

Along the Way 30 August 2019
The Work of Our Hands

This weekend we celebrate Labor Day. Most of us know that Labor Day came about because workers felt they were spending too many hours and days on the job. In the 1830s, workers were putting in 70-hour weeks on average. Thanks to union organizers, we now have a shorter eight-hour work day and a five-day work week. Not everyone, of course.

There are many jobs where the five-day work week and eight-hour day do not apply. Mothers, fathers, farmers, teachers, service providers, first responders and many others plus . . . pastors.

When I was growing up, the worst thing you could say about a person, the worst derogatory description of a person, was to call them *lazy*. I worked hard to avoid this moniker, maybe too hard sometimes. But my parents also instilled in me a love of work. There is so much joy to be experienced after a completed task. A garden weeded, a project completed, a house built, a class taught, a book finished, a child fed and so much more. We celebrate that joy this weekend, the gift of meaningful work.

Singer Carrie Newcomer writes about her work as a singer and canning tomatoes and pears in a song titled, *The Work of Our Hands*:

“I make something barely there, music is a little more than air
So now every year I put by tomatoes and pears
Boil the lids and wipe the lip with a calloused fingertip
And I swear by the winter ground, I'll open one and pass the thing around
Let the light catch the jar, ever gold as a falling star
So humble and physical, it's only love made visible
They'll understand, it's just the work of our hands.”

May we take time this weekend to enjoy the sacred work we do with our hands, “love made visible.” And know that we are a part of something meaningful. May we see that significance in each other. Finally, remember to say to someone: “Thank you for the work that you do. I trust that you are doing your best to make the world a better place.”

Paula Northwood