

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Whiterocks

Dear St. Elizabeth's Family,

September 3, 2021

It's a holiday weekend, and I'd like to ask, What is Labor Day exactly? Along with Memorial Day (when we remember our beloved departed, especially veterans), it's one of the bookends of summer. By now the Fourth of July is well past, and the kids are all back in school. Labor Day signals that the carefree days of being outside are nearly finished; winter is on its way.

Labor Day is also a time to acknowledge the importance of work done well and to show appreciation for the people who do it. With all the wildfires in the West, we've been praying every week for our firefighters. During the pandemic it's become clear how much we rely on nurses and teachers and other essential workers. Sadly, a lot of important work in our homes still lacks respect: caring for the young and old, cooking and cleaning and grocery shopping. Women who have jobs outside their homes (usually for lower pay than men) tend to do most of the domestic work as well. Shouldn't they be honored on Labor Day?

When I grew up in Iowa, this holiday was really a celebration of the middle class. People there had come to expect a living wage, safe working conditions and a forty-hour week, the chance to own a home and better opportunities for their kids. What had been forgotten was that many of these advances were won by workers standing together against the wealthy people who profited from their labor. And no one mentioned the systemic racism that cut off people of color from the opportunities that whites like me took for granted.

What we rarely think about is the religious significance of Labor Day. "Six days you shall labor," the Ten Commandments tell us, "but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." (*Exodus 20:9*) The message seems to be: Work hard, but depend on the Lord. We also hear that in the Psalms: "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but stands fast for ever." (*Psalms 125:1*)

Paul expands on that message in his letters. "Whatever you do, work heartily," he says, "as for the Lord and not for men... You are serving the Lord Christ." (*Colossians 3:23*) He emphasizes that each of us has been given spiritual gifts, which should be used for "building up the body of Christ." (*Ephesians 5:12*) If we get distracted and fail to use our God-given gifts, not only are we squandering our inheritance, but we're letting down the community. "We, who are many," Paul says, "are one body in Christ." (*Romans 12:5*)

On Labor Day we're celebrating the gifts God has given each of us to do work in the world, and the greatest gift of all: being gathered by Jesus into the body of Christ. With that blessing comes the responsibility to join together to fight injustice and racism, as we make God's kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven. There's a lot to celebrate and plenty more work to do. Happy Labor Day!

Michael+

Gathering in Our Hearts

Prayer for Grace

Lord God, Almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages *You can read more by looking up the citations in the message in your Bible, using the Table of Contents at the front of the book.*

from Psalm 51

Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall show forth your praise.
Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Reflection

Each day the sun rises on people who do not see it as a bright hope but as a sign their daily struggle has begun again. People who do not have enough to eat. Families living on the thinnest of margins. Women and men caught in addiction. Inmates in prisons around the world. In comparison to these brothers and sisters, I live a life of wealth and privilege. Turn the eyes of my faith toward those who seek to share the light with me, Great Spirit, and let me see what I can do to help. Let that help be given with both compassion and respect. Let the support I offer be sustainable for me, let it change lives and set spirits free, let it be a commitment on which those in need may rely. Each day the sun rises: I pray it will never set before I have done all that I can to make it shine brightly on us all.

Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston, Choctaw nation

Remember those among us who are in need of prayer. We pray for rain, for safety from wildfires, and for the firefighters who protect us. In our church family, we remember Julia, Tiarance, Chris, Tony, Leanna, Judy, Connie, Lyn, John, Sterling, Kaysen, Christopher, Eve, Logan, LeeRoy, Julia, Arick, Leo, Hudson, SueAnn, Redrock, Dave & Nora, Tyler, Rodricka, Ina Jane, Peggy and Reuban, and for those who have died. We pray for first responders and medical workers, those from our reservation serving in the Armed Forces and for all veterans. We say the **Lord's Prayer** out loud.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

*If you can, join us for in-person worship at St. Elizabeth's on Sundays at 10:00 am.
You can also look for prayers and a spiritual message on Michael Carney's Facebook page.
These short services are recorded every Sunday morning and can be viewed at any time.*