

# Commissioning and Thankfulness



When someone gets a new job or is promoted it is something to be thankful for and perhaps to acknowledge as a whole church. Furthermore, a new job is not just a source of provision; it is an opportunity for mission and ministry so, in the same way that one would pray for a new pastor, it is hugely encouraging to commission someone for their new job or their new role.

Ideally, prayers might have three main thrusts:

- Reflect an understanding of the job to be done and how it may contribute positively to others, the place it will be done and the skills required.
- Reflect the conviction that the Christian goes into the workplace as a representative of the Lord Jesus carrying his commission and confident in his promise to be 'with' his disciples 'to the very end of the age' (Matthew 28:19–20).
- Reflect the conviction that the Christian goes into the workplace as the individual representative of your church. Thank God that he has given your community an opportunity to make an impact in that place.

## Opportunities for Prayer

### **After the offering**

Most churches do this every week so you don't have to change anything in a service to begin to enrich people's understanding of God's generosity and the variety of ways he may bless his people in, at and through work, and other mechanisms of provision. Across a year you could probably teach and pray a whole theology of work, divine provision, money and generosity, just through offertory prayers. Themes might include:

- Gratitude for work.
- Gratitude for being created with skills.
- Recognition of the need for stewardship.
- Recognition of God as the source of money.
- Gratitude for money.
- Gratitude for the privilege of being able to give.
- Gratitude for our workplaces, our bosses and colleagues.

## General prayer

The simplest way to build faith-consciousness is to include a reference to the world of work and school within general prayers. Take, for example, a confessional prayer like:

*'Lord, we bring to you our relationships – our relationships at home, our relationships with neighbours, our relationships at work or at school. Show us where we have failed to love as you would have us love.'*

The simple addition of seven words 'our relationships at work or at school' instantly transforms this prayer into one that encourages the whole congregation to recognise that their life cannot be compartmentalised, that God is interested in the 9 to 5. It only takes another three seconds to say!

## Prayer and the rhythm of the non-agricultural year

Plough Sunday, Rogation Sunday and harvest were key moments in the agricultural year that in a rural community everyone shared. In a mixed economy, however, there are still moments we all share. So, for example, for the bulk of the population the tax year begins in the first week of April, so the first Sunday of April might be a good moment to ask for God's blessing on the work of our hands in the coming year. Similarly, May Day retains some of its historic connection with work and therefore might be a natural moment to give thanks for our participation in God's mission through work.

There is no obvious equivalent to Plough Sunday but it might still be marked as Technology Sunday, as a moment when we thank God for the liberating impact of technology on our lives and its helpfulness in limiting drudgery and producing goods and services that contribute to human flourishing to the glory of God.

Indeed, many of the advances in the widespread use of technology have emerged out of a biblical understanding of work that sought to limit the drudgery imposed on people and animals. It's true of the development of the watermill – long known in the East – but only brought into widespread use by Benedictines seeking to reduce toil. It's true also of the clock, of the iron horseshoe, of the crank . . .

## Prayer and pressure points

Just as Plough Sunday and Rogation Sunday and harvest represented key moments in the agricultural cycle – not least in terms of effort – so a church can connect its prayer for different people into the rhythm and pressure points of their working year – sheep farmers in lambing season, accountants at the end of the tax year, kids at exam time, teachers at the beginning and end of terms, shop assistants during sales. An example calendar is laid out on page <X>. There is a downloadable version on the HOPE and LICC websites and you can ask people in the church to fill it in and then perhaps display it.

## Praying blessing @ work

On the completion of each day's work of creation in Genesis 1 – 2 God blessed the living creatures he had made, bidding them increase and multiply and fill the earth. Blessing is powerful – our words matter! How can we bless our work?

Ask the congregation for aspects of their work that they would want to bless. Help them explore why it would be good to bless each aspect.

Possible areas:

- The privilege of having work.
- Relationships at work.
- The prosperity of the organisation for whom we work.
- Management and decision making.
- Use of resources.
- The 'output' of our hands and minds.
- The godly aspects of the culture and values of the organisation.
- Evangelism.

In groups of three or four ask them to construct a short prayer (one or two sentences) to bless one aspect of work. Record and group these.

As a congregation, pray blessing on work as different people stand up and read out their short prayers.

Type up the prayer of blessing to be circulated for future use.

## An example prayer of blessing

### Thankfulness

*Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits. We bless You, Lord, for your gift of work – for the opportunity to co-labour with you and to provide for our families and communities.*

### Output

*We bless the creativity and skills you have given which enable us to make goods and deliver services that others need.*

### Relationships

*We bless every contact with another person, be they colleague, customer or supplier. We bless those we meet, speak to or email, that they may experience something of your love through us.*