



For Those Who Labor

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As we approach Labor Day, we pause from our own work and honor those who have labored on our behalf. This past year and a half have taken a toll on us all, and exhaustion is our ever-present companion. Because of the pandemic, many people have lost their ability to work, due to illness or unemployment. Though some of us have converted our work to a virtual platform, that isn't practical for everyone. As a result, some have seen their life's work scuttled by the pandemic because we shouldn't gather, sing, perform, dine, play, or travel together. Labor Day takes on special meaning when we can't labor in a way that fulfills us.

Far too many people labor under extreme conditions because they have no choice. Poverty and labor trafficking work in tandem to undermine fair employment, leaving people vulnerable to abuse. In the language of our Matthew 25 vision, they are left naked, at risk and unable to provide for themselves. Reading the Janesville Gazette article linked in Fresh Impressions today will give you a glimpse into the labor trafficking that happens in our own communities. Thank you, good Presbytery, for the ways in which you helped these particular victims begin their recovery process!

So, we pray today for those who labor. This prayer comes from a wonderful collection of prayers compiled by the Council for World Mission in *From the Ends of the World: Prayers in Defiance of Empire*.

For Those Who Labor

For those who labor, twelve hours with little rest and meager pay, whose children are left on their own to fend for themselves,

For those who labor, without promise of security for tomorrow, whose sweat makes our lives comfortable,

For those who labor for the rich and are treated without respect, without safety, without basic rights,

Sharanam Sharanam Sharanam

For those who labor in pain,

Lord, hear our prayer as we take refuge in you.

The word "sharanam" is Sanskrit, meaning to surrender to or take refuge in that which is the creator of all. It contemplates a release of all burdens – the heavy yoke – so that we might be embraced and protected. Though the word is not commonplace in our Christian tradition, the meaning behind it is. For all of you who are exhausted, I pray you will know "sharanam" and the sustaining refuge, rest, and peace found in our Lord. Have a blessed Labor Day!