOS 5:14-24

True religion stresses justice for all.

MICAH 4:1-7

Life is hallowed in the sight of God, and work in all its forms is part of his purpose.

MICAH 6:6-8

God has shown what is good; he requires justice and love, not abundance of material things.

HABAKKUK 2:1-4,9-14

There should be justice for all; those who work only for themselves and use others are condemned by God.

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## NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW 6:1-6

All must be done in humility.

MATTHEW 6:19-24

Jesus shows the right attitude to earthly things; God's priorities are different from our own.

MATTHEW 6:24-34

Jesus' attitude to wealth and possessions.

MATTHEW 7:1-12

All people are equal before God; petty jealousies are destructive for each has his or her part to play.

MATTHEW 18:21-35

The importance of forgiveness. No party has a monopoly of goodness; in any dispute each party has wronged the other.

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Entry to God's kingdom is through grace; it is not earned.

MATTHEW 25:14-30

Our obligation to use and develop our talents.

MATTHEW 25:31-45

The strong should support the weak.

LUKE 4:14-21

Jesus cares for and loves those whom we would rather not love.

LUKE 10:25-28

Love is the most important priority in living.

LUKE 12:13-24

The poverty of wealth. If business is no more than making money, means are substituted for ends.

LUKE 15: 11-end

The prodigal is accepted because he is his father's son; he does not have to earn his acceptance.

JOHN 1:1-14

God's involvement with his creation is plain to see; the gospel expresses his love and concern for the world.

JOHN 6:1-15

God can increase the yield on what we offer to him.

JOHN 6:25-35

Getting earthly things into perspective.

JOHN 13:3-17

Those in authority are called to serve.

JOHN 14:15-27

The promise of the Holy Spirit is the promise of new life.

JOHN 21:1-14

The divine presence in the commonplace.

ACTS 1:15-26

Important decisions require prayer.

ACTS 20:32-35

Doing a good job requires a group to work together.

ROMANS 8:1-8

The right priorities in life; material things are never an end in themselves.

ROMANS 8:14-17, 38-39

Through God's love men and women are freed from fear.

ROMANS 8:16-23

The role of Christians in God's transformation of chaos into final creation.

ROMANS 12:1-13

The gifts of all are needs in building up the whole.

ROMANS 13:1-10

Obedience is owed to those in legitimate authority.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:3-9 or 3:5-17

We are fellow workers with God and one another.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-11

All forms of work are inspired by God and so all are important.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

All have their part to play; co-operation in all forms of work brings out the best in each.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:49-58

Our work is to be transformed and taken up into the life of heaven.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-14

Those without wealth show the wealthy riches in non-material things.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-end

To work ungrudgingly is a way of thanking God for his generosity to us.

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

The whole of life is to be lived in the new way of Christ.

EPHESIANS 6:5-12

The right attitude to work and relationships. Attacks should be against social evils rather than against any individual.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Jesus' example of humility shows a better way to live and work.

COLOSSIANS 1:11-20

All things come from God and are fulfilled in Jesus.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

We should stop being motivated by self-interest and put on God's love.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

Peace and justice are essential to the gospel. Each is to work in a spirit of co-operation not confrontation.

JAMES 4:13-5:12

Self-interest is not acceptable. Affluence and wealth carry a burden of responsibility.

1 PETER 2:4-12

Self-interest has no place in the new life to which Christ has raised us.

1 JOHN 4:7-21

Love for one another is Jesus' command. In this new way all may work in peace and equality.

REVELATION 21:9-27

The New Jerusalem the goal of God's creative purpose; human work and wealth have contributed to its abundance.

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## **2. APOCRYPHA**

### **Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-11**

(Revised English Bible)

Hear then, you kings, take this to heart; lords of the wide world, learn this lesson; give ear you rulers of the multitude, who take pride in the myriads of your people. Your authority was bestowed on you by the Lord, your power comes from the Most High. He will probe your actions and scrutinize your intentions. Though you are servants appointed by the King, you have not been upright judges; you have not maintained the law or guided your steps by the will of God. Swiftly and terribly he will descend on you, for judgement falls relentlessly on those in high places. The lowest may find pity and forgiveness, but those in power will be called powerfully to account; for he who is Master of all is obsequious to none, and shows no deference to greatness. Small and great alike are of his making, and all are under his providence equally; but it is for those who wield authority that he reserves the sternest inquisition. To you, then, who have absolute power I speak, in hope that you will learn wisdom and not go astray; those who in holiness have kept a holy course will be accounted holy, and those who have learnt that lesson will be able to make their defence. Therefore be eager to hear me; long for my teaching, and you will learn.

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### **Ecclesiasticus 38: 24-end**

(Revised English Bible)

A scholar's wisdom comes of ample leisure; to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks. How can one become wise who follows the plough, whose pride is in wielding the goad, who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen, whose talk is all about cattle? He concentrates on ploughing his furrows, and toils late to give the heifers their fodder. So it is with every craftsman and designer working both day and night. Such are those who make engravings on signets and patiently vary the design; they concentrate on making an exact likeness and stay up to all hours to finish their task. So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil, intent on his ironwork. The fiery vapours shrivel his flesh as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace; the hammer rings in his ears again and again, and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying. He concentrates on completing the task and stays up late to give it a perfect finish. So it is with the potter, sitting at his work, turning the wheel with his feet, always engrossed in the task of making up his tally of vessels; he moulds the clay with his arm, crouching forward to exert his strength. He concentrates on finishing the glazing, and stays up to clean out the furnace.

All those rely on their hands, and each is skilful at his own craft. Without them a city would have no inhabitants; no settlers or travellers would come to it. Yet they are not in demand at public discussions, nor do they attain to high office in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench or understand the decisions of the courts. They cannot expound moral or legal principles and are not ready with maxims. But they maintain the fabric of this world, and the practice of their craft is their prayer.

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### **Of knowledge and Science**

We are indeed in God's hand, we ourselves and our words,

with all our understanding, too, and technical knowledge.  
It was he who gave me true knowledge of all that is,  
who taught me the structure of the world and the properties  
of the elements,  
the beginning, end and middle of the times,  
the alteration of the solstices and the succession of the  
seasons,  
the revolution of the year and the positions of the stars,  
the natures of animals and the instincts of wild beasts,  
the powers of spirits and the mental processes of men,  
the varieties of plants, and the medical properties of roots.  
All that is hidden, all that is plain, I have come to know,  
instructed by Wisdom who designed them all.

(Wisdom 7:16-21 Jerusalem Bible)

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### **Of Value and Worth**

Do not try to be smart when you do your work,  
do not put on airs when you are in difficulties,  
Better a hardworking man who has plenty of everything  
than a pretentious man at a loss for a meal.  
My son, be modest in your self-esteem,  
and value yourself at your proper worth.  
Who can justify a man who runs himself down,  
or respect a man who despises himself?  
A poor man is honoured for his wits,  
and a rich man for his wealth.  
Honoured in poverty, how much the more in wealth!  
Dishonoured in wealth, how much the more in poverty!

(Ecclesiasticus 10:26-31 Jerusalem Bible)

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### **Of Honesty in Trade**

It is difficult for a merchant to avoid doing wrong  
and for a salesman not to incur sin.  
Many have sinned for the sake of profit,  
he who hopes to be rich must be ruthless.  
A peg will stick in the joint between two stones,  
and sin will wedge itself between selling and buying.  
If a man does not hold earnestly to the fear of the Lord,  
his house will soon be overthrown.

(Ecclesiasticus 26:29-27:3 Jerusalem Bible)

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## Of Counsellants, advisers etc

Any adviser will offer advice,  
but some are governed by self-interest.  
Beware of a man who offers advice,  
first find out what he wants himself -  
since his advice coincides with his self-interest -  
in case he has designs on you  
and tells you, 'You are on the right road',  
but stands well clear to see what will happen to you.  
Do not consult a man who looks at you askance,  
conceal your plans from people jealous of you.  
Do not consult a person about a rival,  
or a coward about war,  
a merchant about prices,  
or a buyer about selling,  
a mean man about gratitude,  
or a selfish man about kindness,  
a lazy fellow about any sort of work,  
or a casual worker about finishing a job,  
an idle servant about a major undertaking -  
do not rely on these for advice.  
But constantly have recourse to a devout man,  
whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments,  
whose soul matches your own,  
and who, if you go wrong, will be sympathetic.  
Finally, stick to the advice your own heart gives you,  
no-one can be truer to you than that,  
since a man's soul often forewarns him better  
than seven watchmen perched on a watchtower.  
And besides this beg the Most High  
to guide your steps in the truth.

(Ecclesiasticus 37:7-15 Jerusalem Bible)

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## **3. MODERN**

### **The Church's Affirmation of Work**

(The Bishop of Ripon, 1978)

We know, when we stop to think, that we are dependent on industry, and yet we are unable to affirm industrial life as being of real worth. This is a basic sickness at the heart of our society, a failure in our fundamental attitudes. Put in religious terms, we are unable to relate our belief in the creative power and purpose of God to the existence of factories and mills and power stations and office blocks. In an agricultural society, praise is given to God for his power in the rhythm of seed-time and harvest, for his mercy in the fresh growth each year of grain and crops. Even today harvest festivals exercise an attraction even in the most urban of parishes surrounded by brick for miles and without a field or a farm within its boundaries. Where is the corresponding affirmation of God at work within the industrial process? A piece of coal amidst the apples in the sanctuary, or a cog wheel among the chrysanthemums is nothing more than a reluctant admission that our lives today depend upon coal and cogs, upon oil and computers as much as upon crops and cattle. We need a joyful celebration of the worth of the industrial undertaking, a celebration which must have its religious aspect. When a Festival of Industry touches our hearts as deeply as does harvest festival, then we shall have overcome our sickness. Just as individuals cannot live in a healthy way if they deny part of themselves as evil, so societies cannot live in a healthy way if they believe that a significant part of their social life is somehow evil; or even if they feel that it is dubious. There is nothing dubious about converting the wealth of resources with which God has endowed this world into means by which human beings may live and realise the purposes for which God has created them.

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### **Creative Work**

It is easy but wrong to glamorise the Bible's view of work. Human beings, "in the image of God", and given dominion over the earth, are made to fulfil themselves in creative activity. This belongs to their high destiny. But there is no sentimentality here. Human work is tainted through the Fall. The consequences are reflected in working conditions. Some find their work stressful; others are concerned about the value or morality of what they are doing. Some find their work dull, or exhausting - not healthily so but just debilitating. There are many whose problem is that of no work and their number is increasing.

Human work belongs in the realm of God's redemption. The Church must take more seriously its place within the divine purpose; clergy and laity together must share in uplifting all who labour, seeking to renew the economic order and holding before all the promise of a brighter future.

One contemporary work is of special import: the word "technology". For some it raises fears of unemployment as machines take over from people. For others it spells excitement and the chance to overcome our many problems. Could it be that the scientists and technologists of our age have been raised up by God for the redemption of his people, even if many of them know him not? Used according to the divine will, the new instruments they have produced may liberate from drudgery, end dehumanisation and save our threatened environment. Under God, technology could play a significant part in enabling us to be a real community, freed for the creative work of caring for each other and the planet.

(Adapted from sermon notes produced by the Industrial Society, 1978)

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Blowing through heaven and earth, and in our hearts and the heart of every living thing, is a gigantic breath - a great Cry - which we call God. Plant life wished to continue its motionless sleep next to stagnant waters, but the Cry leapt up within it and violently shook its roots: "Away, let go of the earth, walk!" Had the tree been able to think and judge, it would have cried, "I don't want to. What are you urging me to do? You are demanding the impossible!" But the Cry, without pity, kept shaking its roots and shouting, "Away, let go of the earth, walk!"

It shouted this way for thousands of eons; and lo! as a result of desire and struggle, life escaped the motionless tree and was liberated.

Animals appeared - worms - making themselves at home in water and mud. "We're just fine", they said. "We have peace and security; we're not budging!"

But the terrible Cry hammered itself pitilessly into their loins. "Leave the mud, stand up, give birth to your betters!"

"We don't want to! We can't!"

"You can't, but I can. Stand up!"

And lo! after thousands of eons, human beings emerged, trembling on their still unsolid legs. Human beings are centaurs; their equine hoofs are planted in the ground, but their bodies from breast to head are worked on and tormented by the merciless Cry. They have been fighting, again for thousands of eons, to drag themselves, like a sword, out of their animalistic scabbard. They are also fighting - this is their new struggle - to draw themselves out of their human scabbard. The human being calls in despair, "Where can I go: I have reached the pinnacle, beyond is the abyss". And the Cry answers, "I am beyond. Stand up!"

(Nikos Kazantzakis, 'Report to Greco' - slightly adapted)

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## **Staying Put**

Faced with ethical dilemmas, conflict, stress and other problems, those who exercise their ministry at the front line may be tempted to give up and get out. Sometimes people may mistake their inability to reconcile Christian values with secular values as a divine call to resign and seek ordination! This may sometimes be the right thing to do. God may indeed be calling more lay people into the ordained ministry. However, more often than not, God's call to lay people is to 'stay put'. That is what 'incarnation' is all about... staying in the thick of it! Although it may not always be easy to reconcile Christian values and secular values, some degree of responsible compromise is frequently necessary. Compromise is not always a dirty word. It may, for example, be more responsible for a Christian who is a director or a trade union official to stay at his or her post when beset by alien values and attempt to influence affairs from

within, than to resign and opt out. The Christian in public life can never do more than push public affairs slowly in a Christian direction. The speed with which Christians can do this may depend upon their realism about public affairs. It is not easy to head straight for the desired goal. A zig-zag approach may be the only feasible way forward. Sometimes we are in the 'zig' and sometimes we are in the 'zag' but we press towards the goal. This can produce a great deal of stress. Hence the importance of relevant support through prayer, worship and sensitive groups of people. In the end God himself supports people at the front line but his presence is not always easy to discern. We have the assurance of the risen Jesus that "he goes ahead of his disciples into Galilee". Our Galilee is our secular activity. Wherever we go, wherever we work, whatever responsibility we have in public life, Jesus is with us, supporting us and ministering alongside us at the front line.

(Denis Claringbull 'Front Line Mission')

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## **Making a Difference**

Christians have a crucial role to play in influencing companies, organisations and society for good. The odds against them doing so are, in worldly terms, formidable. Christians often feel desperately outnumbered at their place of work. The distinctive contribution which they bring to bear on events may seem negligible. As they look back on their actions at the end of a day, or even at the end of a career, they may well be inclined to ask themselves: 'Do not even pagans do that?' [Matthew 5:47]. The New Testament does not encourage a spirit of naive triumphalism. The forces of evil are powerful, and they are still alive and kicking. But the rise of the early Christian church, allied to the teaching of Jesus, gives grounds for hope that great things can develop from distinctly modest beginnings. Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven as a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds which grows into the greatest of shrubs. He also uses the image of leaven: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened" [Matthew 13:33]. Christians who are truly worth their salt (which was another metaphor Jesus used about them) are infiltrators of the world in which they operate, permeating and purifying and penetrating for the forces of good and of God.

(c. Richard Higginson 'Called to Account')

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## **A Modern Version of the Beatitudes**

Blessed are the poor...  
not the penniless  
but whose whose heart is free.

Blessed are those who mourn...  
not those who whimper  
but those who raise their voices.

Blessed are the meek...  
not the soft  
but those who are patient and tolerant.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst  
for justice...

not those who whine  
but those who struggle.

Blessed are the merciful...  
not those who forget  
but those who forgive.

Blessed are the pure in heart...  
not those who act like angels  
but those whose life is transparent.

Blessed are the peacemakers...  
not those who shun conflict  
but those who face it squarely.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice...  
not because they suffer  
but because they love.

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## **Sunday by Sunday**

Sunday by Sunday  
the church gathers  
Women and men meet  
to worship  
to withdraw from the world?  
or to bring the world  
their living with them?

Women and men  
living with tensions  
struggling with dilemmas  
challenged by change  
oppressed by changes that are too rapid.

Is this the place  
is it together  
that they can affirm  
this is where life  
is given meaning?

Or do they sing uneasily  
because here is the place  
where no meaning is given  
to the context and the content  
of their daily lives?

Can I bring my anger with me  
Or must it be quelled before I enter?

Can I bring my confusion  
Or should I simply pretend there is none?

What do I do with my contradictions  
of loving my family  
yet rarely seeing them?  
or with the pressure to raise  
excessive profits  
without the tempering of justice  
and compassion?

What do I do with the painful knowledge  
of failing to touch with understanding  
the urgent needs  
of my fellow human beings?

Soothing will not ease my burdens.  
Where do I find the courage  
to confront my problems?...

(Rachel Jenkins)

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### **Economic Activity and Social Justice**

The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole person, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice so as to correspond to God's plan for human beings.

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: 'If any one will not work, let him not eat'. Work honours the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, human beings collaborate in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. They show themselves to be disciples of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work they are called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ.

In work, persons exercise and fulfil in part the potential inscribed in their nature. The primordial value of labour stems from people themselves, who are its authors and its beneficiaries. Work is for people not people for work.

All of us should be able to draw from work the means of providing for our lives and that of our families, and of serving the human community.

All of us have the right of economic initiative; all of us should make legitimate use of our talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all, and to harvest the just fruits of labour. We should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good.

Economic life brings into play different interests, often opposed to one another. This explains why the conflicts that characterize it arise. Efforts should be made to reduce these conflicts by negotiation that respects the rights and duties of each social partner: those responsible for business enterprises, representatives of wage earners - for example, trade unions - and public authorities when appropriate.

The responsibility of the state. Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labours and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly... Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society.

Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits. Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment.

Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment.

A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. Remuneration for work should guarantee people the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for themselves and their families on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good. Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.

Recourse to a strike is morally legitimate when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit. It becomes morally unacceptable when accompanied by violence, or when objectives are included that are not directly linked to working conditions or are contrary to the common good.

It is unjust not to pay the social security contributions required by legitimate authority. Unemployment almost always wounds its victim's dignity and threatens the equilibrium of his life. Besides the harm done to him personally, it entails many risks for his family.

(From the Roman Catholic Catechism - adapted [c.] )

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## **A New Vision of Society**

Probably for the first time in human history there is a widespread awareness of the inter-locking character of human social organisation across the face of the globe. The organisation of the human race in national states continues to be one of the most prominent and necessary ways in which our race organises itself for many common purposes. Yet the existence of trans-national organisations and the ever growing means of communication and transportation has brought about the need for true international types of social organisation to regulate human affairs. We are clearly members of one race and what touches a human being in one part of the world will have consequences for all other human beings.

The Church, in her formal teaching, has never officially taught that one specific form of social or political organisation is necessarily more in accord with gospel values than another. The Church's teaching magisterium has taken care to point out the offences to human dignity which some political systems seem to present but there has been no canonisation of any particular system. Where then are we to find a new vision of society which will be adequate to respond to the challenge presented by new technologies and horizons?

A new vision of society has to arise from a combination of capacity to expect and manage change while holding on to an enduring conviction as to the true dignity and future of the human person and the human race. Change comes about in human affairs as a result of the gift of God to humankind to be made in his image and likeness and hence a co-creator and lord of this creation, shaping it ultimately to the glory of God. The enduring conviction of human dignity and our union with Jesus Christ the worker of Nazareth will act as a necessary defence and corrective to the impulses of selfishness and pride which can destroy human social organisation at local, nation and international level.

In this way and with these convictions, whatever choices human beings must make in the construction of the necessary social organisation under which society must operate, the poor will not be excluded from the common good; no individual or class of persons will be marginalised; the danger of the consequence of sin in each of us and in society will be recognised and combatted. Thus it is not organisation in itself, regulated solely by a simple search for obvious efficiency, but the full Christian vision of the human being, including the role as worker, which offers the hope for the future progress of our race.

(Bishop John Jukes OFM Conv.)

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## **Hope and Suffering**

In setting us free to be his children, God wants to enlist us in his service as co-workers with himself in the business of the kingdom; we are to labour with God to humanise the universe and to help his children become ever more fully human, which is a glorious destiny - you see, God created us in his image. It was not to animals or spirits that he gave this splendored privilege; and when he chose to intervene decisively in our affairs, he did not come as a magnificent and impressive awe-inspiring beast or as a glorious spirit but he became a human being. Thus our humanity is for ever united with divinity. We are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are God-carriers.

(Bishop Desmond Tutu)

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## **The Web of Creation**

I live in a world where air, trees, plants, water and fire, creatures and lands link to each other for food, for life, for balance, for use. A world which was made for them all - and for me.

God lives a life of holiness, joy, balance and truth, of justice and peace where Spirit links One with the Others, in love.

God looked, and God said, 'Let us make! Let us make!' So God spun the whole universe from atom to galaxy in the web of his love. It was great, it was good, there was meaning for all. God even provided true meaning for me.

But the story went on: there was trouble for earth; for we humans did not get the drift of God's plan. The web became tattered and torn; lost were justice and peace.

So God moved in again and at fearful expense made a way to restore the great tangle we'd made. So I live in a world where the lines of the tangled web and the love of God co-exist for a time. Praise to God for the web, for the way he re-plans our chance to create again, to make Love.

(Daphne Fraser - adapted)

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## **World Justice**

All Christians are called to act.  
For stating principles is not enough.  
To point out injustice is not enough.  
Prophetic cries are not enough.  
Words lack weight  
unless we all become responsible,  
and act effectively.

To pass on to others  
the blame for injustice  
is all too easy.  
Each of us has a share in it.  
The first thing we need  
is a personal conversion.  
Such basic humility  
keeps all our action  
flexible, unsectarian, brave,  
in the face of the immensity  
of what we have to do.

The Christian's hope  
rests on this knowledge:  
the Lord is working

with us  
in the world.  
Through his body, the Church,  
through the whole of humankind,  
Christ continues his Redemption,  
accomplished on the Cross,  
and bursting forth in victory  
on Resurrection morning..

(From 'This is Action', Section 48 - a popular version of Octogesima  
Adveniens, an Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI)

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## **The Incarnate Church**

Christ became a man of his people and of his time: he lived as a Jew, he worked as a labourer of Nazareth, and since then he continues to be incarnate in everyone. If many have distanced themselves from the Church, it is precisely because the Church has somewhat estranged itself from humanity. But a Church that can feel as its own all that is human, and wants to incarnate the pain, the hope, the experience of all who suffer and feel joy, such a Church will be Christ-loved and awaited, Christ present. And that depends on us.

(Oscar Romero, 1978, quoted in his book 'The Church is All of You'  
Collins (Fount) 1985, p.54)

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## **Unemployment Is...**

Unemployment is feeling utterly useless as far as one's contribution to society is concerned.

Unemployment is seeing everyone else with a job, a purpose, while you wander around aimlessly.

Unemployment is having to face the indignity, time and time again, of signing on with the same DSS assistants.

Unemployment is the guilt of having to rely on society's money in order to simply exist.

Unemployment is the shame of bumping into colleagues in the city, former workmates from the times when the going was relatively good.

Unemployment is seeing that one's clothes are wearing out and yet not knowing where the next set is going to come from.

Unemployment is getting a pair of the cheapest shoes in town, smelly and ill-fitting and looking cheap.

Unemployment is having to drag yourself out of bed in the morning, not knowing how you're possibly going to get through or fill the day.

Unemployment is often absolute loneliness for hours on end.

Unemployment is seeing a new book you want in a shop and knowing you cannot afford it.

Unemployment is wanting to go to see a play at the theatre, or a film at the cinema, and knowing you cannot afford it.

Unemployment is experiencing the distance of relatives and friends, because they also do not know how to cope with the despair and desperation of the situation.

Unemployment is suddenly losing friends who simply do not want to know you any more, or relatives who simply can't be bothered to accept the pain of caring enough.

Unemployment is being too old for even *Restart* to bother with you.

Unemployment is taking it out on the wife because you've no-one else to take it out on.

Unemployment is an unshakable whinge and whine and moan because you don't know where else to put your frustration.

Unemployment is to be kicked about by DSS and Council officials without any status or redress.

Unemployment is to be told you don't qualify for benefits even when you've followed all the rules.

Unemployment is being offered the dirtiest, noisiest and most vulnerable flats in town.

Unemployment is having to borrow from friends in order to survive until the next dole cheque.

Unemployment is absolute terror when the dole cheque doesn't arrive on time.

Unemployment is simply surviving one day at a time.

Unemployment is to lose yourself in drink or cheap sex as sheer necessary escape.

Unemployment is to seriously consider suicide.

Unemployment is sometimes to feel that the whole world has forgotten you.

