



**Faith Communities Honoring Workers  
On Labor Day and Beyond**

*Resources for Clergy, Churches & Small Groups*

Our denominations, ecumenical and interfaith partners have a long history and offer considerable resources to assist in our preaching, teaching and advocacy for worker justice. Fair wages, access to good work, and dignity of work are central themes. We are sharing these resources to encourage and inspire you to honor workers through education and worship, especially in the season of Labor Day.

**As Paul said in his letter to the Romans, “Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due.”**

*NRSV Romans 4:4*



August 1, 2016

Dear Friends,

As the nation honors the workers of our country this Labor Day, we at the Maine Council of Churches are reminded of the deep-seated conviction shared by our nine member denominations – that those who toil in blueberry fields, restaurants and all places of employment are entitled to dignity, respect and the opportunity to work in a safe environment. As Paul said in his letter to the Romans, “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.” (4:4)

In honor of this important secular holiday, the Maine Council of Churches has compiled a resource packet to help you and your congregation explore the theological basis for our denominations’ commitment to workers. It is also designed to help you study some of the important labor issues of our day in more depth. These include theft of wages through uncompensated overtime and paying workers less than minimum wage.

While this resource packet can be used at any time, the Council feels it is particularly pertinent this Labor Day because Maine voters will be asked in November whether to approve a referendum that would increase the minimum wage at a graduated level from \$7.50 to \$12 by 2020. It is a referendum that the Council wholeheartedly endorses.

Like you, our denominations firmly believe that Scripture and our faithful response, calls us to support a living wage for all workers and an end to the growing disparity between the rich and poor. We embrace the Deuteronomic mandate that equates workers’ wages with their very lives: “You shall not abuse a needy and destitute laborer... You must pay him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is needy and his life depends on it.” (24:14-15) And we believe that workers should be able to earn at least enough to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. We trust that these resources will serve as a beginning to further discernment of the role and responsibility of our communities of faith to better understand the realities of work in our state and nation.

We hope that you will let us know how you used this resource packet, and we pray that these materials will enrich and inspire your congregation’s life this Labor Day.

Faithfully,

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**Initiative Appearing on the Maine Ballot, November 2016**  
*Endorsed by the Maine Council of Churches*

*“An Act To Raise the Minimum Wage”* - This initiated bill raises the minimum wage to \$9.00 per hour in 2017 and by \$1.00 per hour each year after that until it is \$12.00 per hour in 2020. The minimum wage then increases at the same rate as the cost of living. The minimum wage for workers who receive tips increases to \$5.00 per hour in 2017 and then by \$1.00 per hour each year until it matches the minimum wage for all other workers, which occurs no sooner than 2024.

## **Scripture**

Psalm 94:16

Isaiah 58:10-12

Matthew 20.1-16 (Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard)

Matthew 22:36-40

Romans 4.4

## **Worship**

A prayer blessing work

<http://files.iwj.gethifi.com/resources/08LipPrayers-12.pdf>

Worship Toolkits for honoring workers on Labor Day weekend

Catholic:

[http://files.www.iwj.org/Labor\\_Day\\_Resource/2015\\_Labor\\_Day/Worker\\_in\\_the\\_Pulpit\\_Catholic\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://files.www.iwj.org/Labor_Day_Resource/2015_Labor_Day/Worker_in_the_Pulpit_Catholic_Toolkit.pdf)

Protestant:

[http://files.www.iwj.org/Labor\\_Day\\_Resource/2015\\_Labor\\_Day/Worker\\_in\\_the\\_Pulpit\\_Protestant\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://files.www.iwj.org/Labor_Day_Resource/2015_Labor_Day/Worker_in_the_Pulpit_Protestant_Toolkit.pdf)

Sermon preparation

[workerjustice.org/interfaith-resources/labor-day-resources/](http://workerjustice.org/interfaith-resources/labor-day-resources/)

## **Adult Education and Preparation for Advocacy**

What faith groups say about worker justice

<http://files.www.iwj.org/resources/WFaithGSay2011.pdf>

Minimum wage myths and facts

<http://files.www.iwj.org/iwj-resources/MinWagMyths.pdf>

“Worker Justice Matters” Study Guide

<http://files.www.iwj.org/resources/WJ-StudyGuide.pdf>

“Work With Dignity” Resource from Southern Maine Workers’ Center

<http://www.maineworkers.org/what-we-do/work-with-dignity/know-your-rights/>

DOL in Action: U.S. Department of Labor Blog

<https://blog.dol.gov/2015/09/24/dol-in-action-15/> Sep 24, 2015 - The many benefits of a living wage. U.S. Secretary of Labor... A common mission to protect workers... Nearly 70 leaders from the Episcopal Church ... making sure working people in the U.S. receive a fair day's pay... access to training resources to help protect the health and safety...

Comprehensive ecumenical resource on living wage (from the National Council of Churches’ 2004-2009 effort “Let Justice Roll”)

<http://ljrdev.mayfirst.org/sites/default/files/resources/LWResources.pdf>

Wage Theft in America: Why Millions of Americans Are Not Getting Paid--and what we can do about it. By Kim Bobo, Founding Director of Interfaith Worker Justice. The New Press, NY, 2011.

## **Denominational Resources**

Examples of what you can find by searching your denomination's online resources:

### **Episcopal Church**

Statements & Resolutions:

2003: "...called upon the government to establish a living wage including health benefits as the standard of compensation of all workers in the United States...It also affirmed the right of workers to organize, and insisted that the companies in which the Church invests or with which it contracts provide their employees with a living wage and serve as a model for ethical labor practices."

2013: "...urged Congress to pass legislation raising the federal minimum wage.."

2015: The Episcopal Church, at all levels, engage in and advocate for increasing the minimum wage to \$15.00 an hour or a living wage; including increasing the minimum wage for tipped employees to a level that also enables them to earn a living wage

<http://www.enej.org/resources.htm>

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

[http://www.wpusa.org/Interfaith-Council/Resources\\_Lutheran.pdf](http://www.wpusa.org/Interfaith-Council/Resources_Lutheran.pdf)

ELCA presiding bishop asks U.S. Senate to raise minimum wage - ELCA

### **Presbyterian Church USA**

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/hunger/nationaldevelopment/fair-wages-worker-justice/>

### **Religious Society of Friends**

<http://ljrdev.mayfirst.org/sites/default/files/resources/LWResources.pdf>

### **Roman Catholic**

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/labor-employment/index.cfm>

<http://catholiclabor.org/>

### **United Methodist Church**

<http://www.umc.org/what-we.../rights-of-workers>

### **Unitarian Universalist Association**

<http://www.uua.org/economic/livingwage>

### **United Church of Christ**

[www.ucc.org/justice\\_worker-justice\\_lowwage](http://www.ucc.org/justice_worker-justice_lowwage)

[www.ucc.org/justice\\_farmworkers](http://www.ucc.org/justice_farmworkers)

[www.ucc.org/justice\\_economic-justice](http://www.ucc.org/justice_economic-justice)

[www.ucc.org/justice\\_worker-justice](http://www.ucc.org/justice_worker-justice)