Honor the Sacredness of Work

Labor Day Weekend
ORGANIZING GUIDE

Interfaith Worker Justice
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Labor Day is a time not only to celebrate working people and their contributions to our society but to remember the struggles that workers endured to achieve the many benefits we now enjoy and take for granted: the eight-hour day, workers’ compensation, overtime pay, pensions, health and safety laws, Social Security, Medicare, vacation days, unemployment compensation, family medical leave, a restriction on child labor, a minimum wage and the right to organize for collective bargaining.

Labor Day is also a time to reflect on the current condition of workers in various industries, not only in the United States but throughout the world, who experience low wages, hazardous working conditions, discrimination, unfair treatment on the job, lack of health care benefits, the constant threat of unemployment and plant closure. Labor Day provides a unique opportunity for the religious community, the labor movement and other worker advocates to rediscover our common bonds: social justice, equality, the dignity and respect of all people, economic justice and fair treatment in the workplace. It calls us to recommit ourselves to work together in partnership to be a witness to actualizing these values.

Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ and the AFL-CIO invite leaders in both the religious community and the labor movement, congregations, workers, worker advocates and union members to participate in Labor in the Pulpits this Labor Day weekend to highlight the many ways in which faith, work and the labor movement are intertwined in bringing forth a new vision for justice in our local communities.

For more than a decade, tens of thousands of members of congregations around the country have listened to union leaders and activists speak about their experiences as people of faith and union members during Labor Day weekend worship services.

Through this program, congregations have been educated about the connections between faith and work, new friendships have been inspired between the religious community and unions; congregations have been presented with opportunities for acting on the social teachings of their faith groups; and union leaders and members have gained a deeper understanding of their faith in action.

For additional questions or concerns, contact Interfaith Worker Justice at 773-728-8400 or email info@iwj.org.
Each Labor Day, in cities across the country, interfaith and ecumenical organizations, local religious leaders and central labor councils work together to recruit union leaders and congregations to participate in Labor in the Pulpits. The program places union leaders, workers or worker advocates as guest speakers in congregations to speak out about their faith, work and the labor movement.

WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT...

Labor in the Pulpits provides congregants with a deeper understanding of the relationship between their faith and work. The program has served as a catalyst for closer cooperation between religion and labor in many cities and serves as a concrete step to establish ongoing relationships by unions and central labor councils with the local religious community.

Labor in the Pulpits demonstrates the way the religious community, unions and other worker advocates can work together to achieve social and economic justice and emphasizes the common values they share.

You can bring the program to your congregation or organize several events in your community by simply following the steps outlined in this booklet and utilizing the materials provided here and at www.iwj.org.

GETTING STARTED

1. Make the Decision and Set Goals

The central labor council has the ability to recruit speakers, assign someone to work with religious leaders on matching speakers to congregations, and arrange a training program. Get a commitment for the central labor council to offer leadership in this way.

Set a manageable goal of placing speakers in one, five, ten, or twenty congregations. Be realistic, while simultaneously accepting a challenge.

2. Recruit Congregations

Recruiting congregations to participate is like all recruiting: It is best done personally. Some tips on getting more congregations to participate:

- Send recruitment letters to clergy members
- Convene a meeting with key religious social action leaders -- for example, the social action director for the Catholic Diocese, the president of the Black Ministerial Association, staff for the Jewish Federation or the president of Church Women United. Be certain the religious leaders invited represent a variety of faith bodies: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and other groups that are significant in your community. At the planning meeting, review the basic outline of the program and ask everyone present to commit to recruiting a specific number of congregations. This kind of personal recruitment by a faith body is very effective.

- If the central labor council or union is initiating Labor in the Pulpits, a survey of where union members and central labor council delegates are members of congregations can be conducted, and this can be used as the basis for beginning outreach.

3. Recruit Speakers

Labor leaders who have spoken at services in past years have been pleased with the positive way they were received. Many were nervous ahead of time but found the experience rewarding.

Recruiting for the first year may be the hardest! The easiest way to recruit speakers is to ask each union involved with the program to agree to provide a specific number of speakers. You can also invite workers and worker advocates to speak at the event. Once speakers agree to participate, they should be encouraged to take part in a training session.
4. Match Congregation with Speakers

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

- Languages other than English: What language is needed for the service and which speaker is fluent in that language? If a speaker is not fluent in the dominant language of the congregation, can a translator be found?

- Faith tradition: Union leaders, workers and worker advocates tend to be most comfortable speaking in congregations with which they are familiar. Whenever possible, match a speaker with his or her own congregation.

- Geography: Avoid asking people to drive long distances unnecessarily.

5. Contact speakers and Congregations

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

Direct speakers and faith leaders to the IWJ resource center for more information and access to Faith-specific Labor Day resources.

6. Prepare the speakers

Many speakers will be unsure about what to say in their presentations. Consider hosting a training session for speakers led by the religious leaders who helped recruit congregations and the central labor council.

Provide speakers a copy of the Speaker Training Guide.

7. Promote your Program

Connect with Other Events around the Country

Register your event on the IWJ National Labor Day event page: http://bit.ly/LIPEventRegistration. IWJ will help promote your event along to its supporters in your area.