Unemployment is to get washed and shaved in the morning for you do not know what.

Unemployment is to stop wearing masks because you no longer have the energy to maintain them.

Unemployment is to find a strength and a courage and power and a will-to-live within yourself that you never knew you had.

Unemployment is time to review the past for what it was, even if you cannot see much of a future.

Unemployment is developing a hard nose to take any blows the world may hurl at you.

Unemployment is a determination to stick up for one's rights whatever the cost.

Unemployment is a coming closer to God, a going deep within yourself and finding the deepest spiritual roots.

Unemployment is seeing prayers answered in little ways every day.

Unemployment is seeing the unmistakable hand of Providence at work every day.

Unemployment is potentially a unique destiny granted by God.

Unemployment is an opportunity to become spiritually grounded like you've never been before.

Unemployment is seeing the society around you with the eye of Spirit: greedy, grasping, materially obsessed and insane.

Unemployment is making yourself rich by making your wants few.

Unemployment is being appalled at society's worship of consumer idols, its superficial and empty vanity, its utter lack of meaningful values.

Unemployment is seeing clearly "I'm all right, Jack" and "What can I do anyway?"

Unemployment is seeing the futility of laying up treasure on earth instead of treasure in heaven where rust cannot corrupt.

Unemployment is finally accepting the gift of the desert, the urban slums where life - and values - are turned inside out.

Unemployment is seeing:

In the desert, a highway ...

In the desert, a flower ...

In the desert, a fountain.

(Geoff Smith)

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I journeyed to London to the timekept City  
Where the river flows with foreign flotations.  
There, I was told, we have too many churches,  
And too few chop houses. There I was told:  
Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the church  
In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays.  
In the City we need no bells:  
Let them waken the suburbs.  
I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:  
We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor  
To Hindhead or Maidenhead.  
If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the papers.  
In industrial districts there I was told  
Of economic laws,  
In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed  
That the country now is only for picnics.  
And the church does not seem to be wanted  
In country or in suburb; and in the town  
Only for important weddings...

The lot of man is ceaseless labour,  
Or ceaseless idleness, which is still harder  
Or irregular labour which is not pleasant.  
I have trodden the wine press alone, and I know  
That it is hard to be really useful, resigning  
The things that men count for happiness, seeking  
The good deeds that lead to obscurity, accepting  
With equal face those that bring ignominy,  
The applause of all or the love of none.  
All men are ready to invest their dividends.  
I say to you make perfect your will.

(T S Eliot 'Choruses from the Rock')

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## Light in the City

Look for the lights that will shine today in this city of.....  
the light of honourable commerce and business  
the light of deep concern for human needs  
the light of humble research  
the light of wise teaching and diligent learning  
the light of unassuming service  
the light of leisure and travel appropriately enjoyed...  
... each a part of the light of Christ.

You will have to wage a twofold fight in the heart of the city:  
for God and against evil.  
There you will receive a double grace:  
a meeting with God and purification from your own sins.

In the city you will have to struggle and contemplate.  
What the early monks set out to seek yesterday in the desert,  
you will find today in the city.

Oppose eroticism, prestige and money,  
with the firm contrast of a life of moderation, humility and purity.  
Fight noise with your silence;  
weariness with your peace;  
endless comings and goings with your repose in God.

No cloister will protect your prayer;  
the countryside will not bring you serenity;  
the walls of your enclosure will not preserve your virtue.  
Followers of Christ,  
you are summoned to a real struggle  
in the heart of the city.

(From the Jerusalem Community Rule of Life, adapted)

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When Krushev denounced Stalin's atrocities in public, someone called out, 'Where were you, then, when these terrible things happened?' Krushev replied swiftly: 'Stand up, please!' Of course, no-one in the place dared to move a muscle. So Krushev said wryly: 'You have your answer. I was in the same position as you are now'.

To put your job\* on the line  
to stand up for the truth  
to protest  
is not easy.  
Easier to take the money  
and do as we're told.

(From Anthony de Mello, 'The Song of the Bird'. Final lines added by Kate McIlhagga \*KM has 'head')

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## Male and Female He Created Them

MALE

I am a human being

I am created in the image of God  
God

I am a man

Culture has expectations of me

To be a breadwinner

To command fatherly respect

I am equal in the sight of God

But it's not as simple as that

Men have assumed leadership roles

It's been the same over succeeding generations

Women's ministry and gifts have been largely unrecognized

And yet God created us

I am a man

I was created this way

Let women and men know

Within the kingdom

The assured and confident  
vulnerable

It's a hard lesson to learn

It can be exciting!

FEMALE

I am a human being

I am created in the image of

I am a woman

Culture has expectations of me

To look after my family

To put other's needs first

I am equal in the sight of God

The equality is not easy to see

It's all there in the Bible

In many facets of life

A pattern has been assumed

Male and female

I am a woman

I was created this way

That all are equal in God's eyes

Within the Church

The 'seeming' balance is  
threatened  
The powerful, become

And needs sensible negotiation

It can be exciting!

BOTH: We are both human beings

BOTH: We are both created in the image of God

BOTH: Culture has expectations of each of us

BOTH: But culture has failed to recognize

BOTH: He knows us by name

BOTH: By God.

BOTH: God's lens challenges so much that is in our culture

It feels like a takeover

It's a big risk

I am a human being

I am created in the image of God

God

It's certainly a challenge to the  
usual norm

Letting women take their place

I am a human being

I am created in the image of

BOTH: We are both created in the image of God

There was once a man

Who challenged the 'norm'

And what he did

And pleased others

To those who had the least to lose

The materially poor

He came for men

Born of a woman

And got his 'come uppance'

Angered some

His offers were attractive

Those of other cultures

The women

He came for women

BOTH: He came for all of us

He came

To turn the world on its head

I am a man

I am called and chosen

1

And he comes

To shock us and thrill us

I am a woman

I am called and chosen

BOTH: To take our place, and get on with the task. Amen.

(Rosemary Wass, c. 'All Year Round' 1996, The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland)

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## **If the Gospel Possesses Us**

*I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who deal in false dreams (Jeremiah 23:32 REB)*

If the Gospel possesses us, we shall not be able to help showing that we have loyalties to a kingdom with a radically different understanding of what life is all about.

To those who worship the great financial director in the sky and whose priests are stockbrokers and bankers, we shall be declaring the God who pours out his riches for all.

To those who expect us to wheel out a tribal deity on special occasions to give credence to narrow national aims and prejudices, we shall be declaring the God whose love knows no boundaries and to whom every woman and man is dear.

To those consumed by ambition or greed, driven to climb higher or amass wealth without a thought for those they hurt in the process, we shall be declaring the God who calls us to life in community, where the joy of strength is the ability to support the weak.

To those who see life in terms of aggressive confrontation, we shall be declaring the God who suffers and forgives, that he may bring his scattered people back into one family.

To those who habitually use New-speak, calling retrogressive legislation reform, who are not so much economical with the truth as deliberately camouflaging their actions with falsehoods, we shall be declaring the God who cannot be fooled by any public relations exercise, however brilliantly it may be conceived.

At a time when successive Acts of Parliament are widening the already unacceptable divisions in our society, we shall be witnesses to the claims of the God whose justice is concerned, not with statutes, but with right dealing by the disadvantaged, and who holds us responsible for the way we treat our less fortunate sisters and brothers.

If the Gospel really possesses us we shall show in our living a fellowship in Christ of women and men who rejoice that they have a measure of strength to help the weak, a measure of wealth to share with the poor, a reservoir of love from which they may draw to refresh the unloved and the rejected, and a passion for justice to confront the often squalid legality of our times.

(Edward Banyard, from his Moderator's Address to the URC Assembly 1988, c. 'All Year Round', 1996, The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.)

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## QUOTATIONS

The Good News is Good News for everyone by being Good News for the poor...

This says something quite revolutionary: what's good for the poor is what's good for everyone. It's quite hard to be convinced by that – particularly if you are rich. Trickle-down economics says – contrary to all the evidence – what's good for the rich is also good for the poor. Just suppose we had the reverse policy: what's good for the poor is, in the end of the day, good for the rich. That, I think, would be better economics – and in tune with the Gospel.

(Rev Jim Sweeney)

People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency... They are degraded, for, in the literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable.

(J K Galbraith, 'The Affluent Society')

What thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty, thoughtful poor people call with equal justices a problem of riches.

(R H Tawney)

The religion of money exacts its harshest tribute in its demands on time... The old Cathedral clocks which summoned monks to prayer and measured the time which belonged to God have long been superseded by the digital microseconds which measure the time that belongs to money.

(Anthony Sampson, 'The Midas Touch')

Resurrection as our final and ultimate future can be known only by those who perceive resurrection with us now, encompassing all we are and do. For only then will it be recognized as a country we have already entered and in whose light and warmth we have already lived.

(H A Williams, 'True Resurrection')

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us how to live every hour of the day as his disciples. Every hour of the day is useful and may lead to divine inspiration, discovering the will of the Father, the prayer of love and the life of holiness. Every hour is holy. What matters is that we should live as Jesus taught us. And for this, it is enough to accept the realities of life: work, play, parenthood, family life with all its obligations, community and caring for others.

(From the Prayer Book of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, c. The Methodist Publishing House)

## **SECTION FOUR**

### **SERMONS**

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# **SERMONS**

## **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

With the exception of the sermon by Dr Richard Higginson on St John 21, which is adapted from his book *Called to Account*, and the piece by Bishop John Jukes, which is a writing-up of discussion notes, all the material presented in this section originated in actual sermons. Most of them were written up (in slightly abbreviated form) and published, shortly after being delivered, in the ICF Quarterly or its successor-journal ICF Quarterly Papers.

It is not suggested that preachers regurgitate these sermons verbatim but rather use them as examples of the sort of ground to be covered. It is almost always better for preachers to present subjects in their own style and to suit their own local circumstances. It is our experience that preachers vary tremendously both in their familiarity with the world of work and in their experience in dealing with "work" issues in the pulpit, and we therefore realise that in providing the fair amount of help that some will need we run the risk of appearing to "spoon-feed" the more experienced. May we offer in advance our apologies to the latter group: we have no wish to insult anyone.

# SERMONS

## THE WORTH OF ALL WORK

by Kenneth Adams

"Don't tell me that I am doing work of any social value like people who work in the Health Service - I only make underwear". That was what the Christian chairman of a substantial manufacturing firm in Nottingham said in response to a talk about the value of industrial production that I had given at Nottingham University.

He only made underwear. He employed some five hundred people in his factory; he made good underwear and many people wear it. His company was successful and was expanding; the taxes which his company and he and his employees paid contributed to the cost of providing local and national public services - BUT he saw no social value in his work!

The society in which he lived, and the church to which he went, encouraged him to see the social value of the work done by doctors and nurses, teachers and social workers, clergy and ambulance drivers, but not - NOT - the work which he did in manufacturing industry and commerce.

Of course, he and his firm were invited to make financial contributions to innumerable good causes. Such giving of money out of his profits was good - but the making of those profits? Well, when had he ever been to a service in church which celebrated the completion of a successful industrial contract in the way he went annually to church to give thanks to God for the agricultural harvest? Harvest Thanksgiving - yes, that was splendid - a hallowed tradition of his church. But a thanksgiving service for the successful production of underwear - now don't be silly!

Well, that is the silly thing that we are here to do today: to give thanks to God for work of the people of this congregation and locality [the original had "people of this great County in all its aspects] , and that is no silly matter. It is the most wonderful matter, the most creative matter, the most virtuous matter, because that is the work which maintains the fabric of this world. Remember those concluding words of our first reading, from Ecclesiasticus: But they maintain the fabric of this world, and the practice of their craft is their prayer. [Adapt this last sentence if Ecclesiasticus 38:24-end was NOT the first reading.]

That is why this is a Festival - a festive occasion - a time for singing with joy, praying with joy and sharing with joy the news of God who revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ who worked in manufacturing industry in Nazareth as a carpenter making doors, and tables and chairs and ploughs and farm carts.

So we start in a Festival of Thanksgiving with thanks to God who shared in our work and demonstrated by his participation its inherent goodness. If God himself did this then so should we. In the Book of Genesis - in that great vision of the Creation - the very first commandment given to Adam was to work and to cultivate the garden in which he had been placed. The fruit and vegetables were not going to drop into his mouth in some sort of pre-packed, pre-cooked form - he was going to have to work and cultivate that garden.

So the next thing we give thanks for is that ability - that ability to produce by our work all that we require in food and clothing and housing and public and professional services.

The past twelve months have not been easy. Many people have failed in their efforts in business. Companies have failed and people have lost their jobs at all levels, not only in business but in the professions and in the public services. What does a Festival of Thanksgiving for our work mean for those who have no work? Well, at the very least it means this: the evil of unemployment brings home to all of us the value of a job - the value of our work - not just for the pay packet but for many other profound reasons.

Our work is important not only for what we earn by doing it but for the social relationships of our workplace, for the identity which it gives us in the eyes of others and for the way it allows us to contribute to the life of our community.

I suggest that the next thing we give thanks for is the ability which our work gives us to contribute directly to the needs of other people. Indeed, our work is the principal way in which we contribute to the needs of others, and we very rarely emphasise this truth. It is by producing and having available for sale in our shops all the things that people require that those who work in industry and commerce make their contribution to the community.

We see that very clearly when we think in farming or horticultural terms. But, of course, the same is true for those who produce all our other material needs. And those materials have to be brought to us, so we need transport and all the distribution services of wholesale and retail - the railways, the road haulage, the shops, the supermarkets, the petrol stations.

And our needs are not simply material. We need medical services and education, banks and insurance, police and fire services - all this work contributes to our well-being, and it is right to celebrate and give thanks for it.

Human beings also need delight, entertainment, fun - and so we give thanks for the work of all those involved in the field of journalism, broadcasting, the cinema, the theatre, catering, tourism and the vast area of sport.

You see, our work, our ordinary daily work, is the main thing we do for other people. We often think that it is only when we do voluntary work or work of a particularly social-service character that we are working for others.

Think again. My underwear manufacturer in Nottingham would not be making underwear unless there were customers who needed underwear. Nurses would not be nursing unless there were patients who needed nursing. Our work is our main contribution to the needs of others; we don't work for ourselves, we work to provide the needs of others and in that process earn our own keep.

Our work forms the fabric of this world of which our reading speaks. We are all totally dependent on the work of other people. That interlocking web of work is the fabric which maintains us and maintains the world. Our work is our main contribution to that fabric.

Of course, charitable giving is important, but you can only give from what you have earned. And your work - your forty or fifty or sixty hours a week of work - is by far the biggest contribution you make to the needs of others. It is your principle social service.

The greatest social service which my underwear manufacture in Nottingham provides is through producing good underwear, BUT no-one had told him so.

That is what we do today. In thanking God we thank each other for the contribution each has made through his or her work to the fabric of society on which we all depend. It is that work - our own work - which we bring today to this church [original: "to this great Cathedral"] and offer to God. But how can we visualise our work in all its variety which we offer today in thanksgiving?

A year or so ago a vicar I know was organising (on a much more modest scale) such a service as this. He came to me for advice. He said he knew what to bring into the church for Harvest Thanksgiving - the corn and the bread and the vegetables and the flowers. But what did he bring in for an industrial harvest thanksgiving?

I said that the answer was, Nothing. I said that he need bring nothing into the church for such a service because it would all be there waiting for him. All he would have to do - as we can do now - was to look around. In addition to the things in the splendid displays [there was an exhibition illustrating various types of work], the clothing we are wearing, the seats on which we sit, this very building itself and the vestments of the clergy and, indeed, the sacred elements of the bread and wine of the Eucharist, are all products of the industry of countless thousands of people all over the world.

It is all here - the fruits of human ingenuity, human design, human effort, human industry - all the product of that God-given creative spark in human beings who are made in the image of God the Creator of everything, the God who calls us to be fellow workers with him.

There is so much work to be done because we can see the dire poverty in which so many people on this earth at present live. That poverty can only be ended by the production and distribution of the stuff which is required to relieve it, and we have to do this by our work or by enabling them to do that work themselves. Money will only buy the stuff that is required; it is the material stuff itself which has to be produced. All the money in the world won't buy food and transport which people in Russia and Africa desperately need unless someone somewhere has produced them.

Productive work and caring work, both are necessary. And perhaps the home-maker - the person working in the home - best symbolises that unity of productive and caring work. The cooking of the meal and the care of the young and the elderly - that home-creating, home-sustaining work - forms a great part of the work which maintains the fabric of this world and for which we give thanks today.

Kenneth Adams, CVO, CBE, is Industry Fellow of the Comino Foundation and a former chairman of ICF.

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CBI SERVICE 10 MAY 1992

**ADDRESS BY  
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY**

It is a delight to be with you all today, paying my first visit as Archbishop to the Diocese of Derby. I once lived and worked in Nottingham, but I don't expect you to be impressed by that! As if determined not to confuse your two neighbouring cities, the Church of England has placed Derby in the Province of Canterbury and the Diocese of Southwell, which covers Nottinghamshire, in the Province of York. It prevents any tribal warfare between you spilling over into the life of the Church.

An archbishop receives many invitations to preach but rarely at services thanking God for the achievements of British industry. That is why I was keen to accept, especially as Europe prepares to become a single market. Those twin themes of industry and Europe will be the focus of this address.

Industry. The word may sound unspiritual. Yet we celebrate the industrious, the diligent, those who apply themselves to the care of others. The very word industry includes both a reference to diligence as well as referring to the organisation and production of goods and services. Without both of these, we cannot have a civilised society. Deny the need for industriousness and organisation and we cannot feed the hungry, clothe our children, preserve our health or heal the sick. God gives us our unique gifts as human beings in order to work hard in serving him and our neighbours - not so that we can sit back and leave it to him, or even to other people. That is the meaning of the Parable of the Talents, which we heard as our Second Lesson. We must use our human ingenuity positively, actively, lovingly, tirelessly and account later for what we have done. Complacency spells the end not just for a commercial company. It is death to Christian discipleship too. Doing God's will requires ceaseless effort in his service.

Somehow a myth has circulated that the Church of England is hostile or indifferent to the creation of wealth. We would not be worshipping in this cathedral without it. The Diocese of Derby could not be created until it had a sufficient endowment fund. By 1927 there was enough money collected, raised and created. The £70,000 it took sounds like small beer today but it was big money then. There were rueful thoughts that centuries earlier some dioceses were created not so much by wealth creation as wealth confiscation. Those were the days when some handy monastic property might be appropriated. These days the Church of England knows all about creating wealth. Ask the Provost here and he will tell you there's no pot of gold supporting the life and ministry of this cathedral. Financial backing has to be created, earned, attracted by the vibrancy of its Christian faith and life.

Followers of the Lord who told the Parable of the Talents can scarcely be critical of applying human skills and intelligence to the resources given us by God, in order to create things of value and use to other people. Unless we want ever greater poverty and destitution, we must honour and encourage those who use their God-given talents to help produce goods and services for others. Without them we cannot have a plentiful planet and the human adventure will end with the same wailing and grinding of teeth that awaited the servant who failed to use his talent.

Biblical scholars amongst you will know that in the New Testament the talent (*talenton*) is a sum of money - a big sum, reckoned to be about 15 years' wages for a labourer. But - and it's a big BUT - the story of the talents is not intended to mean that the more money anyone makes, the better God is pleased! It is a parable, about using the gifts given us by God for His purposes - not for any old purpose. It is about being creative with our lives, with what God entrusts to us, but also about being surprised by God's call to

account. It is immediately followed by Jesus explaining what God will be looking for at the time of judgement.

Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'You have my Father's blessing; come, enter and possess the Kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made. For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home; when naked you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help; when in prison you visited me.

Jesus goes on to explain that "anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me" (Matthew 25:34-40). These, then, are the kind of ends to which God calls us to use our talents. And each of us has talents. Make no mistake about that. We may not have 15 years of wages stored up, but we can take that unit of money to represent our skills, abilities and diligence. Up and down the country the talents of people in our inner cities have been released by projects they have started and which have been helped by the Church Urban Fund. Locally - in Derby - the Crimebeat initiative works on similar principles. Young people produce their own ideas to combat crime and are supported to implement them. Ends as well as means are important.

This brings me to a question which I dare raise today. What are the ends you seek in British industry? What is the fundamental purpose to which you are putting your talents? What is it that we are really asking God's blessing for in this Service?

The ultimate purpose of industry is, I believe, to serve our fellow human beings by creating goods and services to meet their needs. It is not to make money for its own sake. It is not to make profits for shareholders, nor to create salaries and wages for the industrial community. These are necessary conditions for success but not its purpose. Nor can the purpose of industry be to serve the market, as if the market was Master instead of servant of human need. No, industry's purpose is surely to serve people by creating things of use and value to them. British industry, like the Church, has plenty of critics, but it has excelled in creating things of use and value which have brought enormous benefits to many people's lives. I want to underline my admiration for many industrialists and industrial workers.

But we need to remain clear about the basic purpose of industry as we enter the European Single Market, if industry is to prosper as a well-loved, well-respected contributor to a Christian society. This will be the way to clear some of the popular misconceptions about industry of which industrialists complain. Company Law sometimes appears to enshrine the erroneous principle that companies exist to serve their shareholders. The other stakeholders in an enterprise and its fundamental purpose may not get a look in. Some people in business do talk as if the bottom line in industry is simply the bottom line, and that industry is a Darwinian world ruled by the values of the market. The language of service and stewardship is too often left to clergymen. Neither service nor stewardship is inimical to wealth creation. They are its allies. But they are not allies of tiny groups of institutional investors who might decide they are unhappy with a company's short-term financial return, and so off-load people's loyalties and talents simply for quick profits. Some of the habits, laws and institutions of industrial life appear designed to nourish misconceptions about industry's fundamental purposes.

The question, "Who benefits from industrial enterprise?" remains relevant to its public reputation. Let us cast our minds back to what Jesus suggested God would be looking for when we account for the purposes to which we have put our talents. If prolonged bursts of private-sector-led economic growth in advanced industrial countries leave more people than ever in the world hungry, thirsty, naked, ill or in prison, what then? A question mark would appear over the proposition that industry exists to serve human needs. It is bound to look as if a minority of people are appropriating a quite disproportionate share of the earth's resources to sustain wasteful patterns of conspicuous consumption. And all this done at the expense of the majority in other parts of the world. As we give thanks today for British industry on the approach of the European Single Market, let us remember also the approach of the UNCED conference in Rio and ask for God's blessing there too.

Within our own society, our collective commitment to industrial enterprise will remain under-powered if the fruits of success appear to be concentrated too heavily in the pockets of shareholders and senior executives. For example, massive individual pay rises during a recession do not encourage public support for wealth creation. Moreover, when God sorts out the unfortunate goats from the sheep, he tells them: "The curse is upon you... For when I was hungry, you gave me nothing to eat, when thirsty nothing to drink; when I was a stranger you gave me no home, when naked you did not clothe me; when I was ill and in prison you did not come to my help". I doubt if He would have been impressed by the argument that the goats had been waiting for these things to "trickle down" as a by-product of economic growth!

In addition to the achievements, hopes and purposes of British industry, we remember today before God the challenges of the Single European Market. Why on earth bring that into church? Because here too we welcome a further stimulus to use God's gifts creatively to meet people's needs. In the light of the Gospel, let us reaffirm this purpose and keep it in mind if the Single Market is to be the blessing we all hope for. The Single Market, like industry, is there to serve people. The people of Europe are not there to serve the Single Market. "The sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath" said Jesus. Markets, if they are treated as masters, tend to be blind to environmental costs and can consume God's creation and waste our heritage. The glory of Europe is the extraordinary variety of cultures, characters, buildings, landscapes and languages packed into a relatively small corner of the globe: living testimony to the rich diversity of talents invested there over centuries. We must work to ensure the Single Market is so regulated that this diversity is strengthened. Spread a monochrome Euro-development and we will destroy distinctiveness. The fate of much of the Mediterranean coastline is a sobering warning of where the European Market can take us unless it is made to serve our long-term needs.

We must hope, too, that the Europe of the Single Market will look outwards and serve the rest of the world, not turn in on itself. It is not just industrialists who have been troubled by the posture of the European Community during the GATT round. Some hope is created from aspects of Europe's collective record on world environment and development issues, but this contribution will have to develop strongly to keep pace with the growing emphasis on keeping economic and environmental refugees out of fortress Europe.

