

God's Work in Our Hands: Employment, Community and Christian Vocation
(General Assembly 1995)

This paper affirms that work, paid and unpaid, is an integral part of the believer's response to God's call, the call to vocation in God's world. Good work should reflect the principles of justice on which the church's witness is based, and is described as full, fair, participatory, and sustaining.

It is important here that we consider two of Jesus' parables: the talents and the vineyard laborers. (Matt. 25:14-30) teaches that God expects every human to make the most productive possible use of every gift entrusted to our hands. Therefore, energetic, good work is to be expected from every human being according to her or his capacity. The other (Matt. 20:1-16) teaches us that God rewards laborers with gracious generosity, not with careful calculations of so-much-reward for so-much-work. In the Realm of God, we do not get merely what we deserve. From God we have already received more than we deserve. In our economic exchanges, both the justice and the love in these teachings must be at the center of a Christian ethic of work.

World of Hurt, Word of Life: Renewing God's Communion in the Work of Economic Reconstruction
(General Assembly 2012)

This report grew out of concern for the economic crisis by the last General Assembly. It reflects a sense of urgency for the unemployed combined with a resistance to the distorted values that have kept our government and society from improving this problem more directly. It also reflects the awareness that many of us share, that it is hard to sustain a "middle class church" when the middle class is under great financial pressure.

In the current severe economic recession and faltering recovery, we see the consequences of a long developing moral crisis in our culture. A distorted value system has taken hold, spreading reckless consumerism, deep insecurity, and extreme inequalities across America. These are not the values of Christianity or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but they have infiltrated the practice of Christianity in America along with other social life. These values subvert faithful observance; they weaken our communion with family, neighbor, workers, and a world in need. . .

To renew our communion with families and children, the 220th General Assembly (2012) encourages the church's support for policies that strengthen families, support children's development, provide comfort to the elderly, and help to insulate decisions about family formation and child-bearing from undue economic stress. Concerned with the impact of the current crisis on families, especially low-income families, the 220th General Assembly (2012) supports policies that:

- (1) Protect a healthy work-family balance. These include such policies as paid parental leave; universal high-quality childcare and early childhood education; mandatory sick-pay; and mandatory flex-time alternatives to meet family care responsibilities.

In 1969, a typical middle income, middle American family with two children and a husband-wife couple, would have been working an equivalent of 5,420 hours. Twenty years later, that family is putting in an extra 1,068 hours of work for a total of 6,488 hours.

In 1993, unemployment was about 6.3 percent

1992, average weekly wages = \$252, down from 1980 when adjusted for inflation.

1992 – 18% of US workers at poverty level wages.

Isaiah writes, “They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well” (Isa. 65: 21–23).