General Media

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

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

**Within the Congregation**

Ask religious leaders to start placing Labor in the Pulpits bulletin inserts in their bulletins or newsletters several weeks before Labor Day.

**Within the Central Labor Council and Local Union**

The central labor council or union partner should help publicize the program. Ask them to post information on their website and blogs and to send it to their Facebook list. If possible, list congregations where union members will be speaking along with the time of the services. Union members should be urged to attend these services.

**On Social Networks**

Utilize free tools on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and others to promote your event. Create a calendar listing on Facebook; promote actively and often on Twitter. IWJ will be more than happy to post your information on IWJ social network pages.

**8. Evaluate and follow-up with congregations**

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

- Evaluation: Find out worked and what didn’t work by conducting a survey. Seek suggestions and comments from all speakers and all religious leaders whose congregations participated in the program.
- Follow-up: Send speakers and congregation contact person thank-you notes. A meeting of union speakers and religious leaders should be held as soon after the event as possible to evaluate the experience and make plans for next Labor Day.

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

**PROMOTIONAL CHECKLIST:**

- Register your event on the IWJ website.
- Send the bulletin inserts and news announcement to the congregations a few weeks before Labor Day.
- If you have questions about what others around the nation are doing or want to share what you are doing, check the IWJ website at www.iwj.org for updates and resources.
- Send a news release for the religious affairs pages of local newspapers.
- Send the news release to area religious newspapers or newsletters, including denominational papers.
- Place announcements in the central labor council newsletter and local union newsletters.
- Announce Labor in the Pulpits at central labor council meetings.
SAMPLE SPEAKERS’ WORKSHOP AGENDA

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

8:30
• Welcome
• Prayer
• Introductions

8:40
• Overview
• Labor Day Speakers Program
  background and overview
• Congregation Assignments
• Speakers’ Packet walk-through

9:00
• Speaking in Congregations
• What’s Important?
• What to Talk About:
  Reflection on scriptures
  Personal stories
  Individual questions, concerns, etc.

10:00
• Adjournment

CHECKLIST FOR SPEAKERS

1. Call the pastor/rabbi/imam as soon as you are assigned. Ask him/her:
   • What time does the service start?
   • At what point in the service will I be speaking, and how long a talk is appropriate?
   • How do I get there?

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

3. Final reminders for giving your presentation:
   • Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.
   • Be brief.
   • Be prepared.
   • Talk about your own experiences. It is far more important to believe what you are saying than to be eloquent.

4. Once you have finished:
   • Take a deep breath and smile!
   • Greet people after the service. This is a great opportunity to chat informally with interested people.

Cut out and hand this sample introduction to the pastor/rabbi/imam:

Labor Day is an opportunity to recognize and remember God’s commitment to justice. We have with us today ________________________ who will speak to us about faith, work and the struggles of working people to be treated with dignity. ________________________ is a member of ________________________________.
Labour in the Pulpits

Introduction and thanks to the congregation

Reason for speaking

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

Tie Labor Day to the lectionary, other Biblical readings, or the appropriate faith group statement on the right to organize.

Check www.iwj.org for this year’s lectionary.

Describe the importance of unions today in light of a current situation.

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

1. Decline of earnings.
2. Loss of job security.
3. Downsizing and the increasing loss of jobs or heavier work burdens.
4. Increasing need for multiple breadwinners in a family just to maintain the current standard of living.
5. Growing disparity of wealth.
6. The union as the traditional means of protecting workers’ rights.

Unions are responsible for benefits we often take for granted, such as the eight-hour day, the end of child labor, the public school system and pensions.

Emphasize the importance of the religious community and unions working together.

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

Some Do’s and Don’ts

Please Do:

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

Please Do Not:

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

Deuteronomy 15:11 Open your hand to the poor and needy.
Deuteronomy 24:14-15 Don’t withhold wages of poor and needy laborers, including those of “aliens.”
Proverbs 21:13 Don’t close your ears to the cry of the poor.
Isaiah 32:17 Justice will bring peace.
Jeremiah 22:13 Woe to him who makes neighbors work for nothing and does not give them their wages.
Amos 5:22-24 Let justice flow like a stream.
Micha 6:8 God requires us to do justice, love and mercy walk humbly.
John 3:16-18 Love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.
Romans 12:26 If one member suffers, all suffer.
I Corinthians 3:6-9 Each will receive wages according to the labor of each.
James 5:4 The wages of Laborers kept back by fraud cry out.
II Timothy 2:6 The farmer that labors must receive the first rewards.
II Timothy 6:18-19 Rich people are to be generous and ready to share.
Thank you for participating in the Labor in the Pulpits program. Please take a few moments to fill out this evaluation. Your comments will help us make improvements for next year.

Please evaluate the following (1=poor, 5=great)

- The workshop
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- Presentation
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- The speaker’s guide
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- Logistics information
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- Overall process
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5

How could the program be improved?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Would you consider speaking again next year?

☐ Please add my name to the mailing list.
☐ Please add my name to speak next year.
☐ Please send me information about the Faith and Work Study Guide.

Name

Congregation

Address

City/State/ZIP

Please Return To:

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