Let us therefore link this great celebration and thanksgiving to some challenging demands upon all of us. We must resolve that the institutions, laws and practices of European industry are in proper shape to help it fulfil its fundamental purpose of serving the people. The new Europe must use God's creation and its own diverse heritage sustainably, so setting an example to the world. And it must not turn its back on its neighbours in other parts of the world.

So let us pray for God's blessing on industry and industrialists at this historic moment. Let us pray, too, for God's grace in our lives so that we remember the most important account is the one each of us will render to Him of the efforts we have made to use the talents He has given us for His loving purposes.

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable George Carey, BD, ALCD, MTh, PhD, is Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the Industry Churches Forum.

## OFFERING OUR WORK TO GOD IN THE SACRAMENT

by David Welbourn

The idea of offering our work to God in the sacrament of Holy Communion is not new. At the offering of the bread and wine, some churches use the following ancient words, said respectively over the bread and wine:

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation; through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation; through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

Bread and wine, both described as "the work of human hands", both offered to God. In using these words, our Christian forebears were indicating their belief that God intends human work to contribute to his own sacred purposes.

How can this be? What if our work isn't particularly "Christian". Many Christians express that feeling. They are thereby reflecting a persistent misunderstanding in Christian circles that work is only worthy if it is directly to do with preaching or spreading the Gospel or with caring. Thus, the jobs of the minister of religion, or the missionary or the member of the so-called "caring" professions are acceptable to God, while all the rest (the vast majority of jobs) are not.

This reflects a very narrow perception of the purpose of God, a perception very different from that of Jesus, who declared "I have come that they may have life and have it in all its fullness". Fullness of life, or "life abundant" as Jesus' words are rendered in some translations, includes the material side of our being as well as the spiritual. So any job which contributes to human need of whatever kind is relevant to achieving God's purpose as understood by Jesus. The work of architects, accountants, planners and factory workers is as relevant as that of doctors, teachers, nurses and social workers in contributing to fullness of life.

So whatever our occupation, let us see in the offered bread and wine symbols of our own work. At the moment of the offertory let us offer our particular work, our particular Monday-to-Friday occupation, to God.

There is a sense, however, in which we must all be hesitant in offering our work to God - whatever our occupation. And the reason for our hesitation is our knowledge that our work is imperfect. Whether we are priest or publican, teacher or town planner, we all know that we fall short of God's standards, and that our work contributes to God's purpose ambiguously at best.

But this is not a reason for holding back our offering; least of all in the Holy Communion service. For consider what happens to the bread and the wine. These human artifacts are taken up by God and transformed by him. Then afterwards they are received back by us in their transformed state as "the body and blood of Christ". This is a perfect way of symbolising that our work as it is is imperfect and stands in need of God's forgiveness and his transforming power. At the offertory we offer to God our imperfect work and our inauthentic selves. But when we take the bread and wine we receive both back transformed

by the real presence of Christ. Now our work is "embodied" by Christ and we ourselves are the "body of Christ", enabled by God's grace to do his work in the world.

The Revd David Welbourn is Churches' Officer for Industry and Commerce with the Surrey & North East Hampshire Industrial Mission.

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## ALL WORK IN HIS SERVICE

by David Welbourn

The title of this address is All Work in His Service. Perhaps you are thinking there ought to be a question-mark at the end of that phrase. Is ALL work in God's service? Do all kinds of work contribute to his purpose? Is all work 'Christian work'?

Let me tell you about a man who was convinced that his work wasn't. A young man came to his manager one day and announced: "I intend to give up my job in industry in order to do Christian work". Now what was he minded to do? Probably he was thinking of becoming a clergyman or a teacher, or some other sort of "carer".

Many Christian people would seem to characterise work as follows. They conceive of a sort of "premier league" of Christian work - in which they would place jobs such as those of the minister of religion, or missionary doctor, or Christian bookseller - by which they mean seller of Christian books. Then there's a "first division" - jobs not directly concerned with spreading the Gospel or to do with the life of the institutional Church but "Christian-approved" jobs just the same: and they would have in mind teachers, doctors, nurses, social worker - the so-called caring professions.

In which division would you place your job? Premier league, first, second, third division. Perhaps you are wondering whether your job is even Vauxhall Conference!

If we want to decide what sort of job qualifies as "Christian", we can do no better than consider the work and ministry of Jesus. He was quite sure he was doing God's work. "My Father works and I work" he declared in John chapter 5. Thus Jesus could speak of his Father's work and his own work in one breath.

We notice how Jesus in his work met the whole range of human needs. First, bodily needs. When people were hungry he provided them with food; when their bodies required healing he provided that. He also met the needs of people's minds - as a great teacher, for example. Finally, he met the deepest needs of the human spirit - by bringing people to the experience of the love and forgiveness of God within the life of the God's kingdom.

A parallel may be drawn between the work of Jesus in meeting the needs of body, mind and spirit and ordinary human work. Some jobs meet the needs of the body, for example the baker. Some jobs meet the needs of the mind - teachers, broadcasters, journalists. Others meet the needs of the spirit - counsellors, psychiatrists, plus those who enrich human culture through art, music and the like.

Provided they genuinely meet need, all types of work can be affirmed by Christians, all can qualify as "Christian work". Well, practically all! There are some exceptions. There cannot be Christian prostitutes, or drug pushers. And there may be some occupations of a borderline kind. But these are very much exceptions.

I should want to claim that any job, occupation or profession is Christian, contributes to the purpose of God if it (1) meets any kind of human need, or (2) contributes to the life of, or preserves, or heals the fabric of society, or (3) develops or preserves the life of the planet.

All these three categories are referred to in scripture. In the case of (1) there are scores of biblical passages about service, about loving our neighbour. In relation to (2) I will cite that wonderful passage in Ecclesiasticus 38, which speaks of herdsmen, smiths, potters and the like as "those who maintain the

fabric of this world". With regard to (3) we may mention Genesis 1, which speaks of human beings created in God's image to have "dominion" (i.e. managership, stewardship) over the earth; and Genesis 2, in which human beings are enjoined to "till and keep the garden" of this world. These thoughts are repeated in Psalm 8, Romans 8 and Hebrews 2.

A thought may be bothering some of you. You may feel that I have done a whitewash job on human work by speaking in such positive terms about it. The reality of work as you know it might feel rather different. I am aware, however, that work has its shadow side.

Our work is meant to meet the needs of people and promote the well-being of society and the planet. Much actual work falls short. Sometimes industry produces shoddy goods. Occasionally the focus is on creating artificial needs rather than on meeting real ones. There are instances of dishonest marketing. In many workplaces people are badly used. Often profits are put before people. Much industrial output pollutes the planet. Examples could be multiplied.

Other dark features include the effects of recession. Businesses fail. People may become unemployed, fall into debt, have their houses repossessed. Those still in employment often work over-long hours, suffer stress, feel insecure about the future, experience problems of conscience.

These dark features of the world of work are found not just in the realms of industry and commerce. They are experienced in the world of work generally. They are present in the so-called caring professions. They are found also in the life of the church.

A distinction needs to be drawn between God's purpose for all types of work, and our actual performance in whatever occupation we happen to find ourselves. In other words, the distinction is not between some professions which are by nature godly and others which are not, but between God's purpose for them all and the failure of all adequately to carry out that purpose. All work is both Christian and less than Christian.

All are called to make their work more Christian; all are called to work in God's service. All therefore may be said to have a vocation. The idea of vocation should not be limited to the clerical and caring professions, but should include bankers, factory workers, planners, engineers, accountants.

People are called where they are, in their present job. But doesn't God sometimes call people out of one job into another? Yes, he does - sometimes. But when he does, it does not entail a divine judgement about what is higher or more Christian. Rather, God is saying to a particular individual: this, given your experience, talents and opportunities, is what I want you to do for me now.

Referring again to the young man who wanted to transfer to "Christian work", I am glad to tell you that he was persuaded by his manager to stay where he was and to fulfil his Christian vocation in industry.

May I close by suggesting something for you to go away and think about. Reflect on, and complete the following sentence: "My work is Christian because..."

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## SERMONS ON UNEMPLOYMENT

### (1) RESTORING FELLOWSHIP

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18-19)

Why are churches concerned, or urged to be concerned, about unemployment? It might be argued that so to be concerned is to become involved in politics and economics - subjects about which the Church has little expertise.

During the war, in 1942, the person who was then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, published a book called *Christianity and Social Order*. In this book he talks about something that the churches often talk about, which is fellowship. Only here he is not talking about fellowship in the church hall or chapel meeting. He is arguing that society needs to be organised along the lines of fellowship. Let me quote what he says: "No man is fitted for an isolated life; everyone has needs which he cannot supply for himself; but he needs not only what his neighbours contribute to the equipment of his life but their actual selves as the compliment of his own. Man is naturally and incurably social". He goes on to point out that whilst there is a correct use of the word individual to mark us off from one another, we also need the word person. Every person is an individual, but "only in his social relationship can a man be a person". We can think of all kinds of ways in which they two words come into play. We emphasise that we are individuals when we want to talk about our uniqueness. But when we think of ourselves as persons we remember how much we owe to others. The language I speak, the clothes I wear, the job I do, the political ideas I follow, the religion I practice all owe something to the fact that we live in society, in relationship with other people. And William Temple saw that these relationships take place in a "whole network of communities, associations and fellowships". Temple believe that the real wealth of human life consisted of these relationships and that the job of the state was to promote human well-being by fostering "these many groupings of its citizens". Temple also had two other great principles, those of freedom and service, but it's the one of fellowship that we're concentrating on today.

We can see how Temple's emphasis, drawing on Christian social principles, differs from so much thought in our own time, where individualism is promoted to the detriment of society as a whole. But of course it was also true in Temple's day that there were many social ills. And he saw those ills as being those things that undermined his great principles of Freedom, Service and Fellowship. He drew attention to the magnificent unity that existed in much of British society. But then he goes on to say: "Yet allowing for all this, the breaches in our fellowship are pretty serious". He draws attention to the snobbery which is intensified by our education system; to the lack of a voice in the control and direction of the work that provides people with their livelihood; to the class war which is the ultimate expression of this; to the monotony of work which robs people of any idea of vocation. The fact that work is so monotonous makes it difficult for modern people to worship, for Temple says: "For worship is the offering of our whole being and life - therefore very prominently our work - to God; and no-one but an already-perfect saint could sincerely offer that sort of work to God".

And then we come to Unemployment. Temple sees unemployment in the context of a breach of fellowship. He says about it: "The worst evil afflicting the working class in England is insecurity; they live under the terrible menace of unemployment. And in our own time a new and horrible evil has appeared - long-term unemployment on a considerable scale. Unemployment is a corrosive poison. It saps both physical and moral strength. The worst effect of it, especially now the community takes some care of its unemployed members, is not the physical want, but the moral disaster of not being wanted".

Of course, since Temple wrote those words in 1942, many others have written and spoken about unemployment. Some of the things the Temple witnessed how have a dated feel. For instance, in Britain in 1942 unemployment was mainly a working class and a male problem. But he also qualified that by saying "Unemployment is no respecter of persons. It hits young and old, men and women, skilled and unskilled, executives and labourers".

But the reason why I have concentrated on what Temple had to say is that he puts unemployment so firmly in the context of Christian Social Principles. As he says: "Now it is no part of the duty of the Christian as such to draw plans of a reformed society. But it is part of his duty to know and proclaim Christian principles, to denounce as evil what contravenes them, and to insist that these evils should be remedied".

Emphasising that unemployment is a breach of fellowship is another way of saying that there is about Christianity a spirit of inclusiveness, of universality. This Christianity inherits from its Jewish background. When Jesus came to Nazareth on the Sabbath day and read the scriptures in the synagogue, he drew on the idea of Jubilee which we find in the Hebrew Bible, and saying that this Jubilee was coming about in his ministry. The Jubilee is the fiftieth year when land and property will be redistributed so that there are no disproportionate gaps between the rich and the poor. It is the year of the Lord's favour, when the poor hear the good news, the captives are released, the blind recover their sight and the oppressed go free. The principle of Jubilee is clearly enunciated in Leviticus chapter 25. The fiftieth year will be hallowed. Prices are to be worked out according to the number of years left till the Jubilee. In that year people shall return to their property (verse 13). The principle behind it is that the land belongs not to the buyer but to God. "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (verse 23). Similarly, people are not to be sold as slaves when they become impoverished but shall serve as hired or bound labourers, free to go back to their families and property in the year of Jubilee (verse 39ff.).

We see this concern to bring people back into society in the ministry of Jesus, in his dealings with the sick, the poor, the foreigner, the outcast, the sinner. So we have the same theme that we find in William Temple - broken fellowship restored. But this restoration refers not just to economic life - it is a matter of the whole work of Christ, including his death on the Cross, bringing about a universal reconciliation. This included Gentiles as well as Jews, the whole created order and not just humanity. Thus the restoring of unemployed people to social fellowship has the widest possible context, the universal restoration of all things, "the universal homecoming", as the theologian Ethelbert Stauffer called it.

But Christianity is not only universal, it is also particular. Universal love has its appeal, but it can sound very bland. This is particularly the case with God. We might think that it is all very well of God to love everyone but the idea lacks moral authenticity. That is why Christianity asserts that God has himself experienced suffering, death and the temptation to sin, and has overcome them as a human individual. Thus God has "the moral authority to overcome them in and with the rest of humanity" (Vernon White in Atonement and Incarnation). So we see that God's love is not bland but costly. God has himself on the Cross "borne our sorrows"; he is universally present in the suffering of others. He does not merely have "awareness" and "sympathy"; he is "the fellow sufferer who understands". Indeed, some theologians argue that "the Christ event" brings something new to the experience of God. In some sense it changes God. This is not a change in God's attitude, but is "something new in the divine experience of the world and himself" (Paul Fiddes, quoted in Vernon White).

We can catch a glimpse of it from our own experience. To know these things at first hand means that one is no longer simply sympathising or having a general awareness. It is to know what the author of a book

on unemployment means when he says "unemployment is profoundly hated by the vast majority of those who experience it".

So God in Christ knows what it is to be homeless with the homeless "for the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head". And as W.H.Vanstone suggests in his book *The Stature of Waiting*, he know too what it meant to be unemployed, for at the end of his life he had to move from being an agent to being a person to whom things were done - one who like the unemployed simply had to wait. The difference is that unlike the unemployed God enters into this experience voluntarily.

If God can enter directly into this experience, can the Church do less than raise its awareness, develop projects, and advocate the needs of the unemployed to all in power, arguing that ways be found to include them in the social fellowship. Otherwise the year of Jubilee will remain a distant dream.

From the Unemployment Sunday Resource Pack produced by Church Action With the Unemployed, 1993

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## SERMONS ON UNEMPLOYMENT

### **(2) CHURCH SUPPORT FOR THE UNEMPLOYED**

by David Welbourn

(Note: Reference is made in the course of this sermon to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. It would therefore be appropriate to choose Luke 15:11-end as a lesson)

"What do you do?", or even more revealingly, "What are you?" - that's the sort of question that adults almost invariably put to each other at an early stage of their getting acquainted. And we know what the question means - we are asking about each other's work or occupation. In most circumstances I find I get asked the question very early on, indeed almost as soon as I have met my new acquaintance. But interestingly it's rather different on holiday. The last few years our family has gone on "house party" type walking holidays, the format of which encourages the gradual building up of relationships with one's fellow holidaymakers. In this situation, the question What are you? doesn't usually get asked - at least not right away. Obviously people don't think it appropriate to raise the subject of work while they are on holiday. Yet there comes a point - usually on about day four - at which, in order to get to know each other better, we feel we just have to pop the question. To hold back on such information would be to withhold something of importance about yourself and would be tantamount to saying "I don't want the relationship to go any further".

What is all this saying? It is saying that in our culture and society, what we essentially are is in some way bound up with our work. And that, of course, means a problem for the unemployed. Those unable to lay claim to an occupation suffer the psychological equivalent of having an arm or a leg missing. They are incomplete human beings.

We see how much being without work is a problem when we consider what work provides for people. Work is a means of livelihood - and being unemployed usually means much less cash is available for support of self and family. Work gives a sense of direction or meaning: it tells people what they are "for". It also provides a place in society. It involves a contract with society - you use your skills to provide some need which society has and society offers you payment in return. (Unemployment benefit or income support payments are not the same.) Work means social contact; unemployment often means being cut off from others. Work also, hopefully, provides a means of self-expression and an opportunity for self-development and fulfilment.

Unemployment is serious also because of the number of people it is affecting, especially here in the South East [See note at end]. Of the 2.8 million unemployed nationally, a third of them live in the South East. And this region has witnessed the fastest rate of increase in unemployment. Take the Guildford figures as an example.... Other factors make things worse for our region: here people have been unused to being made redundant; and ours is very much a success-oriented culture which makes being a "failure" (and unemployed people feel they're failures) very hard to take.

Another blow is the way people are sometimes made redundant. I was recently told the story of an executive who went away on holiday, leaving his company car in his drive. On his return he found the car missing. He phoned his workplace to say he would be late for work as his car had been stolen. He was told, however, "Your car has not been stolen; it has been repossessed by the firm. You no longer have a job here". Other stories just as gruesome could be told. To be fair, though, I must add that some firms are

good about the way they dismiss people, often being very supportive and making great efforts to help they get a new job.

Also very difficult to bear is the shame people feel about being without work. Some are so ashamed that they fail even to tell their own spouse and family. I recently heard of a commuter who lost his job in London taking his usual train to Waterloo each day, wandering about town all day, and then returning in the evening, in an attempt to hide his unemployment from his family and friends.

A big part of the problem is the strength and persistence of what is called the Protestant Work Ethic. I can't go into details now about this, except to say that it involves a set of beliefs which include the idea that human beings are made to work, and that work is virtually the be-all and end-all of life.

An illustration of the work ethic's influence is the way some people must use their redundancy money to start their own business. A way of life not based on work is inconceivable to them. Of course, the present economic climate is a difficult one in which to succeed in a new business. But encouraged by Government assertions about the recession being about to end, they go ahead. They go ahead and fail. Failure means debt; debt often leads to house repossession.

How can the Church, and church people, support the unemployed? We can help them, first of all, by understanding the current unemployment situation. We must appreciate the plight unemployed people are in. But we must also help people get work into perspective. We should discuss with them the true place of work in life.

Now Christianity does regard work as important - indeed it is a commission from God (Genesis 1 and 2), although here we should realise that paid work is not the only kind of work there is. Paid work should certainly not be regarded as the be-all and end-all of life. How do we help people get a better perspective?

A firmer grasp of the Christian gospel will help. Let me explain. What the work ethic says is, Your value lies in what you contribute to society; you earn your salvation through work. The Christian gospel says, You are valued as you are, as a human being, as a child of God, as a person for whom Christ died. You are valued before you make any contribution. You don't earn salvation, you accept it as God's free gift.

The returning prodigal thought he would earn his way back to acceptance by his father by becoming "as one of his hired servants" (salvation through paid employment) but the father accepted him, with open arms, as he was; he accepted him because he was his son. And so it is with us. We are valuable to God irrespective of our employment status.

Where, though, does work come in, from the Christian point of view? Work is, properly speaking, an expression of gratitude for value already given. The correct sequence is: God loves us and values us. We accept his love and our own value. We want to love him in return. To love God, in the words of the New Testament, is to keep his commandments. Chief among his commandments is that we love one another. One of the ways we love others is by using our talents to meet their needs. A main way of doing this is through our daily work.

So a very important way of helping the unemployed is to preach the gospel to them. However, the message may take some time to sink in. The contrary signals from society are very strong. In addition to being told they are only valuable if they are working, people are counted worthy to receive unemployment benefit only if they are "actively seeking work".

There are also many practical ways the Church and church people can help. Church premises can be made available, perhaps as a drop-in centre, where unemployed people can meet for a coffee and a chat. Or

information or advice leaflets can be provided, which tell people where to go for help, or what alternative opportunities there are for them (e.g. in training or adult education or leisure activities), or what clubs and societies there are for them to consider joining. In many church congregations there are people with particular skills for helping the unemployed - for instance, counselling skills, or expertise in financial matters.

I should like now to address particular groups of people. First of all, employers faced with the task of making people redundant. Do so in as humane a manner as possible. Offer people practical help, such as outplacement counselling. Don't feel personally guilty about making people redundant. Your action is dictated not by malevolence but by economic factors beyond your control. The survival of the firm may well depend on some people having to lose their jobs.

Secondly, people who have the privilege of regular paid employment - and it is these days rightly regarded as a privilege. Perhaps you would consider whether you might be part of the problem. I'm thinking of those who work excessively long hours. What an irony this is: some are overworked while others have no work at all. Those without work would love to share some of your excess hours (although I appreciate that the number of hours worked is not always in the individual's own control).

Now a word to the unemployed themselves. If you are without a job, know what makes you a valuable human being. Work is important, but it's not everything; and besides, work need not be the same as paid work. Realise that God loves and values people whether they are in paid employment or not. Tell others about your unemployment, especially your own family. Try also to trust members of the church family. Let them share your burden.

And what of the church congregation? Be an understanding, sensitive congregation. Don't pry. Don't demand to know people's employment situation. But offer them openings, opportunities to share their feelings - if they wish. Look out for opportunities to proclaim the gospel message to them about where their worth really lies. But do so sensitively. Engage in voluntary work which directly or indirectly helps unemployed people - e.g. Citizen's Advice Bureau, YMCA. I have already spoken of the use of church premises and members of the congregation using their professional skills. You might like to set up an Unemployment Support Group - at least a dozen churches in our area have done so. There is so much we can do as individuals and as a church.

I trust you can see that unemployment is not merely a social problem, but something which relates to the central message of the Christian gospel. What is at stake is whether or not people have the chance to find the "life in all its fullness" which Jesus came to bring. So it is as believers and evangelists as well as socially concerned people that we take on board the issue of unemployment and the needs of our unemployed sisters and brothers. It is a vital area of Christian concern and ministry.

(Note: This sermon was preached in the early '90s in Surrey and North-East Hampshire and the statistics quoted are appropriate to that time and place. Preachers who wish to address this issue in their own localities might consider contacting their nearest Jobcentre for their own local statistics.)

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## FROM CHAOS TO CREATION

by David Welbourn

Three men - a lawyer, an architect and a politician - were arguing about whose was the oldest profession. Mine is, said the lawyer, for the law was given way back under Moses. No mine is, claimed the architect who referred to the creation of the world by the Great Architect. But the politician had the trump card: "And where were you two when chaos reigned?!"

It seems to many that chaos reigns in the world of work today. One of the first activities by the new Bishop of Guildford on coming to his diocese was to familiarise himself with some of the major workplaces of the area. In organisation after organisation he heard the message "We're surviving in chaos".

To say that the present work scene is in a state of chaos is hardly an exaggeration. A number of factors contribute to the overall picture of chaos. Restructuring and rationalisation are the order of the day, as our organisations find themselves under intense pressure to improve their performance and at the same time reduce costs. A major cost is people, so firms are now operating with as few people as possible. Hence the measures described, in somewhat sinister fashion, as downsizing and delayering (stripping out layers of management to produce flatter organisations) .

The economic background to all this is (a) the recession (not fully over yet) - in the face of which cost reduction is vital to survival - and (b) the global market economy, of which we are inescapably a part and within which we are having to compete not only with the best in the world but with Third World countries where labour costs are a fraction of our own.

The factors I've described are major causes of high unemployment - a chaos experience affecting 3 million people. Many people, fortunately, are managing to get back to work but on less attractive terms, being offered either part-time or short-term contract work. Nor is it just returners who are going on to contract work. In fact, we are fast becoming a contract employment society. The major worry for those in contract work is whether they will be able to keep up their mortgage repayments. Uncertainty about continuity of income and the threat of house repossession are particularly worrying aspects of the chaos experience.

For many, gone are the days when one could look forward to a career. The business journal *Management Today* recently carried in large letters on its front page the words "No Stability, No Security, No Careers". Regarding careers, it has been said that today "there's no such thing as a career path; there's only crazy paving, and you lay it yourself". Life is therefore chaotic even for those with marketable skills; the prospect is total chaos for the unskilled, who would seem to have no place in the coming "intelligence" society.

The sheer amount of time many are spending at work - and this applies not only to those in senior positions - is another worrying phenomenon. The experience of chaos here is the loss of wholeness or balance in life. Many organisations are adopting the "half-times two-times three" formula: half the number of people, working for twice the pay and three times as hard. For some 6pm is midday. Many work long hours to demonstrate their loyalty, being afraid to leave before mid-evening. I'm told that some people take two jackets to work - one to wear when they go out of their office and the other to put on the back of their chair to indicate they are still on the premises. Many have far too little time for their families or for leisure pursuits. Some indeed speak of the sheer incompatibility of working and family life.

