

Over Labor Day weekend, I invite you to reflect on what our faith teaches about the sacred worth of all workers. God calls us to build a society that values all people equally, in which no social or economic system can take away the unalienable rights given to us by God. Tragically, here in the United States the income gap between the wealthiest and poorest continues to grow, resulting in many hard-working families living below the poverty line.

In their September, 2018 meeting, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board newly endorsed Worker Driven Social Responsibility Principles. The principles include: Full civil, political and economic rights for women and men of all races; abolition of forced labor, human trafficking, and the exploitation of children; employment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work; the rights of workers to organize, and to share in workplace decisions and productivity growth; protection from dangerous working conditions, with time and benefits to enable full family life.

Over this holiday weekend I hope you will lead your congregation to reflect on how we as Presbyterians are called to end the exploitation of workers. Many Presbyterian congregations are proud to partner with Arise Chicago, a 28 year-old interfaith workers-rights organization. Arise Chicago teaches workers their rights, builds leadership skills, and advocates for public policy changes – all of which transforms lives and communities. This weekend, in partnership with the Chicago Federation of Labor, Arise Chicago has speakers in over 100 services, lifting up the sacred link between work and faith.

As a part of our Labor Day reflection, let us remember to turn away from the idolatry of wealth that can fool us into believing that we are self-sufficient. Instead, let us embrace the truth that we are all connected to one another. We cannot live in a world without auto mechanics, shoe salespersons, teachers, hotel workers, grocery store clerks, nurses, etc. I invite you to honor the dignity of workers whom you encounter in your daily interactions and reflect on how each of us, through our work, contribute to the common good of humanity. Our interconnectedness gives us a lot to celebrate together! Happy Labor Day!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicky Curtiss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Vicky" on top and "Curtiss" on the line below it.

Rev. Vicky Curtiss
Associate Pastor for Mission
Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago