



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

In gratitude to all workers, especially essential workers during these uncertain times
ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message
Sept. 4, 2020

On Labor Day, we pay tribute to those whose work contributes to our nation's social and economic well-being. It's not one that I've marked with a message before, yet this year is different. The impact of [the] COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the heroics and faithfulness of the many we now know to be essential workers.

While all workers are important, during this pandemic we give special thanks, this Labor Day, for those workers who, despite challenges and dangers to their own health, plant and harvest and deliver our food, keep store shelves stocked with essentials, first responders and those who nurture and teach our children and care for the sick.

In honor of their contributions to our country's well-being, they deserve our support and accompaniment so that they can do their jobs safely, with dignity and respect.

Our church's social teaching reminds us that work is the way we serve God and our neighbor. The ELCA social statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* states: "In Genesis, work is to be a means through which basic needs might be met, as human beings 'till and keep' the garden in which God has placed them. Work is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means for sustaining humans and the rest of creation."

Dear church, we need to acknowledge the extra labors these last months have required in what is turning out to be a marathon with a long way to go. The multiple hardships of this year have touched every one of us. This pandemic has also revealed long-held racial and economic injustices that deprive people of equal pay for sufficient and sustainable livelihoods. As church together, God calls us to accompany our neighbors who have lost their livelihoods, their income, supporting our siblings through prayer, service and advocacy.

Labor Day, like many holidays, marks the passage of time. The change of weather, return to school, the end of the growing season. It also marks our eighth month of collectively facing the challenges of this time. As you take time to observe this year's Labor Day, may you find time to rest and renew yourselves for the work ahead. As is stated in this church's economic life social statement, "Our vocation is to seek what is good for people and the rest of creation in ways that glorify God and anticipate God's promised future."