Working life is also characterised by growing inequalities. In some organisations chief executives earn more in one hour than ordinary employees do in an entire week. The chaos in this instance is the loss of agreed ethical norms or communal sense as to what is fair.

Also chaotic is people's loss of bargaining power. Trade unionists complain that hard-won employment rights, worked for over a century, are being progressively eroded. And increasingly people are in no position to do anything about their situation.

These features are sufficiently pervasive for many to claim that "chaos rules" in today's world of work.

This chaos is affecting the church. Clergy can no longer be sure of careers with pensions at the end of them. Many able lay people are too busy to be involved in church life, or even to attend church services. This leaves the running of church organisations even more to the clergy, who are themselves becoming over-worked and stressed.

Is there a Christian message of hope in the face of all this chaos? Can the chaos be overcome? Our thoughts automatically go to the opening verses of the Bible. The Bible's very first statement about God is that he overcomes chaos, turning it into creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a vast waste". Or, as an older translation has it, "without form and void"; literally "formlessness and emptiness" in the original Hebrew. The very picture of chaos! Then God began to bring order out of the chaos. First light, then habitable dry land, and so on.

There are other key points in the Old Testament where God brings creation out of chaos. The idea is applied to God's bringing his people out of slavery in Egypt, the Exodus. Slavery was an experience of chaos, God's deliverance from it was the corresponding act of creation. It is spoken of in these terms in the Psalms and some of the prophetic writings. Psalm 89 celebrates God's mighty act in terms of the slaying of the great chaos monster, Rahab. The event of the Exodus is here being regarded as a replay of the primordial act of creation. The background is the widespread near-Eastern myth of the creation of the world out of the slain monster's body.

In a number of the Psalms and also in Isaiah, it is suggested that the act of creation involves a real struggle on God's part. This contrast with Genesis where creation is achieved instantly and effortlessly by divine fiat. Another contrast to Genesis 1: 1f. is the involvement in the drama of human actors, with Moses as God's main creative partner.

Another Old Testament event regarded as an act of creation-out-of-chaos is the deliverance from exile in Babylon. Here the main human agent is not a hero from God's own people but the foreign king Cyrus, referred to by Isaiah as "the Lord's anointed". (An implication of this will be drawn out later.)

In the New Testament, new creation comes about through Jesus Christ, the Lord's Anointed. In Romans 8 this new creation is very clearly portrayed as a creation out of chaos. Vivid chaos language is used to describe the present world order: it is "subject to frustration", "shackled by mortality", "groaning in all its parts". But chaos is not the end of the story. There is "glory, as yet unrevealed, in store for us" and all the world. There is to be "liberation", the "entering upon the glorious liberty of the children of God". Who will bring this new creation out of chaos? The primary agent will be God in Christ. But ordinary Christians will have a part to play: "The created universe is waiting with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed". Note the plural: sons - or sons and daughters as we should want to say today.

Now who are these Christians working with God to bring creation out of chaos in the world of work? (for I now want to apply this thinking to our main subject today). The particular Christians to whom this challenge is primarily directed are, of course, those operating in the world of work. There must be

hundreds of thousands of Christians out there but at the moment they make little impact, certainly no concerted impact. Possibly that is because they are largely unknown to one another. Yet these people are God's front-line troops. Their task is to set forth a vision of what work could and should be, to underpin their own working life with Christian faith and values and to demonstrate Christian ways to others.

But God has other agents too. First, there are those of other faiths. In particular we should recognise that Buddhist-Shintoist spiritual values have underpinned working life and business practice in Japanese firms, many of whom have set up factories in the UK. We can anticipate their continuing influence.

Then there are people of goodwill generally. There are those of all faiths and none who still adhere to humane values and who are working for a change of direction in the world of work. With the example of Cyrus in mind (referred to earlier), we should not be surprised that God should use such agents.

How will the creative changes happen? God's method is unlikely to be one of sudden, dramatic divine intervention, but rather a gradual sea change, building on the good things and good people in the world of work. For not all, by any means, of what goes on in organisations is anti-people. There is a philosophy called "Total Quality" which includes the idea that people are of intrinsic importance and stresses that organisations should be such that people are proud to work in them. The magazine *Management Today*, referred to earlier carried in the same issue a piece about the old Quaker firms and their values and spoke of the need to reinstate those values today.

But to return again to the Christian scene. The front-line troops have already been mentioned, but we may expect local churches are their clergy also have a role: the task of the local church is to hear, understand, resource and support its members who are in the world of work. Here are some suggestions which might help local churches do this more effectively.

A list of congregational members and their occupations

Regular Sunday intercessions for working lay members of the congregation

A service (at least annual) on the theme of work

Occasional sermons on work and work-related issues

At least one PCC meeting a year with work on the agenda

A discussion series on work (e.g. in a Lent course)

Church magazine articles on work (e.g. "A day in the life of...")

Mutual support groups of working lay people

Support groups for unemployed people

Invitations to outside speakers (e.g. industrial chaplain to preach or meet a group)

May I close by inviting you and your church to do all you can to put 'work' issues more centrally on the agenda, and to do whatever you can to resource and support your working members. In so doing you will be playing your part within God's purpose of transforming chaos into creation in the present world of work.

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## INDUSTRY AND THE WORK OF GOD

*My Father has never yet ceased his work, and I am working too (John 5:7)*

How is God at work in industry? How should a Christian regard the world of work?

In the first place, we are surely to affirm the work of industry. There is plenty to affirm. Industry has brought great benefits, not only in material terms - though certainly that - but in social, economic and cultural terms as well. And we have to remember that it is the wealth created by industry which underpins our education system, our health service, the social services and so much else of value in our society.

We Christians ought especially to value industry, for we believe in a God whose work was and is the creation of the world, and who, in the most breathtaking act of delegation and trust, put us here to "till and keep" (Genesis 2:15) the garden of this world. In taking, shaping and fashioning raw materials, converting them to human use, those who work in industry are participating in God's continuing work of creation. This is indeed something to affirm.

"My Father has never yet ceased his work and", Jesus went on, "I am working too". His work on that occasion was that of healing. The healing ministry of Jesus was, and still is, about making people whole, taking away the disabilities which prevent them seeing and growing to the fullness of life which God intends for them.

The jobs which people do in industry not only provide goods and services but also can enable those doing them to develop to their full potential. It is a joy to see people who are fulfilled by their work, who are being made more nearly whole - and that is part of Christ's ministry of healing. It can and does occur in industry, and that too is something to affirm.

But is that all? You may be thinking, this is a whitewash job. This is not the industry you see on television, or read about in the newspapers, or indeed in which some of us work ourselves.

Some people attempt such a whitewash, not only industrialists but church people too. When the rest of us are not convinced and point to things which seem to us to be wrong in industry, they say it is because of a weakness in our education system or because we are not taught the proper role of industry in our society or because we are ignorant about our dependence on industry.

There is truth in such ideas. But in fact, like all things human, industry has its good and bad features. It is neither better nor worse than any other human activity. Among the bad things should be mentioned corporate greed, profit at all costs, the deadening boredom of some jobs, the harrowing stress of others, the 'them and us' divisions between management and workers, the pollution which sets us at odds with the God whose creation we spoil.

When we look at the Cross it rebukes us. We crucify Jesus whenever we fail to love God or our fellow human beings or do violence to the planet. But we see in the Cross not only judgement but also forgiveness. The Cross shows God's love for us. The same love of God operates in our lives now; it seeks our response, our commitment.

All this we see at work, in industry. Not only the means of God's continuing creation and of his making women and men whole, but also - in the very things that are wrong in industry - the means of his

salvation. God is at work establishing his Kingdom, in which all will be reconciled to each other and to himself.

We are called to enter that Kingdom, to work for and to wait for its coming. "My Father has not ceased his work, and I am working too". We are fellow-workers with God, in Christ. Here then is our Christian commentary on industry. We give thanks for it as the means of God's continuing creation and of his making men and women whole. When we see things wrong, we neither whitewash over them nor condemn industry on account of them. Rather we look at them in the light of the Cross, and see not only God's judgement but his forgiving love. And we long to respond ourselves and work for his Kingdom on earth.

(From some preaching notes produced by the Industrial Society)

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## WORK IN GOD'S PLAN

by Bishop John Jukes

Our starting point is the word or term "work". It is extremely difficult to define "work". In fact the present Pope, with all his expertise, draws back from seeking to establish a definition in his great Encyclical *Laborem exercens* on work. He contents himself with describing work as any human activity which is called work by humans. This is part of the logic of the Pope's approach since it is the human being who is the measure of work, not the other way round.

To many people work is seen only in terms of paid employment. But in fact "work" has a much wider significance than this. It encompasses a very great variety of human actions and activity. There is about work an element of shaping the universe which is God's gift to us. So to understand work it is necessary to consider the place of the human being and the human race in this creation.

We have to turn to the book of Genesis for our vision of the universe in which man is the worker set there by God. It is a vision and understanding of our world which Jesus himself, born into the Jewish race, inherited. In this vision God is shown as making the universe out of nothing. He elaborates it with all his mighty power and perfects it. At the very end of that process he creates and places in it the human being. That human being is unique in this creation. No other being in creation is like the human being. Man and woman, he created them as equal but complementary to each other.

In the Genesis narrative the man is placed in the garden to cultivate it and both Adam and Eve are to use it and enjoy it. They are free to use its fruits, although in this God places a requirement of obedience to his will. Even after the Fall, the dominion of the human over all nature, especially over living things, is not withdrawn; although that dominion is uneasy and is exercised only with suffering.

In this primitive narrative there is to be found a number of principles which are central to our theme of the Christian understanding of work in God's plan. I have not time even to outline the history of the development of these principles through the centuries. I will therefore simply present to you some of the principles used by the present Pope and some of his predecessors to set out the Church's teaching in these matters.

The human race as a whole is the inheritor of this creation. The race is given the gift of dominion over it. This gift is to be understood as laying the basis for the human being to be a kind of co-creator with God in the operation of perfecting this creation. No part of this creation is withdrawn from human dominion in order that God's purpose can be fulfilled. However after the Fall, that which was intended to be the scene or expression of God's glory and power, became in certain circumstances the occasion for the entry of sin into this world. That sin showed itself in the forms of aggression and selfishness on the part of individuals. The Church reminds us of the need to be aware of this risk by insisting that all material things have a certain universal purpose and destination.

The Church documents express this universal ownership in the phrase "the universal destination of material goods". By it we intend to emphasise the shared nature of the human being's relationship to the goods of the earth. At the same time the Church does not exclude the legitimacy of private ownership and the acquisition and retention of goods that one has made or acquired by work or other means. The phrase does exclude the taking to oneself exclusive ownership of the goods of this creation in such a way as to deny to another human being or group of human beings any effective participation in such goods of this creation which are necessary for life or due human dignity.

Another principle underlying the Church's teaching on work flows from the social nature of the human race. The human being alone finds it difficult to find the necessities for food, clothing, shelter etc. Without social contact between human beings, no intellectual or spiritual development of the individual is possible. Even the exercise of dominion over nature, which is God's gift to each human being, simply cannot take place except through the social realities of human existence. These social realities lie at the root of the many different styles of social organisation which the human race has evolved in the course of its long history. The Church has never canonised or adopted any particular form of political-social organisation as the ideal one.

However there are two important notions which the modern Popes have underlined as especially significant for bringing the values of the Gospel to bear upon modern social living. These are "solidarity" and "subsidiarity". "Solidarity" speaks of the common origin and future of every member of the human race. "Subsidiarity" requires that in taking decisions affecting the community, the place for such decisions should be as close as possible to those who are involved in these decisions.

Bishop John Jukes, OFM Conv., is Chairman of the World of Work Committee of the Catholic Bishops

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## SERMON ON JOHN 21:1-14

by Richard Higginson

It may well have been a sense of anti-climax which prompted Peter to decide he was going fishing. Certainly, he'd experienced the excitement of Easter Sunday, he had seen the risen Lord, but where was all that excitement leading? Jesus himself had disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as he had appeared. Peter and the other disciples may well have had a feeling of being left in the lurch. With Peter in particular, there may have been a sense of unfinished business, of reconciliation as yet unmade, after the awful matter of denying Jesus. What were the disciples meant to do now? For three years they had been Jesus' near-constant companions. Now there was a gaping hole in their lives, and they were left wondering how to fill it.

Peter, always a man who liked practical action, comes up with a very obvious solution: back to work. Back to the practice and the trade he and the others knew so well, that of fishing. I have come across one commentator who describes this as an act of apostasy, an abandonment of discipleship. That is a very harsh judgement. It is entirely understandable that the disciples wanted to fill their time doing something positive. They may well have needed to do so for financial reasons.

These fishermen were real professionals. They knew what they were doing when it came to fish. That was why they went out at night: experience has taught them this was the most productive time. But on this occasion they fished with a singular lack of success. When morning came, their nets were as empty as when they'd begun. We can imagine their feelings: tired, frustrated, tetchy, baffled, hungry.

The simple phrase 'they caught nothing' is profoundly evocative. It calls to mind all the occasions when we work extremely hard over something and achieve nothing. There is the house that a housewife spends all day tidying up which is systematically untidied by the small child who trails round after her. There is the contract which the project manager has worked so hard to secure only for it to be awarded at the last minute to somebody else. There is the report which the secretary has lovingly transcribed on to the word processor and is lost when the disc develops signs of terminal damage. There is the employee with the alcohol problem who seems to be responding to the treatment for which the company has paid, and then all the progress is undone in an evening of wild drinking.

What we all experience at times like these is the futility of work. A sense of time, money and energy having been wasted: in the words of Ecclesiastes, 'a striving after wind... What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun?' (Ecclesiastes 2:17,22). Like Peter and his colleagues, we catch nothing, and find it difficult to understand where we've gone wrong.

So exasperated were the disciples, so completely at their wits' end, that they are ready to act on the advice of a complete stranger, even though this must have been a serious blow to their pride. Who was this clever fellow on the shore who asked the painful question: 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' Never mind, from his vantage point he might be able to see something they couldn't. They cast their net in to the right, and this time they really do catch something. The realisation that it is the risen Jesus who is the mysterious stranger rapidly follows.

Christians who work in business should take encouragement from the fact that the glorified Lord makes himself known in their doing of a secular job. Jesus does not criticise the disciples for going back to their old occupation. They may have had an inflated sense of their own self-sufficiency, but the actual work

they sought to do was not wrong. What Jesus does is bring success to their working endeavours, to lead their night out fishing to a marvellous conclusion.

This story raises the question of whether we expect, look for and long for the resurrection power of Jesus to be evident in our places of work. Do we believe he can transfor our mundane, complex and often difficult situations just as he filled those fishing nets to bursting point? Just as there are episodes of depressing futility at work, so there are also moments of exciting transformation. It could be a dreaded interview with a member of staff, which turns out much better than expected: a hostile relationship turned into a friendly one, with real reconciliation taking place. It might be the breakthrough in a research programme when months of painstaking investigation and experiments suddenly come to fruition. It may be a sudden influx of customer orders after a period of deep recession and constant cutbacks.

There is a delicate theological balance to observe here. Jesus' metaphorical presence with us on the shore does not guarantee that everything in the place of work will go wonderfully smoothly. The Christian faith is not that sort of insurance policy. Frustrations and setbacks, crossed lines and empty nets will continue to afflict us from time to time. But in Jesus Christ there is a scope for transformation, which is relevant to working life as well as to church life. In this particular story, change is effected through listening to a word of advice: 'Throw your net to the right side of the boat'. Christians need to be on the alert for similar words of wisdom. If they are living in a state of close relationship with their risen Lord, they may be surprised at the flashes of inspiration which sometimes come their way.

In this story there is a fine sense of Jesus and the disciples being co-workers. Admittedly, Jesus provides the decisive piece of information, but the disciples have to haul the fish ashore, and quite a weight it was too. When they reach the beach they find Jesus has already been busying himself cooking a breakfast, apparently having access to some private fish supply of his own. No doubt the disciples forgot their tiredness, the crossness about the long hours wasted catching nothing, and marvelled at the transformation which had taken place - all because of the risen Jesus in their midst.

(Dr Richard Higginson is Director of Faith in Business, Ridley Hall, Cambridge)

# SECTION FIVE

## SAMPLE SERVICES

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# SAMPLE SERVICES

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

These services are examples of what can be done on different occasions and in various settings – from the local to the national. The more local ones are likely to prove of greatest use to the normal compiler of services.

With the exception of Transforming Chaos into Creation, nearly all the material in this section has been adapted from services that have actually taken place. The first two have been virtually lifted bodily from their original setting, the main adaptations being the removal of the geographical references.

Only the titles of hymns, and the text references of psalms and Bible readings are given. The number of each suggested hymn in each of the most frequently used hymn books is given in the section on Hymns, while the full texts of the lesser-known hymns are provided. Since most people do not have ready access to the Apocrypha, readings from that source are printed in full, as are modern non-biblical readings.

A common formula is used throughout, according to which instructions or suggestions (for example *After the offering of bread, the president may say*) are printed in italics, words and phrases said by the whole congregation (for example **Blessed be God for ever**) appear in bold type. Explanatory notes and acknowledged sources are given in small type.

# A "HARVEST OF WORK" SERVICE IN AN ORDINARY LOCAL CHURCH SETTING

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The worship leader explains why a "more-than-agricultural" harvest is being celebrated. S/he could make the following points: Less than 2% nationally work in agriculture [in our area it is x %]. This service enables all the work done by our congregational members to be offered to God. Tokens of our work will be brought up during the service [or placed at the front beforehand] and put beside the more traditional harvest exhibits. [Alternatively, or in addition, we have an exhibition of the work of local firms, and this symbolises our offering to God all the goods and services produced/provided in our own locality.]

## HYMN

(Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation)

[See the note on Hymns on the preceding page]

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

Lord of the Universe, we praise you for your creation, for the wonders of space, the beauty of the world, the value of the earth's resources, and the skills of hand and brain which enrich our lives.

We thank you for humanity in all its diversity, for the unique individuality of every child, woman and man, for the gathered communities of home, work and leisure; of village, city and nation.

We thank you for offering us the chance to share in creation through the work of hand and brain; for the opportunity to plan and design, to manufacture and grow, to service and conserve, and to care for one another in the places where we work.

We thank you for giving us special gifts and responsibilities, for enabling us to stand upright and make choices, for presenting us with opportunities to promote justice and truth.

And because he shared with us our humanity and our world, we thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ, our beginning and our end, who carried out your work to your praise and glory and for the renewal of your creation. So we make our prayer to you in his name, who died and rose again for us. **Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

## PSALM 103:1-8,14-22

## THE FIRST READING

Ecclesiasticus 38: 24-end

(Revised English Bible)

A scholar's wisdom comes of ample leisure; to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks. How can one become wise who follows the plough, whose pride is in wielding the goad, who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen, whose talk is all about cattle? He concentrates on ploughing his furrows, and toils late to give the heifers their fodder. So it is with every craftsman and designer working both day and night. Such are those who make engravings on signets and patiently vary the design; they concentrate on making an exact likeness and stay up to all hours to finish their task. So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil, intent on his ironwork. The fiery vapours shrivel his flesh as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace; the hammer rings in his ears again and again, and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying. He concentrates on completing the task and stays up late to give it a perfect finish. So it is with the potter, sitting at his work, turning the wheel with his feet, always engrossed in the task of making up his tally of vessels; he moulds the clay with his arm, crouching forward to exert his strength. He concentrates on finishing the glazing, and stays up to clean out the furnace.

All those rely on their hands, and each is skilful at his own craft. Without them a city would have no inhabitants; no settlers or travellers would come to it. Yet they are not in demand at public discussions, nor do they attain to high office in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench or understand the decisions of the courts. They cannot expound moral or legal principles and are not ready with maxims. But they maintain the fabric of this world, and the practice of their craft is their prayer.

## **HYMN**

(Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord)

## **THE SECOND READING**

### **The Church's Affirmation of Work**

(The Bishop of Ripon, 1978)

We know, when we stop to think, that we are dependent on industry, and yet we are unable to affirm industrial life as being of real worth. This is a basic sickness at the heart of our society, a failure in our fundamental attitudes. Put in religious terms, we are unable to relate our belief in the creative power and purpose of God to the existence of factories and mills and power stations and office blocks. In an agricultural society, praise is given to God for his power in the rhythm of seed-time and harvest, for his mercy in the fresh growth each year of grain and crops. Even today harvest festivals exercise an attraction even in the most urban of parishes surrounded by brick for miles and without a field or a farm within its boundaries. Where is the corresponding affirmation of God at work within the industrial process? A piece of coal amidst the apples in the sanctuary, or a cog wheel among the chrysanthemums is nothing more than a reluctant admission that our lives today depend upon coal and cogs, upon oil and computers as much as upon crops and cattle. We need a joyful celebration of the worth of the industrial undertaking, a celebration which must have its religious aspect. When a Festival of Industry touches our hearts as deeply as does harvest festival, then we shall have overcome our sickness. Just as individuals cannot live in a healthy way if they deny part of themselves as evil, so societies cannot live in a healthy way if they believe that a significant part of their social life is somehow evil; or even if they feel that it is dubious. There is nothing dubious about converting the wealth of resources with which God has endowed this world into means by which human beings may live and realise the purposes for which God has created them.

## **INVITATION TO CONFESSION**

We who have received much have not always been grateful. We who have been called to work with God for the good of others as well as ourselves have often been selfish. We who have been called to live in the light often choose darkness. We who have been called to be salt to the world often prove to have no taste. In the knowledge of our weakness, ignorance and deliberate choice, let us confess our sins to Almighty God.

## CONFESSION

**Almighty God, with sorrow we confess that the gifts you have given us are spoiled by our selfishness and lack of regard for your sovereign will. We have failed to love you or your creation. We have failed to see you in our daily work, or in those who share it with us. We have taken for granted those who serve us through the gift of their labour. We are sorry for our failures, which have been hurtful to us as well as to others. Release us from the burden of our guilt so that we can step into the future unafraid, and, strengthened by the knowledge of your abiding love, follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Priest/minister shall pronounce*

## ABSOLUTION

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you [us], pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## INTERCESSIONS

O God the Father, Creator of all things:  
**Have mercy upon us.**

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world:  
**Have mercy upon us.**

O God the Holy Spirit, Giver of life  
**Have mercy upon us.**

O Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God:  
**Have mercy upon us.**

From envy, avarice and status-seeking, from covetousness which is idolatry;  
from wanting more than is our fair share:  
**Good Lord, deliver us.**

From ruthlessness in making money, and from irresponsibility in spending it:  
**Good Lord, deliver us.**

From unwillingness to know the cost to others of our own standard of living:  
**Good Lord, deliver us.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

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

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

Lord, when we are deciding how to make money, how to steward it, and what to do with it; help us to look hard at our motives, our aims and our prejudices - honestly, as in your sight. **Amen.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake became poor; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(For the fruits of his creation)

## **THIRD READING**

(2 Corinthians 9:6-end)

## **OFFERTORY HYMN**

(Take my life, and let it be)

*[During the offertory hymn examples of work will be brought to the altar/table/front of the church]*

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

*All say*

**Living God**

**We come with no great gifts to offer,**

**We are ordinary people.**

**Yet what we have, we bring to you,**

**To make your love felt in other people's lives.**

**We offer you our time and our talents**

**At home, at work and in the market place.**

**Use us fully so that your love may shine through us,**

**And the light of your kingdom  
May illuminate the world. Amen.**

### **THE SERMON**

(Suggested Sermon: The Worth of All Work)

### **HYMN**

(Father, Lord of all creation)

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

O Lord our God, who has called us to serve you in the midst of the world's affairs; when we stumble, hold us; when we fall, lift us up; when we are hard pressed with evil, deliver us; when we turn from what is good, turn us back. And bring us at last to your glory. **Amen.**

(Alcuin)

O Lord our Saviour, who has warned us that thou wilt require much of those to whom much is given; grant that we, whose lot is cast in so goodly a heritage, may strive together the more abundantly to extend to others what we so richly enjoy; and as we are entered into the labours of others, so to labour that in their turn others may enter into ours; to the fulfilment of thy holy will and our own everlasting salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

(St. Augustine - adapted)

### **THE BLESSING**

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon you, and upon all you seek to do in his name, this day and for evermore. **Amen.**

# **A NATIONAL SERVICE CELEBRATING BRITISH INDUSTRY**

## **HYMN**

(O Worship the King)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human enterprise is not simply an end in itself; it is the means and the medium through which people fulfil their ultimate destiny.

We are here today to give thanks to God for all that Commerce and Industry mean to our country, our economy and our lives.

We thank God for the value that our businesses create, which can secure the public services we and our families need.

We thank God for the network of international contacts that mean that never again will Europe be devastated by war. The new Europe is being built by people in different countries working together towards common goals.

We thank God for the opportunity to contribute to the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, to the ultimate benefit of all the citizens of Europe as a whole.

We thank God for the difference that industry can make to the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink, our nation's transport and communications infrastructure.

We thank God for the ability to develop and apply the most advanced technology in the cause of peace, and to improve the quality of life for all.

We thank God for our colleagues: their competence, capacity, commitment and comradeship. Business is about ordinary people working together, often in very difficult circumstances, to achieve extraordinary things.

And we pray to God that we will be able to meet adequately the responsibilities and obligations of management.

This we do in the name of him who taught us that to lead is to serve, and whose service is perfect freedom, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **The Raw Materials**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a vast waste, darkness covered the deep, and the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water.

## **PSALM 8**

### **FIRST LESSON**

(Isaiah 55: 1 - 13)

### **HYMN**

(Praise and thanksgiving)

*During this hymn some pieces of coal and some limestone will be presented at the altar and placed upon it.*

### **The Production**

In this final age he has spoken to us in his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things; and through him he created the universe. He is the radiance of God's glory, the stamp of God's very being, and he sustains the universe by his word of power.

### **THE ANTHEM**

(Brother James's Air)

### **SECOND LESSON**

(St Matthew 25: 1,14 - 30)

### **HYMN**

(Lord of all power, I give you my will)

*During this hymn a piece of porcelain, a box of chocolates, a fan blade and a model train will be presented at the altar and placed upon it.*

### **The Stewardship**

We are to be regarded as Christ's subordinates and stewards of the secrets of God. Now stewards are required to show themselves trustworthy.

Let us confess our sins, in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all people.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you, through our own fault, in thought and word and deed, and in what we have left undone. For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(Lord, to you we bring our treasure)

*During this hymn a copy of the Report of the CBI's Advisory Group upon the State of Manufacturing Industry will be presented at the altar and placed upon it.*

## **THE INTERCESSIONS**

O Saviour of the world, who by your Cross and precious Blood have redeemed us. Save and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.

O Lord our governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations upon earth.

To our Queen and Government and all in authority, grant wisdom and foresight in the exercise of their duties, that they may provide for the needs of all our people, and fulfil our obligations to the community of nations.

Teach us as citizens of this country to rely on your strength and to accept our responsibilities to one another, that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honour your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Look mercifully, O Lord our God, upon the world of our day, and heal the sorrows and sufferings of humankind. Save the nations from the lust of power, from racial hatred and jealousy, from the worship of material things; and grant that in every land the rule of tyranny may be broken, the cause of righteousness may triumph, and all peoples may learn to serve you in the peace and freedom of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

O merciful and loving Father of all, look down on the many millions who are hungry in the world today and are at the mercy of disease and famine. Grant that we who have lived so comfortably and gently all our lives many have true sympathy with them and do all in our power, as individuals and as a nation, to help them to that abundant life which is your will for them; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

O God you have bound us together in this bundle of life; give us grace to understand how our lives depend upon the courage, the industry, the honesty and integrity of our fellow men and women; that we may be mindful of their needs, grateful for their faithfulness, and faithful in our responsibilities to them; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Let us commend to Almighty God the Single European Market, that it may serve rather than dominate, persuade rather than insist, and come to realise its place in the Order of Things set forth in Christ. In the knowledge of ourselves, our abilities and limitations, we pray in words first used by Sir Francis Drake:

O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory. **Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

## **ANTHEM**

### **The Sharing**

If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct its course.

## **HYMN**

(Teach me my God and King)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested sermon: Archbishop of Canterbury's Derby Address)

## **HYMN**

(Crown him with many crowns)

*During this hymn a loaf of bread and a bunch of grapes will be presented.*

### **The Thanksgiving**

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks every day for everything to God our Father. Let us therefore render thanks to Almighty God in the words of the General Thanksgiving: Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(All people that on earth do dwell)

## **THE BLESSING**

## **THE NATIONAL ANTHEM**

# A ROGATIONTIDE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION FOR AN ORDINARY LOCAL CHURCH SETTING

## SENTENCES

You are the light of the world. Let your light shine in the presence of others so that they notice the good things you do and give glory to your heavenly Father.

Work is the expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God.

(John Stott)

## INTRODUCTION

Today, the 5th Sunday after Easter, is Rogation Sunday. Traditionally Rogationtide was the time when God's blessing was asked on the newly sown crops. Rogationtide was the "before" of which Harvest Thanksgiving was the "after". As is the case with Harvest Thanksgiving, Rogation Sunday is a good time to think about human work, and the theme of this service is "Offering our Work to God" - not just agricultural work but all work, and in particular the work done by members of this congregation and people living in this community. And in this service of Holy Communion [Mass, Lord's Supper] we shall be using the bread and wine as symbols of our work offered to God for use in his service.

## HYMN

(Come to us creative Spirit)

## GLORIA

## PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

Let us celebrate today the providence of God and the gift of work.  
We give thanks to God our Father, Maker of the universe,  
for the unity and order of created things;  
for the resources of the earth;  
for the gift of human life;  
for our share in the continuing work of creation.

Almighty God, Creator and Lord of all things, we thank you for the vast resources of the earth and the sea, and for the hidden forces of nature now brought within our control by scientific discovery. We thank you again for the different abilities and skills which you have given us and which we use in daily work. Help us to use all your gifts wisely and faithfully for the benefit of humankind, that all may rejoice in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We thank you for humanity in all its diversity, for the unique individuality of every child, woman and man, for the gathered communities of home, work and leisure, of village, city and nation.

We thank you for the work of hand and mind; for the opportunity to plan and design, to manufacture and grow, to service and conserve, and to care for one another in the places where we work.

Above all we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ, who carried out your work to your praise and glory and for the renewal of your creation. We make our prayer to you in his name, who died and rose again for us. **Amen.**

## **OLD TESTAMENT READING**

(Genesis 1:26-28,2:15)

## **POEM**

### **Sunday by Sunday**

Sunday by Sunday  
the church gathers  
Women and men meet  
to worship  
to withdraw from the world?  
or to bring the world  
their living with them?

Women and men  
living with tensions  
struggling with dilemmas  
challenged by change  
oppressed by changes that are too rapid.

Is this the place  
is it together  
that they can affirm  
this is where life  
is given meaning?

Or do they sing uneasily  
because here is the place  
where no meaning is given  
to the context and the content  
of their daily lives?

Can I bring my anger with me  
Or must it be quelled before I enter?  
Can I bring my confusion  
Or should I simply pretend there is none?

What do I do with my contradictions

of loving my family  
yet rarely seeing them?  
or with the pressure to raise  
excessive profits  
without the tempering of justice  
and compassion?

What do I do with the painful knowledge  
of failing to touch with understanding  
the urgent needs  
of my fellow human beings?

Soothing will not ease my burdens.  
Where do I find the courage  
to confront my problems? ...  
(Rachel Jenkins)

## **EPISTLE**

(Ephesians 4:17-32)

## **MODERN READING**

### **Staying Put**

Faced with ethical dilemmas, conflict, stress and other problems, those who exercise their ministry at the front line may be tempted to give up and get out. Sometimes people may mistake their inability to reconcile Christian values with secular values as a divine call to resign and seek ordination! This may sometimes be the right thing to do. God may indeed be calling more lay people into the ordained ministry. However, more often than not, God's call to lay people is to 'stay put'. That is what 'incarnation' is all about... staying in the thick of it! Although it may not always be easy to reconcile Christian values and secular values, some degree of responsible compromise is frequently necessary. Compromise is not always a dirty word. It may, for example, be more responsible for a Christian who is a director or a trade union official to stay at his or her post when beset by alien values and attempt to influence affairs from within, than to resign and opt out. The Christian in public life can never do more than push public affairs slowly in a Christian direction. The speed with which Christians can do this may depend upon their realism about public affairs. It is not easy to head straight for the desired goal. A zig-zag approach may be the only feasible way forward. Sometimes we are in the 'zig' and sometimes we are in the 'zag' but we press towards the goal. This can produce a great deal of stress. Hence the importance of relevant support through prayer, worship and sensitive groups of people. In the end God himself supports people at the front line but his presence is not always easy to discern. We have the assurance of the risen Jesus that "he goes ahead of his disciples into Galilee". Our Galilee is our secular activity. Wherever we go, wherever we work, whatever responsibility we have in public life, Jesus is with us, supporting us and ministering alongside us at the front line.

(c. Denis Claringbull 'Front Line Mission')

## **HYMN**

(Lord God, in whom all worlds)

## **GOSPEL**

(Luke 12:13-24)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested sermon: Offering our Work to God in the Sacrament)

## **CREED**

We believe in One God,  
Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
Source of human skills,  
Provider of the earth's riches.  
We believe in God who is love,  
and judge of all,  
who claims our service and our worship,  
who longs for our help in creation,  
to fulfil his purpose on earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
the only-begotten Son of God,  
the Lord of all life,  
the man for others;  
our fellow-worker for good,  
our Redeemer, neighbour and friend,  
with the power to make all things new.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
God's inspiration to men and women,  
revealer of the truth,  
the giver and director of life,  
the promoter of peace and patience,  
our Comforter in times of trouble,  
and supplier of vision and hope.

**Amen.**

## **INTERCESSIONS**

### **A Litany**

For the riches of your creation, giving us the materials of the earth:  
We thank you, Lord.

For the labour of our hands and minds, developing invention and skill:  
We thank you, Lord.

For agriculture, industry and commerce, providing work and wealth and goods for the world:

We thank you, Lord.

For all who work in transport and distribution, service industries and local government, that in giving service they may find reward:

Hear our prayer.

For those in management and the trade unions, that mutual respect and good relations may always be maintained:

Hear our prayer.

For the unemployed and the handicapped, that they might not lose hope, and may find a positive role in life:

Hear our prayer.

For young people at work and those who educate and train them, that they may find promise and aspiration fulfilled:

Hear our prayer.

Lord the Creator, whose great goodness has provided for our needs; help us so to use, develop and preserve the resources of the earth that, through our industry, the needs of all may be fulfilled, human dignity enhanced, and our people live in true prosperity and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **THE PEACE**

### **OFFERTORY HYMN**

(Upon thy table, Lord, we place)

*During the hymn the money collection will be offered, together with offerings of the tokens of different types of work. (Members of the congregation can be invited to bring to the service tokens (portable ones!) of their own work. A selection of these could be brought up as part of the Offertory Procession and offered immediately after the offerings of money and the bread and wine. And/or a work exhibition could be displayed in the church. This could include examples of the work of local industry etc. These would be 'offered' at this point.*

*After this the following prayer will be used.*

We offer you, Lord, ourselves and our work. Please accept it as a token of our gratitude to you, and in the hope that it will contribute to the building of your kingdom on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

At the offering of the bread, the president may say

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the Bread of life.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

Similarly at the offering of the cup

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation: through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

*[Hereafter the Communion may proceed as normal, although the following variants may be used.]*

### **PROPER PREFACE**

And now we give you thanks that through your Son we have an example to follow for the whole of our lives, at home and at work. In sharing our earthly life, he shared also our experience of toil and creative endeavour, and entered fully into our human condition.

### **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

Though our lives may be different and our occupations varied, we are one in our Lord Jesus Christ. We come together to share the one bread, product also of human hands, and so we share in the body of Christ.

### **WORDS OF INVITATION**

Come, draw near with faith. Receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shared our human life, its joys and its sorrows. Come, find rest for your souls, and refreshment for your lives in One who knew the toils and struggles of human life. Eat, drink, remember he died for you, and lives for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Father of all, we thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son to humanity, for his sharing of our earthly life; for his work as a carpenter; for his understanding of those whose jobs made them outcasts but also of those who held positions of honour; for his own ministry and that of his disciples. And now, above all, we thank you for feeding us with his body and blood. Send us back into the world, refreshed by this heavenly food, to work as he did, and, by the power of your Spirit, to live our lives as witnesses to his life, death and resurrection. **Amen.**

### **HYMN**

(Now let us from this table rise)

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

Almighty God,  
sustainer of daily life and work,  
and provider of all our needs.  
Open our hearts to your creative power  
so that we may know your will,  
praise your name,  
and share your vision for the creation of your kingdom.  
**Amen.**

With listening ears and hearts,  
With open minds, obedient feet,  
We journey on with Christ,

And choose again the pilgrim way.  
In new obedience to the vision we have caught,  
We offer time and talents, energy and love  
To serve the Prince of Peace  
In worship, in active partnership, in hope.  
Help us to take the risk of reaching out  
For peace and justice in your name. **Amen.**

### **BLESSING**

Christ whose family were carpenters, and whose company was tax collectors, uphold you in your work, give you a sense of value in what you do, and guide you in your decision-making; and the blessing...

# **A CATHEDRAL SERVICE CELEBRATING THE WORK OF A COUNTY**

## **PROCESSIONAL HYMN**

(Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him)

## **WELCOME AND BIDDING**

We have gathered here this day to give thanks and praise to Almighty God for his love and gifts given to us day by day. We praise him for the gifts of creation and the work we are called to do, and we offer in thanksgiving all the work of our County.

We remember those without work; and it is our hope for them that, in God's love and in our dedication and service, they may find support and opportunity to use their skills.

So as we give our thanks and praise, we join in the prayer our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ taught us saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven....

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Almighty God, we praise you for all your gifts to us in creation. We acknowledge the skills with which we have been endowed, the materials available for our use and the opportunities to meet the needs of others. We thank you for what agriculture, industry, commerce and local government have achieved and for their contribution to our lives. May our gratitude to you be plain in all we do. Help us to use all your gifts wisely and for the good of all, in the knowledge that through our daily work we contribute to your loving purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **FIRST LESSON**

Exodus 31: 1-11

(The Dedication of Skilled Work)

## **HYMN**

(God is his love for us lent us this planet)

## **SECOND LESSON**

Philippians 2: 1-11

(The Call to Service)

## **ANTHEM**

## **THE PRAYERS**

Let us pray:

Eternal God, to whom belong all power and dominion, we seek the guidance of your Spirit for all on whom is laid the responsibility of government. We pray for Members of Parliament and all others in authority in our land, that they may have wisdom to order the affairs of our nation in accordance with your will. Especially we pray for those wrestling with the economic difficulties we currently face, that through their endeavours there may be created a just and loving society to which all may feel they belong.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Almighty God, from whom all good gifts come, grant to those who hold office in our county the spirit of justice and truth, of wisdom and charity; that, mindful of their responsibility and the needs of those they serve, they may promote the true welfare of all our people. May they have skill in dealing with the often-conflicting demands made on them, and wisdom in allocating the limited resources at their disposal. May they at all times give protection and help to those in special need.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

O God our Father, as we acknowledge our dependence on your bounty for our daily food, so we also seek your blessing on those engaged in agriculture. We pray that you will so prosper their work that the earth may yield to us its full harvest. At this time of great change and uncertainty for those who work on the land, we ask you to guide all who are planning the future shape of the agricultural industry.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray too, Lord, for all who work in industry and commerce. We thank you for creating women and men in your own image, giving them the ability to turn raw material into objects of use and beauty. May they not forget their indebtedness to you, nor that their creative efforts are performed to your honour, the enrichment of humankind and the benefit of the earth.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

In you, Lord, are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We pray for all engaged in the work of education and training. Bless the work of our universities, colleges, schools and training institutions, that in them your name may be honoured and from them may come men, women and young people who seek and love the truth as it is revealed in your Son Jesus Christ.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

We thank you, O God, for all who work in the social services, caring professions, and in voluntary work. Help them combine sympathy with firmness and love with understanding. Uphold them when they grow

weary, guard them from despair when human problems seems intractable, and renew them daily in your love.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Father, we pray for the casualties of our economic life:  
for those whose work is monotonous or stressful  
for the low-paid and those struggling to make ends meet  
for the unemployed and those threatened with redundancy  
for failed businesses and all victims of the recent recession  
for those in debt, those who are ill, those who are homeless  
for those who are anxious or in despair.

May we all work together to strengthen the weak and empower the powerless.

**Lord hear us:**

**Lord graciously hear us.**

Let us say together the words of the Grace:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(Praise God for the harvest of farm and of field)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested sermon: All Work in His Service)

## **A LITANY**

O Son of Mary:  
Consecrate our homes.

Son of David:  
Cleanse our politics.

Son of Man:  
Rule the affairs of nations.

Son of God  
Give us eternal life.

Jesus the carpenter  
Hallow our daily work.

Jesus the Christ:  
Deliver a world which waits for you.

Jesus the Saviour:  
Save us from ourselves.

Jesus the life-giver:  
Renew your Church.

Word of God:  
Perfect your creation.

Lord exalted at the Father's side:  
Raise us to live with you in God.  
(SCM 1924)

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Into your hands, Lord, we commit our lives, our work and the tasks that await us, our homes and families, all our loved ones, and especially those in need. Bless all who work in our county, in whatever capacity or occupation, and may we all, through your grace, play our part in building your kingdom on earth. We offer these prayers in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **HYMN**

(All my hope on God is founded)

### **BLESSING**

May God, the giver of all good gifts, fill you with his wisdom and the understanding of his will.  
May he fulfil your just desire for the prosperity of our county.  
May his Spirit reign in our cities, towns and villages and in all places of your employment.  
And may he give peace in our time.  
And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and all you seek to do in his name, now and always. **Amen.**

# UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

## Version 1: Service with Holy Communion

### INTRODUCTION

We come together to worship God. We stand in his presence. We open ourselves to his goodness and his love. We come to confess our sins, and those of our nation, against those who are unemployed. We come to pray for all those who bear the burden of unemployment, for those who serve them, and for our nation. We pray for a new willingness to bear one another's burdens; a new determination to value one another. We come in the hope that God will show to us, and to our nation, how together we may overcome this great evil.

### HYMN

(Praise my soul the king of heaven)

Let us pray:

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the Lord.

Lord, you support those who stumble and raise those who are oppressed. Forgive our indifference and our lack of compassion.

Father, forgive us, we have wronged our neighbour, we have condoned injustice, we have marred your image in us. Help us to hunger and thirst to see right prevail, so that all people may be free to live and praise your name. Amen.

May God show us mercy by forgiving our sins and confirming us in his goodness. May we continue to share Christ's risen life and so bring life to others. **Amen.**

### PSALM 8

O Lord our God: the whole earth glorifies your name!  
Your praise stretches to the heavens on the lips of  
infants and children.

You tower over your enemies,  
and defeat all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky, the moon and the stars you created,  
how insignificant humans seem, and yet you cherish them.

You share your glory with men and women,  
as if they were gods beside you.

You have made them masters of creation:  
everything is subject to their authority,

Cattle and sheep, and every living creature,  
soaring birds, sea fish and the teeming life of the oceans.

O Lord, our God: the whole earth glorifies your name.

## **OLD TESTAMENT READING**

(Isaiah 40:1-11)

## **MODERN READING**

### **Unemployment Is...**

Unemployment is feeling utterly useless as far as one's contribution to society is concerned.

Unemployment is seeing everyone else with a job, a purpose, while you wander around aimlessly.

Unemployment is having to face the indignity, time and time again, of signing on with the same DSS assistants.

Unemployment is the guilt of having to rely on society's money in order to simply exist.

Unemployment is the shame of bumping into colleagues in the city, former workmates from the times when the going was relatively good.

Unemployment is seeing that one's clothes are wearing out and yet not knowing where the next set is going to come from.

Unemployment is getting a pair of the cheapest shoes in town, smelly and ill-fitting and looking cheap.

Unemployment is having to drag yourself out of bed in the morning, not knowing how you're possibly going to get through or fill the day.

Unemployment is often absolute loneliness for hours on end.

Unemployment is seeing a new book you want in a shop and knowing you cannot afford it.

Unemployment is wanting to go to see a play at the theatre, or a film at the cinema, and knowing you cannot afford it.

Unemployment is experiencing the distance of relatives and friends, because they also do not know how to cope with the despair and desperation of the situation.

Unemployment is suddenly losing friends who simply do not want to know you any more, or relatives who simply can't be bothered to accept the pain of caring enough.

Unemployment is losing confidence regarding the talents one once had.

Unemployment is watching Neighbours at midday, because you've nothing better or more exciting to do.

Unemployment is being too old for even Restart to bother with you.

Unemployment is taking it out on the wife because you've no-one else to take it out on.

Unemployment is an unshakable whinge and whine and moan because you don't know where else to put your frustration.

Unemployment is to be kicked about by DSS and Council officials without any status or redress.

Unemployment is to be told you don't qualify for benefits even when you've followed all the rules.

Unemployment is being offered the dirtiest, noisiest and most vulnerable flats in town.

Unemployment is having to borrow from friends in order to survive until the next dole cheque.

Unemployment is absolute terror when the dole cheque doesn't arrive on time.

Unemployment is simply surviving one day at a time.

Unemployment is to lose yourself in drink or cheap sex as sheer necessary escape.

Unemployment is to seriously consider suicide.

Unemployment is sometimes to feel that the whole world has forgotten you.

Unemployment is to get washed and shaved in the morning for you do not know what.  
Unemployment is to stop wearing masks because you no longer have the energy to maintain them.  
Unemployment is to find a strength and a courage and power and a will-to-live within yourself that you never knew you had.  
Unemployment is time to review the past for what it was, even if you cannot see much of a future.  
Unemployment is developing a hard nose to take any blows the world may hurl at you.  
Unemployment is a determination to stick up for one's rights whatever the cost.  
Unemployment is a coming closer to God, a going deep within yourself and finding the deepest spiritual roots.  
Unemployment is seeing prayers answered in little ways every day.  
Unemployment is seeing the unmistakable hand of Providence at work every day.  
Unemployment is potentially a unique destiny granted by God.  
Unemployment is an opportunity to become spiritually grounded like you've never been before.  
Unemployment is seeing the society around you with the eye of Spirit: greedy, grasping, materially obsessed and insane.  
Unemployment is making yourself rich by making your wants few.  
Unemployment is being appalled at society's worship of consumer idols, its superficial and empty vanity, its utter lack of meaningful values.  
Unemployment is seeing clearly "I'm all right, Jack" and "What can I do anyway?"  
Unemployment is seeing the futility of laying up treasure on earth instead of treasure in heaven where rust cannot corrupt.  
Unemployment is finally accepting the gift of the desert, the urban slums where life - and values - are turned inside out.  
Unemployment is seeing:  
    In the desert, a highway ...  
    In the desert, a flower ...  
    In the desert, a fountain.  
(Geoff Smith)

## **HYMN**

(God of the world's great cities)

## **GOSPEL READING**

(Matthew 6:19-end)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested Sermon: Restoring Fellowship)

## **STATEMENT OF BELIEF**

(To be said together or alternately by different groups)

We believe  
    in a God of justice,  
    tender to the poor and oppressed  
    who hears their cries;  
    creating, loving, redeeming

throughout history.

We believe  
in the Son of God,  
made human.  
He suffered and died,  
because he challenged and upset  
the powers of his day.

We believe  
in the Spirit of God,  
the Spirit who gives life and joy,  
who moves us, touches us  
and keeps us going.

We believe  
that people are born  
to lead fulfilling, creative  
and productive lives.  
We believe that unemployment  
and frustrating work  
are a denial of God's image in us.

We believe  
that we have to  
search for the truth,  
be brave enough to proclaim it,  
and realise that we need each other  
to build community.

## LITANY

Lord, we pray for your Church:  
for those who lead us...  
for those who teach us...  
for all who break bread with us...  
Help those of us who are unemployed  
to share with those in work  
in the struggle for justice  
for all men and women.

Lead us out from darkness  
to walk as children of light.

We pray for our national leaders...  
for those who advise them...  
for the leaders of industry and commerce...  
for writers and broadcasters...  
May they work together  
to strengthen the weak

and empower the powerless.

Lead us from darkness  
to walk as children of light.

Father, be with all of us who are in work...  
those facing redundancy...

those in training...  
those whose work is unpaid, or  
undervalued...  
and those without a job...  
May we support and love one another  
as Christ loves and values us.

Lead us out of darkness  
to walk as children of light.

Father, we pray for the casualties of our economy...  
for those whose work is monotonous...  
for those poorly paid...  
for those suffering discrimination...  
for unemployed people and their families...  
for those living in poverty...  
for those who are homeless...  
for those who are ill...  
for those in despair...  
Help us reject the notion that some have the right to wealth  
at the expense of others.

Lead us out from darkness  
to walk as children of light.

Lord, we thank you for all those people who  
have struggled  
for justice and peace in their generation.  
May we rejoice with them by continuing that struggle  
until the world reflects your glory.

Lead us out of darkness  
to walk as children of light.

Merciful Father,  
accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*The Communion Service now proceeds as normally, until the Offertory.*

## **OFFERTORY HYMN**

(For the healing of the nations)

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, we bring before you the impoverishment of unemployment:  
the waste of human potential  
the undermining of relationships  
the devastation of communities.

We bring before you the great injustices of our industrial society.

We bring before you our nation,  
with all its divisions between rich and poor,  
powerful and powerless,  
north and south,  
employed and unemployed.

Lord Jesus, we bring before you all these weighty concerns.

We offer them with these our gifts of bread and wine,  
praying that as the bread and wine are transformed into your Body and Blood,  
so our nation may be transformed,  
so that your grace may flow into our world,  
bringing hope and healing, reconciliation and peace,  
joy and understanding. **Amen.**

*The Communion Service now proceeds as normally, as far as the Post-Communion Prayer*

### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, we celebrate the goodness you give us as we commit ourselves to building a community of honesty, of openness and of truth. We believe that in the church God is creating a community of people who care for each other, bear one another's burdens and reach out to the wider world with the good news of God who cares and creates and who builds his kingdom today. Open our eyes to see the needs of your suffering people so that we can respond with compassion, without judgement and in partnership. We ask this for your name's sake. **Amen.**

### **HYMN**

(All my hope is firmly grounded)

### **BLESSING**

May the God who creates and sustains you  
fill your hearts with peace and joy,  
courage and commitment  
to make our world  
a living community  
of justice and love.  
And may the blessing...  
**Amen.**

# UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICE

## Version 2: Service without Communion

### INTRODUCTION

We come together to worship God. We stand in his presence. We open ourselves to his goodness and his love. We come to confess our sins, and those of our nation, against those who are unemployed. We come to pray for all those who bear the burden of unemployment, for those who serve them, and for our nation. We pray for a new willingness to bear one another's burdens; a new determination to value one another. We come in the hope that God will show to us, and to our nation, how together we may overcome this great evil.

### HYMN

(Praise my soul the king of heaven)

Let us pray:

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the Lord.

Lord, you support those who stumble and raise those who are oppressed. Forgive our indifference and our lack of compassion.

Father, forgive us, we have wronged our neighbour, we have condoned injustice, we have marred your image in us. Help us to hunger and thirst to see right prevail, so that all people may be free to live and praise your name. **Amen.**

May God show us mercy by forgiving our sins and confirming us in his goodness. May we continue to share Christ's risen life and so bring life to others. **Amen.**

### PSALM 8

O Lord our God: the whole earth glorifies your name!  
Your praise stretches to the heavens on the lips of  
infants and children.

You tower over your enemies,  
and defeat all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky, the moon and the stars you created,  
how insignificant humans seem, and yet you cherish them.

You share your glory with men and women,  
as if they were gods beside you.

You have made them masters of creation:  
everything is subject to their authority,

Cattle and sheep, and every living creature,  
soaring birds, sea fish and the teeming life of the oceans.

O Lord, our God: the whole earth glorifies your name.

## **FIRST READING**

(Isaiah 40:1-11)

## **MODERN READING**

### **Unemployment Is...**

Unemployment is feeling utterly useless as far as one's contribution to society is concerned.

Unemployment is seeing everyone else with a job, a purpose, while you wander around aimlessly.

Unemployment is having to face the indignity, time and time again, of signing on with the same DSS assistants.

Unemployment is the guilt of having to rely on society's money in order to simply exist.

Unemployment is the shame of bumping into colleagues in the city, former workmates from the times when the going was relatively good.

Unemployment is seeing that one's clothes are wearing out and yet not knowing where the next set is going to come from.

Unemployment is getting a pair of the cheapest shoes in town, smelly and ill-fitting and looking cheap.

Unemployment is having to drag yourself out of bed in the morning, not knowing how you're possibly going to get through or fill the day.

Unemployment is often absolute loneliness for hours on end.

Unemployment is seeing a new book you want in a shop and knowing you cannot afford it.

Unemployment is wanting to go to see a play at the theatre, or a film at the cinema, and knowing you cannot afford it.

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Unemployment is suddenly losing friends who simply do not want to know you any more, or relatives who simply can't be bothered to accept the pain of caring enough.

Unemployment is losing confidence regarding the talents one once had.

Unemployment is watching Neighbours at midday, because you've nothing better or more exciting to do.

Unemployment is being too old for even Restart to bother with you.

Unemployment is taking it out on the wife because you've no-one else to take it out on.

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Unemployment is being offered the dirtiest, noisiest and most vulnerable flats in town.

Unemployment is having to borrow from friends in order to survive until the next dole cheque.

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Unemployment is sometimes to feel that the whole world has forgotten you.

Unemployment is to get washed and shaved in the morning for you do not know what.

Unemployment is to stop wearing masks because you no longer have the energy to maintain them.  
 Unemployment is to find a strength and a courage and power and a will-to-live within yourself that you never knew you had.  
 Unemployment is time to review the past for what it was, even if you cannot see much of a future.  
 Unemployment is developing a hard nose to take any blows the world may hurl at you.  
 Unemployment is a determination to stick up for one's rights whatever the cost.  
 Unemployment is a coming closer to God, a going deep within yourself and finding the deepest spiritual roots.  
 Unemployment is seeing prayers answered in little ways every day.  
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 Unemployment is potentially a unique destiny granted by God.  
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 Unemployment is seeing the society around you with the eye of Spirit: greedy, grasping, materially obsessed and insane.  
 Unemployment is making yourself rich by making your wants few.  
 Unemployment is being appalled at society's worship of consumer idols, its superficial and empty vanity, its utter lack of meaningful values.  
 Unemployment is seeing clearly "I'm all right, Jack" and "What can I do anyway?"  
 Unemployment is seeing the futility of laying up treasure on earth instead of treasure in heaven where rust cannot corrupt.  
 Unemployment is finally accepting the gift of the desert, the urban slums where life - and values - are turned inside out.  
 Unemployment is seeing:  
     In the desert, a highway ...  
     In the desert, a flower ...  
     In the desert, a fountain.  
 (Geoff Smith)

## **HYMN**

(God of the world's great cities)

## **SECOND LESSON**

(Matthew 6:19-end)

## **STATEMENT OF BELIEF**

*(To be said together or alternately by different groups)*

We believe  
     in a God of justice,  
     tender to the poor and oppressed  
     who hears their cries;  
     creating, loving, redeeming  
     throughout history.

We believe  
     in the Son of God,

made human.  
He suffered and died,  
because he challenged and upset  
the powers of his day.

We believe  
in the Spirit of God,  
the Spirit who gives life and joy,  
who moves us, touches us  
and keeps us going.

We believe  
that people are born  
to lead fulfilling, creative  
and productive lives.  
We believe that unemployment  
and frustrating work  
are a denial of God's image in us.

We believe  
that we have to  
search for the truth,  
be brave enough to proclaim it,  
and realise that we need each other  
to build community.

## LITANY

Lord, we pray for your Church:  
for those who lead us...  
for those who teach us...  
Help those of us who are unemployed  
to share with those in work  
in the struggle for justice  
for all men and women.

**Lead us out from darkness  
to walk as children of light.**

We pray for our national leaders...  
for those who advise them...  
for the leaders of industry and commerce...  
for writers and broadcasters...  
May they work together  
to strengthen the weak  
and empower the powerless.

**Lead us from darkness  
to walk as children of light.**

Father, be with all of us who are in work...  
those facing redundancy...  
those in training...  
those whose work is unpaid, or  
undervalued...  
and those without a job...  
May we support and love one another  
as Christ loves and values us.

**Lead us out of darkness  
to walk as children of light.**

Father, we pray for the casualties of our  
economy...  
for those whose work is monotonous...  
for those poorly paid...  
for those suffering discrimination...  
for unemployed people and their families...  
for those living in poverty...  
for those who are homeless...  
for those who are ill...  
for those in despair...  
Help us reject the notion that some have the  
right to wealth at the expense of others.

**Lead us out from darkness  
to walk as children of light.**

Lord, we thank you for all those people who  
have struggled for justice and peace in  
their generation.  
May we rejoice with them by continuing that  
struggle until the world reflects your glory.

**Lead us out of darkness  
to walk as children of light.**

Turn our hearts, O God we pray, towards the saving example of your Son Jesus Christ. In his life, death and resurrection he brought salvation for each of us, and charges each of us to live out our faith in the way of the cross. We would follow, O God, however hard the way. Turn our hearts we pray. Teach us the way of self-sacrifice and openness to others. **Amen.**

Lord God, we remember before you those known to us personally who are unemployed. In the silence of our hearts [or out loud] we name them before you.... Lord, send your Holy Spirit upon these people, and all others known to you; that they may find renewed strength, restored hope and the certainty of your everlasting love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O God, who made us all in your image and fashioned us for creative work. Have mercy on all, employed and unemployed alike. Help us to organise our common life alongside one another, and to understand what kind of help we need to give one another. Guide the leaders of our country, that they may take wise

decisions that will benefit us all. Finally, we ask you Lord to guide us in the knowledge that we all have worth and are all of equal value in your eyes; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Merciful Father,  
accept these prayers, for the sake of your  
Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(Worker God who planned creation)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested Sermon: Restoring Fellowship)

## **A RESPONSIVE PRAYER**

Whether we work at home, or at school,  
in a factory or an office,  
indoor or out of doors,  
**we give our work to you,**  
**Lord God**

Whether we work alone, or with others,  
with hand or brain,  
in a shop or a hospital,  
**we give out work to you,**  
**Lord God.**

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

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

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

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray,  
Amen.

(Greater Manchester Industrial Mission)

## **HYMN**

(All my hope is firmly grounded)

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, we celebrate the goodness you give us as we commit ourselves to building a community of honesty, of openness and of truth. We believe that in the church God is creating a community of people who care for each other, bear one another's burdens and reach out to the wider world with the good news of God who cares and creates and who builds his kingdom today. Open our eyes to see the needs of your suffering people so that we can respond with compassion, without judgement and in partnership. We ask this for your name's sake. **Amen.**

## **BLESSING**

May the God who creates  
and sustains you  
fill your hearts with peace and joy,  
courage and commitment  
to make our world a living community  
of justice and love.

And may the blessing...

...**Amen**

# TRANSFORMING CHAOS INTO CREATION

## INTRODUCTION

The world of work is currently undergoing massive change. To some change is liberating, to others it is frightening. All are affected by it. Many describe working life today as chaotic. This word, however, should - for Christians at least - signify not just disorder and breakdown but opportunities for new order and breakthrough. For we believe in a God whose very purpose is to bring creation out of chaos. In this service we shall face squarely what it means to live through a period of chaos. At the same time we shall attempt to open our hearts and minds to God, that we may discern his creative purpose and be empowered to carry it forward.

## SENTENCE

There is a voice calling through  
the chaos of our time,  
there is a spirit moving across  
the waters of our world;  
there is a movement  
a light,  
a promise of hope.  
(c. Janet Morley)

## HYMN

(Thou whose almighty word)

## OPENING PRAYER

Creator Lord,  
Breathing your own life into our being,  
You gave us the gift of life:  
You placed us on this earth,  
With its minerals and waters, flowers and fruits;  
Living creatures of grace and beauty!  
You gave us the care of the earth.  
Teach us, O Creator of all things,  
That the earth and all its fullness are yours,  
The world and those who dwell in it.  
Call us yet again to safeguard the gift of Life.

## FIRST READING

(Genesis 1:1-10, 26-28)

## PRAYER

From chaos and emptiness  
From loneliness and lifelessness  
Come, Creator, come.

From darkness and shapelessness  
From the abyss and dreadfulness  
Come, Creator, come.

From fearfulness and hopelessness  
From weariness and fruitlessness  
Come, Creator, come.

Come to your creation  
As we wait  
And watch  
and wish for you.  
Come and re-create us in your likeness,  
O God, who can create from nothing  
And bring order out of chaos.  
Come and re-fashion us in your glory.  
(David Adam)

## SECOND READING

Blowing through heaven and earth, and in our hearts and the heart of every living thing, is a gigantic breath - a great Cry - which we call God. Plant life wished to continue its motionless sleep next to stagnant waters, but the Cry leapt up within it and violently shook its roots: "Away, let go of the earth, walk!" Had the tree been able to think and judge, it would have cried, "I don't want to. What are you urging me to do? You are demanding the impossible!" But the Cry, without pity, kept shaking its roots and shouting, "Away, let go of the earth, walk!"

It shouted this way for thousands of eons; and lo! as a result of desire and struggle, life escaped the motionless tree and was liberated.

Animals appeared - worms - making themselves at home in water and mud. "We're just fine", they said. "We have peace and security; we're not budging!"

But the terrible Cry hammered itself pitilessly into their loins. "Leave the mud, stand up, give birth to your betters!"

"We don't want to! We can't!"

"You can't, but I can. Stand up!"

And lo! after thousands of eons, human beings emerged, trembling on their still unsolid legs. Human beings are centaurs; their equine hoofs are planted in the ground, but their bodies from breast to head are worked on and tormented by the merciless Cry. They have been fighting, again for thousands of eons, to drag themselves, like a sword, out of their animalistic scabbard. They are also fighting - this is their new struggle - to draw themselves out of their human scabbard. The human being calls in despair, "Where can I go: I have reached the pinnacle, beyond is the abyss". And the Cry answers, "I am beyond. Stand up!"

(Nikos Kazantzakis, 'Report to Greco' - slightly adapted)

## **PRAYER**

Spirit of God,  
you are the breath of creation,  
the wind of change that blows through our lives,  
opening up new dreams and new hopes,  
new life in Jesus Christ.

Forgive our closed minds  
which barricade themselves against new  
ideas,  
preferring the past  
to what you might want to do through us  
tomorrow.

Forgive our closed eyes  
which fail to see the needs of your world,  
blind to the opportunities of service and love.

Forgive our closed hands  
which clutch our gifts and our wealth  
for our use alone.

Forgive our closed hearts  
which limit our affection  
to ourselves and our own.

Spirit of new life,  
forgive and break down the prison walls  
of our selfishness,  
that we might be open to your love  
and open for the service of your world;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
(Janet Morley)

## **THIRD READING**

(Romans 8:16-23)

## **PRAYER**

Lord:  
help us to see in the groanings of the creation  
not death throes but birth pangs;  
help us to see in suffering a promise for the future,

because it is a cry against the inhumanity of the  
present.  
Help us to glimpse in protest the dawn of justice,  
in the Cross the pathway to resurrection,  
and in suffering the seeds of joy. Amen.  
(Janet Morley)

## **HYMN**

(The earth, the sky, the oceans)

## **SERMON**

(Suggested sermon: From Chaos to Creation)

## **INTERCESSIONS**

We pray for all those who initiate or are affected by the changes in working life.

for those whose skills are redundant, that they may be willing and able to learn new skills, and be given the opportunities to do so;

for those who are unskilled or insufficiently trained, that all may find a place in the coming "Intelligence Society" and none be excluded from it or from the advantages it brings;

for those who have lost their jobs for whatever reason, that they may retain a sense of their own worth and find new opportunities for self-fulfilment and service;

for those bewildered by change, those who cannot see where they or their organisation are going, that they may rediscover meaning and direction in their lives;

for those who are overworked or who suffer stress or who rarely see their families because of the long hours they put in, that they may be enabled to find a proper balance in life;

for peripheral workers and those who work as contractors or on a temporary basis, that society may find a way to give them the security they need;

for those forced out of employment work and who have of necessity become self-employed; that they may be protected from undue risk and worry;

for those who are the main initiators of change, that they may carry forward the changes in as humane a way as possible, and give due consideration both to those who likely to benefit from the changes and those who will be adversely affected by them;

for those responsible for restructuring organisations so that they can survive in today's economic climate, and for those who advise them, that they may seek as far as possible to alleviate the pain and disruption such restructuring will cause;

for those in positions of political and economic power, that they may at all times seek the well-being both of their own people and the world economic community.

Let us pray especially for all involved in the field of Information Technology, for they are at the heart of the changes currently taking place.

Lord, we pray for those making international and national decisions about the 'Information Super-Highway'; that the whole range of considerations - political, economic, personal, sectional, communal - may be properly taken into account.

Lord, we pray for those setting up and administering national data-banks; we give thanks for the good they can do in co-ordinating information. We remember those who misuse the information they hold.

Lord, we pray for those involved in Research and Development in computers; that they may exercise with care the power and responsibility they have for making changes in our world and our lives. We remember those who have lost their jobs as a result of new technology.

Lord, we pray for those who have boring keyboard jobs, those who suffer from Repetitive Strain Injury, or eyestrain. We pray for willingness to deal with the causes of such problems.

Lord, we pray for those in small computing businesses; the difficulties they face in chasing creditors; the stress on them, the risks they have to take - perhaps even with their own homes.

Lord, we pray for those who write computer games: some which are used to do much good at school, others to encourage people to gamble, some which are used just to make money. We pray for those who are addicted to computer and arcade games, and for their families; and for those who are anxious about the violence of some computer games.

Lord, we pray for those frightened of computers and other sorts of new technology; those who feel they cannot master using them; those who feel old or who lose their confidence in the face of change and new things.

Lord, we pray that technology may be the servant, not the controller of our lives. Amen.  
(From 'Work in Worship', Peterborough Diocese People and Work Programme, courtesy of Paul Middleton.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Lord we pray,  
That people may increasingly work together in agreement,  
doing things which are sane to do,  
with mutual helpfulness and tolerance;

That the great masses of humanity  
may rise out of dwarfing pressures and cramped surroundings  
To understanding and participation;

That the resources of the earth  
may be husbanded and harvested,  
economised and used  
with scientific skill for the maximum of human benefit;

That towns and cities may be finely built  
and men and women finely taught and trained;

That there may be open ways  
and peace and freedom  
from end to end of the earth;

That through the great body of humankind  
may go evermore  
an increasing common understanding,  
an intensifying fellowship. Amen.

(Prayers for the City of God - slightly adapted)

Creator God,  
in this beautiful and dangerous world  
in which you have placed us,  
we pray today  
for all who, in your name,

seek to bring order out of chaos.

Where the forces of darkness and fear are mustered  
we know you are present in power.

O Jesus, you walked this way  
when you came in human form.  
You have known the tension,  
the heartache and the hurt.

Through your work and ministry  
lead us in the real world,  
where evil has to be confronted  
and lights have to puncture the darkness.

Stimulate us to give active support  
to those who are in the firing line,  
by prayer, by word, by letter,  
greeting them as your children  
and encouraging them by our own faithfulness.  
(c. YMCA)

## **HYMN**

(Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to thee)

## **CLOSING PRAYERS**

For the potential you have given us  
For the possibilities that lies before us  
We thank you, heavenly Father.

For our plans and their fulfilment  
For your promises and their enjoyment  
We thank you, heavenly Father.

In the problems that await us  
In the perils that will meet us  
Protect us, heavenly Father.

In the pains of our achievements  
In the powers that would control us  
Protect us, heavenly Father.

In our purposes and leisure  
In our passions and our pleasure  
Protect us, heavenly Father.  
(c. David Adam 'Power Lines')

Grant us the patience  
to smooth the way  
on which your kingdom comes to us.  
Grant us hope,  
that we may not weary  
in proclaiming and working for it,  
despite so many conflicts,  
threats and shortcomings.  
Grant us a clear vision  
that in this hour of our history  
we may see the horizon,  
and know the way  
on which your Kingdom comes to us.  
Amen.  
(Janet Morley)

## **BLESSING**

May God the Father, the Creator and Lord of all, who calls you to share in his creative purpose, enable you to create after the pattern of his Son and in the power of his Spirit. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you in your work and in your homes, this day and for evermore. Amen.

# COMMISSIONING & LICENSING OF AN INDUSTRIAL CHAPLAIN

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

*After welcoming the candidate and his/her family and specially invited guests, the officiating minister should briefly outline the purpose of Industrial Mission (see the words of the Licensing below) and the history of the local IM team. It should be explained that IM is part of the total mission of the Church, an important part of whose task is to discern God's presence in, and declare God's purpose for, the life of society – of which the world of work and its institutions are a crucial part.*

## HYMN

(Ye holy angels bright)

## THANKSGIVING

We give thanks to God the Father, Maker of the Universe  
for the unity and order of created things;  
for the resources of the earth;  
for the gift of life;  
for our share in the continuing work of creation;  
for creative vision and inventive skill;  
for industry and commerce.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

We give thanks to God in Jesus Christ,  
for his obedience fulfilled on the cross;  
for his bearing of the sin of the world;  
for his victory over evil and death;  
for his care for people;  
for the value he gave to human labour;  
for all our opportunities of work and leisure.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

We give thanks to God the Holy Spirit,  
for his continuing presence and power in the world;  
for the harvest of the Spirit in the lives of people –  
for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;  
for the strength of the Spirit, which enables and inspires us  
to persevere through troubles and difficulties.

Let us bless the Lord:  
**Thanks be to God.**

## **CONFESSION**

Let us confess to God those things that are wrong in our work.

We bring before you, Lord, all the failure of our daily work;  
We have fallen short of your demands upon us;  
We have not given you the glory, nor worked in your love.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us Lord.**

We confess the faults of the industrial society in which we work;  
the inequalities, the injustices in all systems  
and the difficulties we have in changing them.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us Lord.**

We have not worked together as brothers and sisters of your family.  
There have been differences,  
lack of cooperation and chances of reconciliation missed.  
We have not brought out the best in others.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us Lord.**

We have wasted and misused the raw materials of the earth,  
and scarred the beauty of nature.  
We have not made the best use of the time and skills you have given us.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us Lord.**

We have not met the needs of the hungry and impoverished of the world.  
We have not been able to meet the demands of those without work.

Good Lord, forgive us:  
**Forgive us Lord.**

## **FIRST READING**

(1 Corinthians 3:5-17)

## **PSALMS OF MISSION**

1. The flavour has gone out of the world:  
our childlike wonder has flown away.
2. God, it's your presence we miss:  
you aren't at the centre of our concerns.
3. The secular realm is all we can sense:  
our experience is limited by material things.
4. Help us to relish true knowledge of you:  
so we can become ourselves again.
5. Our recognition of you has been stunted:  
we need salt to bring out the taste afresh.
6. "You are the salt of the world" you said:  
so that is our task and vocation –
7. To bring back the taste of you to our world:  
to keep people consciously open to you.

(John Hammersley)

## **SECOND READING**

### **Creative Work**

It is easy but wrong to glamorise the Bible's view of work. Human beings, "in the image of God", and given dominion over the earth, are made to fulfil themselves in creative activity. This belongs to their high destiny. But there is no sentimentality here. Human work is tainted through the Fall. The consequences are reflected in working conditions. Some find their work stressful; others are concerned about the value or morality of what they are doing. Some find their work dull, or exhausting – not healthily so but just debilitating. There are many whose problems is that of no work and their number is increasing.

Human work belongs in the realm of God's redemption. The Church must take more seriously its place within the divine purpose; clergy and laity together must share in uplifting all who labour, seeking to renew the economic order and holding before all the promise of a brighter future.

One contemporary word is of special import: the word "technology". For some it raises fears of unemployment as machines take over from people. For others it spells excitement and the chance to overcome our many problems. Could it be that the scientists and technologists of our age have been raised up by God for the redemption of his people, even if many of them know him not? Used according to the divine will, the new instruments they have produced may liberate from drudgery, end dehumanisation and save our threatened environment. Under God, technology could play a significant part in enabling us to be a real community, freed for the creative work of caring for each other and the planet.

(Adapted from sermon notes produced by the Industrial Society, 1978)

## SERMON

(Suggested sermon: Industry and the Work of God)

## LICENSING

*The candidate is presented to the Bishop/Church Leader*

Bishop, we present ... [name of candidate] to be licensed as industrial chaplain in .... [name of town/city/area] and a member of the ... Industrial Mission team.

*Bishop:* ... [name of candidate], the work of Industrial Mission involves always the careful study of the nature of industrial life. It means faithful visiting, listening and understanding. It requires a great sensitivity to the problems of being employed and being an employer. It requires humility and respect before the creative activities of men and women.

Will you be sensitive and diligent in your contact with the world of industry and commerce?

I WILL.

The work of Industrial Mission involves gaining the trust of people at all levels of industry and commerce, and preserving that trust.

Will you be careful to earn and keep this confidence?

I WILL.

The work of Industrial Mission involves a due appreciation of the value and dignity of work, and of the suffering that comes when human creativity is frustrated.

Will you endeavour to stand for quality and wisdom in industry and for clear thinking about work and its place in human life?

I WILL.

The work of Industrial Mission involves a concern for justice and compassion in human social relationships, so that all may lead a fuller life.

Will you endeavour to encourage people in industry and commerce to discover the importance of Christian values in all their dealings, and will you yourself be ready to offer such help as may be called for?

I WILL.

The work of Industrial Mission involves teamwork. Industrial chaplains act on behalf of the churches and plan carefully all that they do with their colleagues. In this way the quality of our common mission is enhanced.

Will you consult and act together with your fellow team members and all those who associate both formally and informally with your work in ... [name of town/city/area]?

I WILL.

The work of Industrial Mission involves the deep understanding of our Christian theology and its application to the affairs of the world. It includes the building up of the common life in the body of believers.

Will you persevere in your study and devotion to these great tasks?

I WILL.

## COMMISSIONING

Almighty and everlasting God, by whom all virtues are given and perfected; give such grace to this your servant ... that s/he may worthily fulfil the charge we now commit to him/her. Give him/her reverence towards you, faithfulness in visiting of places of employment, aptness in all his/her work of industrial chaplain in ... for which we do now commission him/her.

*The Bishop now reads the Licence and then says:*

Receive the Care of Souls, which is both yours and mine; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, give you wisdom, courage and love to do his will; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and your work done in his name. **Amen.**

*The Industrial Mission team say together:*

... we welcome you as a colleague and member of the ... Industrial Mission team.

*The team then shake hands with the new chaplain, who is then greeted in similar fashion by representatives of industry and commerce, management and trade unions, officers and other representatives of the local authority and local community groups, and finally by representatives of the local Churches Together groups and local churches.*

## HYMN

(Lord of all power, I give you my will)

## PRAYERS

Lord, we remember

- that work in industry is the principal way in which we provide for our material needs and the needs of others, and help to maintain our social services and leisure;
- that work is for people, not people for work;
- that money, machines and materials are things, while workers, suppliers and customers are people;
- that in our type of society, those who cannot work feel their dignity is diminished;
- that life is more than work.

*The Leader announces what the response is after each bidding*

Let us thank God

- for the gift of life and the resources of the world;
- for our share in the continuing work of creation;
- for human skill and inventiveness, enterprise and hard work.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God

- for industry, commerce and administration and its many products of food, transport, roads, houses, clothing, medicines, machines, fresh water, sewage disposal, heat and light, milk and mail;
- for those who work to maintain the fabric of our community, in shops, offices, factories and farms.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God

- for engineers and technologists, for technicians and sales people, for those who work in finance, and industrial research and development;
- for those who plan and manage;
- for the principal organisations of industry, for companies, for professional associations, for employers' organisations and the trade unions.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God

- that we are made in the image of his Son;
- called to share in his reconciling work, called to resist evil, to transform nature and to proclaim his concern for people.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

Let us thank God

- for those who are not employed but still contribute to the life and well-being of society – for housewives, the retired, the disabled, the unemployed, and children.

Let us bless the Lord:

**Thanks be to God.**

*The Leader announces new bidding and response*

Let us pray

- for those who seek work but cannot find it;
- for those who over-work and neglect others;
- for those who should work but avoid it;
- for those who do work but resent it
- for those who exploit work and demean it.

Lord, in your mercy:  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray

- for efficient production, honesty marketing and responsible use of resources;
- for the unemployed, their families and other victims of economic forces;
- for more justice in the sharing of the world's goods in our own community and between nations.

Lord, in your mercy:  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray

- for all Christians at work, that they may look on their employment as ministry and feel supported in it by their local church;
- for the whole world, as it faces the challenge of change and the impact of new technologies.

Lord, in your mercy:  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us ask for God's grace, as we say together:

**Grant us, O God,  
 a vision of our world, fair as it might be;  
 a world of justice where none shall prey on others;  
 a world of plenty, where vice and poverty shall cease to fester;  
 a world of fellowship, where success shall be founded on service,  
 and honour given to worth alone;  
 a world of peace, where order shall not rest on force,  
 but on the love of all for God and for each other.  
 Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(Forth in thy name O Lord I go)

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Guide us, Lord, in all our doings with your gracious favour, and further us with your continual help, that in all our work begun, continued and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name, and by your mercy attain everlasting life.

## **BLESSING**

# PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

## A service with Holy Communion

### OPENING STATEMENT

From the fragmented world of our everyday lives  
We gather together in search of wholeness.  
By many cares and preoccupations,  
by diverse and separate aims,  
we are separated from one another  
and divided within ourselves.  
Yet we know that no branch is severed  
from the Tree of Life that sustains all.

### HYMN

(For the fruits of his creation)

### BIDDING

Let us be silent before God. Let us open our hearts to the  
Spirit that blows across all the earth, and may that Spirit  
kindle the flame of hope throughout the world.

### SILENCE

### RESPONSE:

O God, make us instruments of your justice,  
Make us instruments of your peace,  
Make us instruments for the renewal of your creation.

### GLORIA

Glory be to you O God, our Creator,  
Source of all life and the gift of belonging;  
Glory to you Jesus, our brother,  
Sharer in living and freer of pain;  
Glory be to you Spirit, our strength,  
Sustainer of hope and spreader of love.

### FIRST READING

All Christians are called to act.

For stating principles is not enough.  
To point out injustice is not enough.  
Prophetic cries are not enough.  
Words lack weight  
unless we all become responsible,  
and act effectively.

To pass on to others  
the blame for injustice  
is all too easy.  
Each of us has a share in it.  
The first thing we need  
is a personal conversion.  
Such basic humility  
keeps all our action  
flexible, unsectarian, brave,  
in the face of the immensity  
of what we have to do.

The Christian's hope  
rests on this knowledge:  
the Lord is working  
with us  
in the world.  
Through his body, the Church,  
through the whole of humankind,  
Christ continues his Redemption,  
accomplished on the Cross,  
and bursting forth in victory  
on Resurrection morning.

(From 'This is Action', Section 48 - a popular version of 'Octogesima  
Adveniens', an Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI)

## **HYMN**

(Our world is one world)

## **OLD TESTAMENT READING**

(Isaiah 5:1-7)

## **SHORT PERIOD OF SILENCE**

## **GOSPEL READING**

(John 6:1-15)

## REFLECTIVE MUSIC

### CREED

I believe in God  
who didn't create the world as something finished,  
as a thing which has to remain the same forever,  
who doesn't rule by eternal laws  
which are irrevocable,  
nor by the natural order of poor and rich,  
experts and uninformed,  
rulers and helpless.

I believe in God  
who wants conflicts among the living  
and the transformation of the existing  
by our work,  
by our politics.

I believe in Jesus Christ  
who was right when he  
'an individual who cannot do anything'  
like ourselves  
worked on the transformation of all things  
and perished in doing it.  
Looking at him I realise  
how our intelligence is crippled,  
our fantasy suffocated,  
our efforts wasted,  
because we don't live the way he lived.  
Every day I fear  
that he died in vain,  
because he is buried in our churches,  
because we have betrayed his revolution,  
in obedience and fear  
of the authorities.

I believe in Jesus Christ  
who rises into our lives  
in order that we may be freed  
from prejudice and arrogance,  
from fear and hatred,  
and may carry forward his revolution  
towards his kingdom.

I believe in the Spirit  
who came with Jesus in the world;  
in the community of all nations  
and in our responsibility

for what will become of our earth,  
a valley of misery, starvation and violence  
... or the city of God.  
I believe in just peace,  
which can be achieved;  
in the possibility of a meaningful life for all  
in the future of this, God's world. Amen.  
(Dorothea Solle)

## INTERCESSIONS

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and  
discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and  
destruction.

This is true: "I have come that they may have life,  
and have it abundantly".

It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last  
word, and that war and destruction have come to stay  
for ever.

This is true: "For to us a child is born, to us a son  
is given in whom authority will rest, and whose name  
will be Prince of Peace".

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of  
evil that seek to rule the world.

This is true: "To me is given all authority in heaven  
and on earth, and lo, I am with you to the earth of the  
world".

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are  
specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church,  
before we can do anything.

This is true: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young  
people shall see visions and your old folk shall dream  
dreams".

It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of  
humankind, our dreams of justice, of human dignity, of  
peace, are not meant for this earth and this history.

This is true: "The hour comes, and is now, that true  
worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth".

God of history,  
You share our joys and our crushing sorrows,  
You hear the cries of the afflicted,  
You fill the hungry,

And you set free the oppressed.  
We pray for the end to all injustice.  
Inspire us with the all-embracing love of God,  
Challenge us with the sacrificial love of Jesus,  
Empower us with the transforming love of the Spirit,  
That we and all God's people may live and be free.  
**Amen.**

(c. 1991 Wild Goose Resource Group, Iona Community)

## **CONFESSION**

O God, you have searched us out and known us,  
and all that we are is open to you.  
We confess that we have sinned:  
we have used our power to dominate  
and our weakness to manipulate;  
we have evaded responsibility  
and failed to confront evil;  
we have denied dignity to the whole of Creation,  
to ourselves and to each other.  
We have failed to celebrate life  
and refused to challenge death.

We turn to you, O God;  
we renounce evil;  
we claim your love;  
we choose to be made whole.

## **THE PEACE**

We are Christ's body on earth, reconciled to God  
through a cross built by human hands from natural wood;  
Let us pursue all that makes for peace  
through justice throughout Creation.

The peace of God be with you always:  
And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of reconciliation and peace.

## **HYMN**

(We utter our cry: that peace may prevail!)

## **OFFERTORY**

We come with offerings - our skills, our symbols, our time,  
our hopes, our pleasure in one another's company.

All these things we bring to God in dedication, and for use  
in the glory of the realm of God.

## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

We take bread  
symbol of labour - exploited, degraded,  
yet symbol of life.  
**Life for us.**

We will break the bread  
because Christ the source of life  
was broken for the exploited and downtrodden.  
**Broken for us.**

We take wine  
symbol of labour - contaminated, despoiled,  
yet symbol of new life.  
**Poured out for us.**

We will drink the wine  
because Christ the peace of the world  
was killed by violence.  
**Because of us.**

Now bread and wine are before us;  
the memory of our meals;  
our working;  
our talking;  
our loving.  
Before us the depths of our life.  
**Thanks be to God.**

The Spirit of God be with you.  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them up to God.**

Let us give thanks to God.  
**It is right to offer thanks and praise.**

We give thanks for our common life  
and for the healing of a broken planet.  
**Thanks be to God.**

We give thanks for the presence of Christ  
in our struggle,  
and for the promise of freedom

for all people.

**Thanks be to God.**

For all that binds us together in our humanity and in  
our ecology,  
with all who live and have lived,  
who have cried and are crying,  
who hunger and are thirsty,  
who pine for justice  
and who sing and pray for the coming of God's  
kingdom.

**SANCTUS**

Holy, holy, holy  
all-creative God,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Today we give thanks for Jesus of Nazareth,  
in whom Christians believe God was especially present,  
through whom God was made known to humanity.

On the night that he was betrayed, he feasted with his  
followers;  
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it  
and gave it to his disciples, saying,  
'Take this and eat it.  
This is my body broken for you.  
Do this in remembrance of me'.

In the same way, after supper,  
he took the cup of wine, gave thanks,  
and gave it to them, saying  
'Drink from it all of you.  
This is my blood of the new covenant,  
poured out for you and for many.  
Do this whenever you drink it  
in remembrance of me'.

For all that Jesus of Nazareth means to us.  
We give thanks.

So today we share bread and wine together  
as a sign that we are one humanity,  
as a pledge that we will work for justice,  
as a foretaste of that which can be,  
despite what is and what has been.

May the Spirit that guides us all  
be present in this feast,  
taking this bread and wine,  
the concerns that we have expressed,  
the lives that we lead,  
and transforming them all  
for the unity of all creation  
and the service of love.

God, whose body is all creation,  
may we come to know you in all the earth  
and feel you in our blood.

So will no part of us, or the world,  
be lost to your transforming grace.

Alleluia! This living bread is broken  
for the life of the world.

Alleluia! Let us keep the feast.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

And now we say with confidence the words Jesus himself  
taught us to use:

Our Father of all Creation  
May your name be honoured,  
May everyone live in your way.  
Give us today our bread for tomorrow.  
Forgive us as we forgive others.  
Do not let us give in when we are tempted,  
And save us from anything that would make us  
lose you.

**Amen.**

### **THE COMMUNION**

The body of Christ, a sign of hope  
Amen.

The blood of Christ, a sign of hope  
Amen.

### **POST-COMMUNION**

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.  
We give you thanks, most gracious God,  
for the beauty of earth and sea;  
for the richness of mountains, plains and rivers;  
for the songs of birds and the loveliness of the flowers;  
We praise you for these good gifts,  
and pray that we may safeguard them  
for our posterity and for their own worth.

Grant that we may continue to grow  
in our grateful enjoyment and employment of your abundant  
creation;  
through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

## **HYMN**

(Jubilate)

## **CLOSING PRAYERS**

God of justice and peace, ecology and economy,  
You ask us to be the voice of the voiceless.  
We call upon you for those who have suffered  
the injustice of poverty, inequality, exploitation and greed.  
From the depths of our being we cry to you.

O God the people and the planet are broken:  
Heal your world and defeat injustice.

Creator God, receive our words, our images, our feelings,  
our silence.  
Grant us those things we cannot or dare not express.  
We make these prayers through our brother Jesus.  
**Amen.**

## **PRAYER OF COMMITMENT**

We commit ourselves to the fullness of life on earth.  
We commit ourselves to the planet and its peoples.  
We commit ourselves to a sensitive ecology and a just  
economy.  
We commit ourselves to support each other  
and to work for a community of sharing.

## **DISMISSAL**

May the God who dances in creation,  
who embraces us with human love,  
who shakes our lives like thunder,  
bless us and drive us out with power  
to fill the world with justice.  
In the name of Christ. **Amen.**

# THE BLESSING OF A SHIP

*The minister/chaplain shall say:*

Seeing in the course of our duty we are set in the midst of many and great dangers, and that we cannot be faithful to the high trust placed in us without the help of Almighty God, let us pray for his blessing upon this ship and all who [will] serve in her.

*The chaplain shall ask for God's blessing on this ship, using this ancient call (from the Gaelic Blessing, 1589):*

I call upon you to pray for God's blessing on this ship.

May God the Father bless her.

**Bless this ship.**

May Jesus Christ bless her.

**Bless this ship.**

May the Holy Spirit bless her.

**Bless this ship.**

## THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for those involved in the life of .... [name of ship]

Lord, we give you thanks for those who built this ship, for those who designed and installed its equipment and those who [will] use it. We pray especially for the captain and crew, and for all who run and maintain this vessel. May all they undertake be in accordance with your will and supported by your blessing. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us pray for our homes, and particularly the homes of those away for long periods at sea.

O God, who sent your Son Jesus Christ to live in an earthly home for our sakes; we ask your blessing on our homes and all members of our families. Grant that we may always remain faithful to them and they to us, and help us to remember that, though time and distance separate us, we are all bound together by your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Part of the Prayer of St Francis:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love  
Where there is injury, pardon  
Where there is doubt, faith  
Where there is despair, hope  
Where there is darkness, light  
Where there is sadness, joy.

A prayer for perseverance:

O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished which yieldeth the true

glory; through him who, for the finishing of thy work, laid down his life, our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

### **THE BLESSING CEREMONY**

Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
**Who has made heaven and earth.**

Let us pray:

O Lord God Almighty, let your blessing be upon this ship, and upon all who serve and sail in her. May good success and your protection always be with them; in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father... Amen.

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

O eternal God, Lord of land and sea, be pleased to receive into your almighty and most gracious protection this vessel and those who sail in her. Preserve them from all dangers at sea, that they may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land. Bless the fruits of their labours, that through them your will may be done and your name glorified; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Go forth in peace, be of good courage, hold fast to what is good, render to no-one evil for evil, strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, honour everyone, love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

## SECTION SIX

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# PRIVATE PRAYER

## AT THE START OF THE WORKING DAY

### **Morning Dedication**

In all I do this day,  
In all I think and say  
Father, be with me all the way.

In all my work and all my deeds,  
In all I learn,  
In all my needs,  
Christ, go before me,  
The One who leads.

In all my work as I do my best,  
In all that puts me to the test,  
Spirit, help, and grant me rest.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Openings**

O Lord God, Creator of all  
Open my eyes to beauty  
Open my mind to wonder  
Open my ears to others  
Open my heart to you.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Peace of the Presence**

I believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are present  
that we dwell in you  
and in your Presence there is Peace

I believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are present,

that this day begins in you  
and in your Presence there is Peace

I believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are present,  
that this journey is in you  
and in your Presence there is Peace.

I believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are present  
that this work place is in you  
and in your Presence there is Peace.

I believe, O God of all gods,  
that you are present  
that we dwell in you  
and in your Presence there is Peace.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

Teach me Lord  
to give  
of my time  
my talents  
my trust  
myself.  
Help me, Lord,  
to receive  
from others,  
to delegate,  
to share  
and in all to be aware of you.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Bringer of Peace**

In busyness  
Bring stillness,  
In work without cease  
Your unending peace,  
When things would harm  
Your inner calm

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

In the quiet of the morning,  
In the new day that is dawning,  
Thy kingdom come.

In my waking and my dressing,  
In my life and my progressing,  
Thy kingdom come.

In this moment for the taking,  
In the things that I am making  
Thy kingdom come.

In my tasks and my employment,  
In my leisure and enjoyment,  
Thy kingdom come.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

Peace, Lord, Peace,  
To all whom I meet  
To all in the street,  
Peace, Lord, Peace.

To all working here  
To all who are dear,  
Peace, Lord, Peace.

To all who need pity  
To all in this city  
Peace, Lord, Peace.

To all facing defeat  
Who feel incomplete  
Peace, Lord, Peace.

To all unemployed  
Whose hope is destroyed  
Peace, Lord, Peace.

(David Adam, 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

### **God of Life**

Lord increase  
My zest for living

My vision of glory  
My hearing of your call  
My grasp on reality  
My response to your call  
My sensitivity to others  
My gentleness to creation  
My taste for wonder  
My love for you.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

O God, you claim me as your partner,  
respecting me  
trusting me  
tussling with me  
Support me  
as I dare to be vulnerable with you.  
encourage me  
as I dare to take risks with you,  
so that together we can transform our world. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **God Be In My Head**

In this hour  
Somewhere in the world  
People will be meeting on buses and trains  
In shops, factories and offices.  
Some will meet for only a few fleeting moments,  
Others will spend most of the day together.  
I may meet people who will cheer me,  
Make me smile or maybe annoy me.  
*Lord of the morning, help me.*

In the hours ahead  
I may bring the warmth of friendship to some,  
Others I may irritate and anger.  
Lord, life is too short for bitterness,  
For quarrelling, or for hurtful gossip.  
Yet sometimes it is hard to think kindly  
About those I share my day with.  
*Lord of life, help me.*

Through the hours of this day  
I may say things that I regret,  
Things that will hurt or cause bitterness,  
Yet in doing this  
I hurt myself,

Spoil my own day.  
Sometimes I am my own worst enemy  
In the way I think of people,  
Talk to people  
Work with people  
*Lord of life, help me.*

Lord of life throughout the day  
Take over my mind,  
My words,  
My actions,  
My life.

God be in my head  
And in my understanding;  
God be in my eyes,  
And in my looking.  
God be in my mouth  
And in my speaking;  
God be in my heart  
And in my thinking;  
God be at my end,  
And at my departing. Amen.

(From 'Pause for Thought' with Frank Topping)

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### **Daily Work**

In this morning light  
I'm thinking about my daily work.  
I sometimes wonder  
How I came to have my present job,  
Or why I earn my living  
In my particular way.  
Should I be doing something else with my life?  
Should I be looking for something new,  
Something better, or ought I be content,  
Grateful for employment  
When many have no work at all?  
Lord of the morning,  
During this working day, guide me.

Lord, over the years I have been caught up in the race  
For something better.  
Perhaps this is the time to stop.  
To stop racing ahead, to take stock.  
If I have learned my trade,  
If I am competent in my work  
Perhaps I should stay where I am

And try to improve what I do.  
Lord, is that common sense  
Or simply cowardice?

Lord, throughout the hours of the day  
Help me to appreciate  
The work I have been given to do.  
If I have talents,  
Help me to use them.  
Let me not waste my gifts by neglecting them  
Or through craving the gifts of others.  
Help me to be courageous  
In decisions about the use of my time and energy  
At work and at home.  
Lord of the morning, help me.

(From 'Pause for Thought' with Frank Topping)

\*\*\*\*\*

In all I think, or do, or say,  
In all that I achieve today,  
Let it be in the Father's way.

In my working, in seeking right,  
Until the coming of the night,  
Let it be in the Saviour's might.

In my actions, in every place,  
In the running of the race,  
Let it be in the Saviour's grace.

In my travelling to the city,  
In my deeds of love and pity,  
Guide me, ever, most Holy Trinity.

God of love and gentleness  
Keep me by your great goodness  
From each act of sinfulness  
From each deed of carelessness  
From each word of hurtfulness  
From each thought of evilness.  
Keep, O Lord, and ever bless  
With your peace and holiness  
God of love and gentleness.

(David Adam)

\*\*\*\*\*

I give my work to you, Lord

I give my work to you.

I give my plans to you, Lord  
I give my plans to you.

I give my hopes to you, Lord  
I give my hopes to you.

I give my dreams to you, Lord  
I give my dreams to you.

I give my life to you, Lord  
I give my life to you.

I give my love to you, Lord  
Keep me true to you, Lord  
Keep me true to you.

In all I say and do, Lord  
In all I say and do.

Help me to serve you, Lord  
Help me to serve you.

(David Adam)

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Almighty God, sustainer of daily work and life, provider of every need. May I be so open to your creative power that I may know your will, praise your name, and share your vision for the creation of your kingdom.

\*\*\*\*\*

May the mind of Christ my Saviour  
Live in me from day to day,  
By his love and power controlling  
Everything I do and say.

\*\*\*\*\*

May the strength of God pilot me;  
May the power of God preserve me;  
May the wisdom of God instruct me;  
May the hand of God direct me;  
May the shield of God defend me.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you, O Lord my God, for my work today. Although there may be problems to solve, difficulties to face, targets to be met – there may also be solutions, victories and achievements. Above all there is a community to serve and a life to be lived – my life which hidden with Christ in you, Lord God

\*\*\*\*\*

Holy God, the money I offer in your house on Sunday will result from my work today. Hear my prayer, that I may work with honesty, integrity and accuracy, and so make both work-and-worship-offerings acceptable to you.

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord, Thou knowest how busy I must be this day;  
If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me;  
For Christ's sake.

(General Lord Astley, 1642)

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## AT THE END OF THE WORKING DAY

### Evening Dedication

Here are my thoughts, Lord,  
Here is my mind.  
Here are my deeds, Lord,  
Help me unwind.

Here is my strength, Lord,  
Here is my will.  
Here is my life, Lord,  
Help me be still.

Here is my heart, Lord,  
Here is my hope.  
Here is my love, Lord,  
Help me to cope.

Here is my time, Lord,  
Here is my might.  
Here I am thine, Lord,  
Bless me tonight.

(David Adam 'Power Lines')

\*\*\*\*\*

O Lord, I remember before thee tonight  
All the workers of the world:  
Workers with hand or brain;  
Workers in cities or in fields.  
Those who go forth to toil  
And those who keep house;  
Employers and employees;  
Those who command and those who obey;  
Those whose work is dangerous,  
Those whose work is monotonous or mean;  
Those who can find no work to do;  
Those whose work is the service of the poor;  
Or the healing of the sick,  
Or the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ  
At home and in foreign places.

(John Baillie)

\*\*\*\*\*

### All My Tomorrows

Lord of the evening  
The day has come to rest  
And in the quiet, I am at peace.  
I wish this calmness  
Could stay with me  
Throughout the working day.  
Yet so often  
I am irritable at the start of a day.  
I wonder why?  
I suppose there are physical reasons,  
A natural reluctance  
To leave the warmth and security  
Of sleep;  
And perhaps a deep-seated unwillingness  
To face the tasks that await me.  
Yet in any working day  
The hours I spend with my family  
Are so few  
I can't afford to spoil any of them.

Lord, I know that when tomorrow begins  
The things I say and do  
Will create 'moods'  
That will affect me and others  
For hours.  
One sharp word from me  
Could mean that two or three other people  
Will start off on the wrong foot.  
It can make a difference  
To so many things.

Lord, may I know the peace of your presence  
When daylight breaks.  
Tomorrow, help me to think before I speak  
Help me to realise that I am not the only person  
Who finds it difficult to start the day.  
I have only to breathe your name  
To know your peace.  
Help me to remember that  
Now and always.

(From 'Pause for Thought' with Frank Topping)

\*\*\*\*\*

Shepherd King  
As you looked lovingly  
Into the eyes  
Of the rich young man,  
Look on me.

God's Anointed,  
As you looked searchingly  
Into the heart  
Of David,  
Look on me.

As I drift heedless  
Into the false calm  
Of a life lived  
Within the confines  
Of others' expectations,  
Save me from shipwreck.

As I tremble  
Before the next task,  
Strengthen me.

Help me to take on the giants of my life;  
To battle with conscience  
And the dictates of culture.

Then may I  
Look into your eyes  
And offer you  
All that is most precious,  
As I receive your gift  
Of life in all its fullness.

(Kate McIlhagga, in URC Handbook, 1993)

\*\*\*\*\*

UNEMPLOYED... REDUNDANT...

Unemployed... redundant... laid off... unqualified... surplus labour...  
These words cut into me,  
Severing all feeling of usefulness.  
What kind of body-part am I now:  
What sort of foot or hand, eye or ear  
Can I be if I don't work?  
Does the body still need me?

Creator God  
I've got this idea I must be active and busy,  
Doing bit things in your name.  
Prophesying to the world,  
Eradicating poverty.  
Yet it is the everyday struggles  
That are so demanding:

Just about making ends meet,  
Maintaining some dignity.  
I might not have been the greatest worker  
But now I've been put on the scrap heap.

Teacher Christ  
We need to learn a new way of being.  
Show us how to be prophets in every situation,  
Employed or unemployed,  
Underpaid or overworked,  
So that the justice of labour shared  
May truly build up your body  
In honour and rejoicing.

(Kate McIlhagga, in URC Handbook, 1993)

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## PRAYER CYCLES/CALENDARS

### Everyday

(Compiled by Rowland Goodwin)

### MONDAY

*"After eighteen years I was made redundant"*

#### I remember today

... all those living with the threat of redundancy... those recently made redundant... especially... those missing the status, collegueship, creativity and routine of employment... those who want and need paid work... especially...

Lord, make me more than sensitive to the needs of those who are searching for work and a living wage. Help me through encouragement, support and change to reorder life so that the skills of all may be used to create a more human world.

WE ARE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER (Ephesians 4:24)

### TUESDAY

*"The productivity scheme was bull-dozed through"*

#### I remember today

... those who work in places where the pressure for profit and productivity has all but pushed out concern for human beings... those who suffer the consequences of bad management caused by inadequate consultation... those who give time at work to represent others in the search for justice and human dignity... especially...

LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS (Amos 5:24)

### WEDNESDAY

*"The boss likes to have a happy ship"*

#### I remember today

... all the good things about my work... the things that bring satisfaction... that make me laugh... the people around me who are good at their job... especially... those who are concerned for others' welfare as well as their own...

Lord, in my search for happiness, keep me sensitive to the things that still need to be put right lest my contentment with the good prevents me from experiencing the best.

I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE... ABUNDANTLY (John 10:10)

### THURSDAY

*"I got 20p an hour rise this week, to £3.40"*

I remember today

... all who are in jobs well below their ability... all who are poorly rewarded for their work... especially... those who are discriminated against because of their sex, colour, disability or age... all who work in insecure, dead-end, poorly supported work... especially... all whose weekly income falls below what is necessary for a decent life...

Lord of the rich and the poor, help us to organise our work and economy with justice and a true sense of our responsibility for each other.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF (Luke 10:27)

FRIDAY

*“Everything is piling in”*

I remember today

... all those under heavy pressure at work... especially... those trying to cope with demands beyond their capacity... those who regularly have to take work home... those whose family and social life is suffering as a result of personal stress... especially...

Lord, we pray for skill to balance creatively the demands made on us in times of stress and to learn new ways of coping.

THE TASK IS TOO HEAVY FOR YOU; YOU CANNOT DO IT ALONG (Exodus 18:17)

SATURDAY

*“My boss works from seven in the morning till seven at night and at weekends”*

I remember today

... all those who have to work while I enjoy my leisure... especially... all those who are under pressure to work ‘all the hours that God sends’... and those who need some of my ‘quality time’... my own mental and physical need for relaxation.

Lord, teach me that there is more to life than work. Give me the ability to relax and enjoy life with family and friends.

GOD FINISHED THE WORK HE HAD DONE AND RESTED (Genesis 2:2)

SUNDAY

I remember today

... the opportunity this day brings for renewal in body, mind and spirit... the way in which, together with others in our congregation and church groups, I can worship God, offer my whole week’s work, be forgiven, be affirmed, be led to deeper faith, vision and strength for my life and work...

Lord, you call me to worship and to be faithful every day. I pray today for those who will help me to sense your presence about me. Stengthen me as I share with others in the renewal of your creation.

MY YOKE IS EASY (Matthew 11:30)

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## **Two Weekly Prayer-Cycles**

(From Herts & Beds Industrial Mission)

### **SUNDAY**

*“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit”*

Glory is rightly to be given to the Father, creator of heaven and earth, whose word brought creation into being, and who actively sustains, upholds and oversees it.

Glory to the Son, living, dying, raised to life and so making abundant new and eternal life available to humanity – a work of re-creation.

Glory to the Holy Spirit, constantly active, convincing the world of sin, righteousness and judgement and bearing witness to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Review the past week with its evidence of God’s varied provision for your needs, and look with hope and expectation into this new week.

Pray for the right combination of worship and leisure on Sundays; for those working to provide essential services and recreational opportunities, that they do not become submerged by the claims of this world.

### **MONDAY**

*The purpose of work*

The weekly pay packet or monthly cheque may often be given as the reason for working. Yet creativity, personal development and contributions to community life should be more powerful underlying reasons.

Pray that the place of work in the realm of God’s redemptive plan may be accepted and taught.

Pray that work may provide opportunity for personal growth, and that Christians in all occupations may truly believe they are fulfilling their vocation.

Thank God for the work you and your family engage in.

“Give grace to us, our families and friends, and to all our neighbours; that we may serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us”.

### **TUESDAY**

*Money – wealth*

Cost of living, pay claims, increased benefits, changing interest rates – our society revolves around the exchange of money. Economic policies are fashioned by people, whether in government, finance houses or large, trans-national organisations. These people at the apex of secular power structures seem remote

and distant from ordinary life. Prayer may be the only way most of us have of affecting them or of opening up more direct links with them and so influencing their decisions.

Pray that the “love of money” may dominate society’s objectives less.

Pray that those who control large budgets may use these resources with care and compassion.

Pray for those who are poor managers of their domestic finances – and hence often in debt; for those caught in the poverty trap; for those who are destitute (for whatever reason) and for all who try to help them.

Pray for the staff of the local Department of Social Security, under pressure from many applicants.

## WEDNESDAY

### *Large firms*

Employment in large, possibly trans-national companies can offer varied experience and progress. It can also mean feeling helpless, as decisions with far-reaching local effects are made at a distance- possibly overseas. Inefficient use of human and material resources can lead to waste and feeling useless. Takeover bids result in loss of identity of smaller firms and can destroy personal friendly working relationships.

Give thanks for the training and advancement prospects provided by large companies.

Pray for all employees to be aware of the value of their contribution to the whole concern.

Pray for shareholders to remember that people matter more than dividends.

## THURSDAY

### *Small firms*

Many small businesses come into being every year, yet unhappily a high percentage fail. However, they meet community needs and provide satisfying work for small groups. Co-operatives enable those with common interests to use their abilities to fulfil shared visions. The small general store or local newsagent often demands long hours of work, while providing a service to the neighbourhood – especially the elderly.

Pray for renewed hope for those with cash-flow problems or who have been forced to close their businesses.

## FRIDAY

### *Unemployed people*

These may be school leavers, with or without certificates of some sort; the skilled tradesman made redundant due to new technology; the early-retired whose long-term ambitions have been cut short. Try to imagine the dull hopelessness of days and months of inactivity and disappointment as a job does not materialise.

Pray for unemployed people to be granted a spirit of hope, and to retain their sense of dignity and self-worth.

Pray that the families of unemployed people may accept and support them.

Give thanks for the deepened understanding of the pain of being without work and for those whose decisions nationally and locally create more jobs.

## SATURDAY

### *Christian witness at work*

Christian men and women are the Lord's front-line troops in the working world. Urged by the church to be "salt" and "light"; judged by their colleagues by the highest standards.

Pray for those in your family and in your congregation who daily face these challenges.

Give thanks for the spiritual support given by Christian groups at work.

Pray for seminars, study groups and for literature relating faith to work to be more widely and fully used.

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## SUNDAY

### *Background to worship*

The ceaseless existence and activity of almighty God – to whom all honour is due – is the background to our worship. Even as congregations gather for worship today, many people are at work. Basic services of heating, lighting, travelling etc. have to be provided; goods are in transit by sea, land and air; news is being collected and transmitted; the ill and dependent need attention at all times – as do farm animals.

Prayer: "Bless the Lord all created things; sing his praise and exult him for ever".

Pray for those who work today in the service industries, in transport, farming, media presentation, and in caring for others. For those in works which must function continuously twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. For Christians on shift work, unable to share in public worship today.

## MONDAY

### *World resources*

"The earth is the Lord's".

In the divine plan, humankind has been entrusted with responsible oversight (stewardship) of this planet. Its resources need to be safeguarded, and the environment maintained in a healthy state for the sake of future generations. Too much can so easily be used too quickly, for selfish ends. Greed is traditionally included in the list of deadly sins.

**Prayer**: "Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made human beings in your image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works, and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving."

Pray: Praise God for the rich resources of this planet, and the universe. Pray that scientists may be wise and prudent in their handling of these God-given materials.  
Give thanks for the increasing concern to preserve high quality in the environment.

## TUESDAY

### *Paid employment*

For most adults the Monday to Friday work is paid employment: the use of their time, skills, physical and mental energy are rewarded with money. Such work may be monotonous or exciting, repetitive or creative, satisfying or frustrating. It may be in manufacturing, retailing, education, the armed forces – the list is long.

Look around you where you are now: at the clothes you wear, the furnishings of the room, this sheet of paper itself. Think through the range of goods recently bought at the local shop or supermarket. Try to imagine the number and variety of people and processes involved in bringing these goods to you, people unknown to you, but known to God and loved by him. Some may acknowledge them, or some may be of non-Christian faiths, others not prepared to profess any faith. The life of a community depends on the efforts of so many.

Pray: For those who maintain a Christian presence in office, shop, factory, college or other workplace. For those whose work is dangerous – for astronauts, research scientists, miners, building site workers. For those whose work is tedious or in conditions that are mentally or physically demanding.

## WEDNESDAY

### *The unemployed*

Hope, ambition, vision – all are desirable characteristics in young people, who have their life before them. But if there is little hope of any work at all, let alone work that suits their interests or gifts, what then? What of the disabled, or the mentally or physically handicapped? Feelings of frustration, uselessness, boredom. Hopelessness and even anger against society can easily arise. The ability to make a personal contribution to the life of the community is an important factor in maintaining self-dignity as a child of God.

Some few may not want to work, but most unemployed feel deprived and even degraded because no opportunities are offered.

Pray: For those frustrated by months of enforced idleness, and for their families. For those made redundant, and those anxious about their future work situation. Pray that government and industry may strive to produce a society in which opportunities for personal development will be more widely available. Pray against the demon of despair.

## THURSDAY

### *Christians at work*

Every day many believers will be trying to make a Christian contribution of thought or insight relevant to their work situation – or remaining aloof from it – or inwardly struggling with feelings of guilt at being unable to translate faith into practice.

If Jesus is Lord (as he is!) then he is Lord of all life. Christians at work have to bear witness to their new life by what is done as well as by what is said; and also by realistic application of Christian teachings to all aspects of the workplace – to procedures, policies, products – everything.

Prayer: “Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory”.

Pray: That Christians will be eager to relate their faith to their daily occupation; that congregations will seek their members at work as engaged in mission and outreach, and so provide support and training. For groups of Christians who meet in workplaces, that they may be glad to strive for the coming of the Kingdom there.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5: 9)  
Much reconciliation is needed in the secular world. Stable community life depends upon understanding, forbearance, mutual respect and willingness to find common outlooks and goals from which co-operation can proceed. When working relationships break down they may become headline news. A strike can cause a legacy of stress and bitterness, which can infiltrate a neighbourhood and affect families.

Pray: Give thanks for the rarely publicised, patient, skilled and professional work done by negotiators on behalf of those they represent.  
For the unity and sense of working together found in small businesses, and in a growing number of co-operatives.  
Pray for an increase of love, truth and truthfulness in our industrial society.  
Pray for Christians who may find themselves on opposite sides in a dispute.

**FRIDAY**  
(As for Monday of previous week)

**SATURDAY**  
*Mission in industrial society*

Individuals and groups are working to strengthen the connections between the Christian faith and the society in which we are set. Opportunities are being provided for church people to discover more of what industry is like and how it affects people. How to interpret and communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to our society is a challenging part of the mission of the church.

Pray: For Faith and Work programmes – helping people to overcome the faith-work divide.  
For Church Action With the Unemployed – supporting local initiatives to help those without a job.  
For full-time and part-time industrial chaplains in their pastoral and prophetic ministry.

I praise you for the enjoyment of my daily work; the challenge of new problems, the opportunities to exercise skill, the satisfaction of job well done, the pleasure of a quality product. Worship and work blend together as my offering to you, my Lord and my God.  
Amen.

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# Intercessions for Those at Work

(The chaplains of the Sussex Industrial Mission have compiled this Calendar of Intercession, whereby they pray for a different category of worker each day of the month. The following list could easily be adapted for other localities.)

- DAY 1 Federation of Sussex Industries, Chambers of Commerce, CBI
- DAY 2 Employees and Trade Unions
- DAY 3 Industrialists and leaders of commerce, Institute of Personnel and Development
- DAY 4 Officers and elected representatives of the local community, MPs
- DAY 5 Judges and magistrates
- DAY 6 Police, fire and ambulance services
- DAY 7 Social workers, probation officers
- DAY 8 Hospitals, doctors, nurses, health workers
- DAY 9 Schools, teachers and pupils
- DAY 10 Workers in shops and offices
- DAY 11 Clinics, doctors' surgeries, dentists etc.
- DAY 12 The redundant or unemployed
- DAY 13 Those stressed at work
- DAY 14 Those on low pay
- DAY 15 Higher education, Sussex TEC, university, research
- DAY 16 Farms, agriculture, forestry
- DAY 17 Horticulture, market gardening
- DAY 18 Utilities, gas, water, electricity, sewage and waste disposal
- DAY 19 Manual workers
- DAY 20 Road, rail and air transport, Gatwick
- DAY 21 Building and the construction industry
- DAY 22 Banking, insurance, finance
- DAY 23 Armed Forces and ancilliary organisations
- DAY 24 Employment agencies and job clubs
- DAY 25 Sussex ports and fishing
- DAY 26 Leisure industry, entertainment, hotels and pubs, leisure centres
- DAY 27 Emergency rescue, air, sea and lifeboats, coastguards
- DAY 28 Those who work at home
- DAY 29 The self-employed
- DAY 30 Press and media
- DAY 31 Non-stipendiary ministers, those in Industrial Mission, and all Christians in their place of work

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## MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS

### Prayers and Reflections on Ordinary Work Situations

(by Ken Jamieson)

#### NEWSAGENTS

I reflect on the stream of customers through the door of the local newsagent. Regulars busy on the way to work; shoppers; senior citizens casually pausing to chat and comment; children wanting sweets not newspapers; other customers eager for ‘newsy’ information from the ‘local rag’, or to pick up a copy of their interest magazine.

I pray for this stream of mixed humanity. I pray that the news and information they receive will be wholesome and positive. I pray for the shopkeepers, under pressure to sell soft pornographic magazines and hire out similar and violent videos, that they may be able to resist these pressures. I pray that they may have sustained good-natured interest in those they serve through the long hours of their working day.

Thank you, Lord, for their community service.

#### DOOR STEP CALLERS

I open the door. It may be the first or the umpteenth knock or ring at the door today, and I don’t recognise the caller.

They might be selling antiques – and offering good prices; or extolling the virtues and necessity of double-glazing or kitchen furniture. They might be unemployed persons with handicrafts to sell, or members of religious sects eager to give away the message so precious to themselves.

Lord God, help these callers to be considerate as, uninvited, they break into domestic situations. Help them to be genuine in which they say. May they operate with courtesy and be received with politeness. Make them sensitive to those they call on – especially the elderly and vulnerable.

If your peace dwells in the homes contacted, may that same peace spill over to them so that they may receive your blessing.

[The above are just two samples of a collection of 27 such reflections. The remainder of the material may be obtained from Ken Jamieson, 4 Ashley Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 5BP]

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You asked for my hands  
That you might use them for your purpose.  
I gave them for a moment then withdrew them  
For the work was hard.

You asked for my mouth  
To speak out against injustice.

I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.

You asked for my eyes  
To see the pain of poverty  
I closed them for I did not want to see

You asked for my life  
That you might work through me.  
I gave a small part that I might not get too involved.

Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you,  
Only when it is convenient to do so,  
Only in those places where it is safe to do so,  
And only with those who make it easy to do so.

Father, forgive me,  
Renew me  
Send me out  
As a usable instrument  
That I might take seriously  
The meaning of your cross.

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Lord, you placed me in the world  
To be its salt  
I was afraid of committing myself.  
Afraid of being stained by the world.  
I did not want to hear what 'they' might say.  
And my salt dissolved as if in water.  
Forgive me, Jesus.

Lord, you placed me in the world  
To be its light.  
I was afraid of the shadows  
Afraid of the poverty.  
I did not want to know other people  
And my light slowly faded away  
Forgive me, Jesus.

Lord, you placed me in the world  
To live in community.  
Thus you taught me to love  
To share in life,  
To struggle for bread and justice,  
Your truth incarnate in my life.  
So be it, Jesus.

\*\*\*\*\*

O God,  
Who am I now?  
Once, I was secure  
In familiar territory  
In my sense of belonging  
Unquestioning of  
The norms of my culture  
The assumptions build into my language  
The values shared by my society.

But now you have called me out and away from home  
And I do not know where you are leading.  
I am empty, unsure, uncomfortable.  
I have only a beckoning star to follow.

Journeying God,  
Pitch your tent with mine  
So that I may not become deterred  
By hardship, strangeness, doubt.  
Show me the movement I must make  
Toward a wealth not dependent on possessions  
Toward a wisdom not based on books  
Toward a strength not bolstered my might  
Toward a God not confined to heaven  
But scandalously earthed, poor, unrecognised...  
Help me to find myself  
As I walk in others' shoes.

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Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
For your mercy and truth's sake.

(The Prayer of St Francis)

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God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.

(Reinhold Niebuhr)

\*\*\*\*\*

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous;  
Teach me to serve Thee as Thou deservest;  
To give and not to count the cost,  
To fight and not to heed the wounds,  
To toil and not to seek for rest,  
To labour and not to ask for any reward,  
Save that of knowing that I do Thy will.

(St Ignatius Loyola)

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From the cowardice that dare not face new truth  
From the laziness that is content with half truth  
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,  
Good Lord, deliver me.

(A prayer from Kenya)

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### **Anger (Unemployment)**

Lord, I am angry.  
Forgive me.  
Lord, why me (once more)?  
But why not me?  
I'm no more important than the others;  
After all, it was just a job.  
But it was a livelihood.  
I was sad to let go.  
The job could be boring.  
It could be monotonous.  
But it could be fulfilling.  
It was worthwhile.  
What now, Lord?  
Show me the way forward.

(R Kempzell)

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### **BEYOND THE SHADOWS**

#### **Tiredness**

God of the moment,  
I often wonder,  
When I am stressed, or tired, or tense,

If it is all worth it.  
For what purpose is life like this?

There are many times  
When I have come in from work.  
Collapsed in the chair,  
And sighed with a tired and thankful sight,  
'Thank God the day is over!'  
Or times when I have come out of a stressful meeting,  
Or a tense conversation,  
And with all my heart  
Felt the relief when I screamed inside myself,  
'Thank the Almighty I got through that!'  
and meant it..  
With all my thankful heart meant it.

But looking back,  
I know of a deeper thanks:  
A thanks that is not just relief at being spared for another day,  
But a thanks that knows,  
Simply,  
That you know.  
You were in my seat at that meeting,  
That visit,  
That conversation,  
You were there with me,  
Supporting, caring, loving.

God of the moment,  
Let me look back again  
At all the moments where tension or tiredness  
Have hi-jacked the comfort of your presence,  
And see at that moment,  
You stood and waited for a better moment  
To tap me on the shoulder and let me know  
You have loved me throughout.

And now, with that Almighty Love,  
Let me look forward with certainty  
To where I can be loved,  
And supported,  
And cared for yet again  
By you,  
God of each moment.

(Roddie Hamilton c All Year Round (1996),  
The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland)

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**A Sunday Prayer**

Lord, as in this new week paper, metal and plastic will pass through my hands and processes, and 'phones and VDUs exchange messages and information – may I not forget that all things come from you, the Creator, Provider, Sustainer.

In the work of my hands may I glorify you.  
In the work of my lips may I praise you.  
In the thoughts of my mind may I adore you.  
In the longing of my spirit may I reach out to you.

Lord, for today and every working day, grant to my colleagues and myself – patience with one another; a true spirit of co-operation; opportunities to laugh as well as to work together; and above all a new ability to perceive that you are here among us.

\*\*\*\*\*

On Sunday I again heard about living out my faith – but I am afraid:  
Afraid that I don't know the Christian answers;  
Afraid that I get tongue-tied;  
Afraid of the workmate who pesters me.  
Please let your love grow in me – that perfect love which casts out all fear, and reconciled. Amen.

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Lord Jesus Christ, help me to think of you –  
As my colleague, my fellow worker, my supervisor, my partner.  
So I may learn to discover you in others with whom I work. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Forgive me, Father, when so often I think of my work as a curse – the interruptions of telephones, callers and urgent orders; the frustration of unanswered letters or machine breakdowns; the monotony of routine and repetitive duties.  
Forgive me, Father, but that's the way I feel. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Absenteeism is up; quality is down; production is slow; materials are delayed – and it's Monday morning!  
Lord God, you must know more about frustrations than I do, so I believe you understand my feelings now. Thank you for standing with me. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

Holy Spirit, you are active to reveal the truth – and in my daily work there is so much untruth and half-truth.

Exaggeration is common; expenses and accounts are distorted; deliberately misleading statements are made; promises are not intended to be kept.

Assist me not to turn from your standards; help me to bear the pain of compromise; guide me to know when to reveal the truth. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the life of his incarnate Son,  
God has shown the dignity of human labour.  
With this in mind I pray:  
Lord, bless my work.

I bless you, Lord, for bringing me to this day;  
I thank you for protecting my life and giving me what I need.  
Lord, bless my work.

You have called me to serve you responsibly in the world;  
Help me to play my part in building a just and Christian society.  
Lord, bless my work.

Stay with me and everyone I meet this day; let me give your joy and peace to the world.  
Lord, bless my work.

(Phil Aspinall)

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Loving Father, I\* am so readily tempted,  
So fearful, so prone to lose my courage.  
Sometimes I take the easy way out,  
Allowing evil to triumph,  
Shrinking from action,  
Because I don't hold firmly to my true beliefs.  
I complain about my own suffering,  
Which is as nothing  
In comparison with that of your Son, my Saviour.

Forgive me, Father,  
That it is my own waywardness, my own blindness,  
That prevents me from recognising you in every part of my life.  
Forgive me that I too often expect to find all the answers or to see [clearly\*\*]  
The way ahead.  
May I be more ready to learn from the Lord Jesus Christ to trust in your fatherly care.  
I ask it in his name. Amen.

(From 'Companion to the Lectionary, Volume 3', c. Neil Dixon, Epworth 1983)

\* Put into the first person singular by the editor

\*\* Added by editor