

CWS Tools

Congregational Packet



A Blessing of the CWS Tools	2
A Litany to Pray over the Gift of Tools	2
Invitation to the Offering	2
Gospel Responsive Reading	3
A Litany for a CWS Tools Sunday	3
Story: Jemal Loves His Bees	4
Moment for Mission: Haiti	5
Bee the Change Activity	6

A BLESSING OF THE CWS TOOLS

Gracious God, thank you for the abundant blessings you have given us this day. Through your generosity, we can share our blessings with those who need tools to build new opportunities for their families. Today, we ask a special blessing over the shovels and plows, sewing machines and looms, hammers and nails and other tools being sent to our neighbors around the world. Gracious God, bless these tools, that they might bring hope to those who need it. Bless those who will receive these tools. Let them know your love through these gifts. Amen.

A LITANY TO PRAY OVER THE GIFT OF TOOLS

LEADER: God created the earth as a home for the people God loves.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools help build homes where families can show their love.

LEADER: God told Noah to build the ark as a place of safety during the flood.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools build safe, sturdy homes for families affected by natural disaster.

LEADER: Even in exile, God told God's people to build homes and plant gardens.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools be a help to refugees building new lives.

LEADER: God's beloved people built the Temple as a sign to the world of their devotion to God.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools build homes where families can devote themselves to caring for one another.

LEADER: The Son of God, Jesus, was born and raised up by a carpenter.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools provide meaningful livelihoods to those who use them.

LEADER: The child Jesus remained in the Temple three days, learning from the teachers there.

PEOPLE: May our gift of tools give children a safe home in which to study and learn and grow.

LEADER: We offer these gifts, these tools, in Jesus' name. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We worship a God who gives generously and abundantly. God has given us so many blessings. The food we eat, the friends and family we cherish, and the precious gift of God's love for us. When that love abides in us, we are called to help our neighbors have the tools they need to create a better life for their families. Through this special offering for Church World Service Tools, we join other people of faith to make God's love known to our neighbors who might feel forgotten—the hurting and the lonely. Our gifts, together, provide hope to our neighbors all over the world. Please give generously.



GOSPEL RESPONSIVE READING

Matthew 25:35-40 (NRSV)

LEADER: For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

PEOPLE: Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?"

WOMEN: And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?

MEN: And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?

LEADER: And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

A LITANY FOR A CWS TOOLS SUNDAY

LEADER: We have come together today to offer our gifts of CWS Tools to be distributed by Church World Service to places where people need tools to build a better life for themselves. As we dedicate these gifts, let us join in prayer.

PEOPLE: God of compassion, hear our prayer.

LEADER: God of new beginnings, you are with our neighbors as they are building new opportunities for their families.

PEOPLE: May my gift of tools provide families hope for their future.

LEADER: God of promises, you remind us again and again that you are present with your people.

PEOPLE: God is good to all and has compassion for all creation.

LEADER: Jesus said, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

PEOPLE: May my gift of tools give hope and promise to our neighbors building new lives.

LEADER: Gracious God, bless these tools, that they might bring hope to those who need it. Bless those who will receive these tools. Let them know your love through these gifts.

PEOPLE: May the tools we offer today contribute to this sacred work and may those who receive these gifts sense your loving kindness and find their hope renewed.

ALL: Amen.



STORY: JEMAL LOVES HIS BEES!

For most people, a bee is just a striped little bug that pollinates our world and gives us honey. For many, the sight of a bee might elicit fear and the desire to run away. For beekeepers who have a front-row view of the day-to-day lives of bees, however, bees are so much more. They are wondrous and intelligent societies of tiny creatures that play a significant role in supporting our own communities.

This is what we learned from beekeeper Jemal when we visited his home in rural western Georgia. Jemal is part of a small town known as Ghorjomi, which has depended on agriculture for hundreds of years. Unfortunately, due to the rapidly changing environment and harmful activities like deforestation, continuing his way of life has become more and more difficult. Because of this, many of Jemal's neighbors have chosen to migrate to different cities to find employment.



Like his neighbors, Jemal was worried about what the longer winters and drier summers would mean for him and his family. Thankfully, when he was connected to CWS through our local partner RCDA, Jemal received hives full of buzzing new friends that became his solution. Jemal's past experience in beekeeping, and the additional training he received through the program, has made him an excellent and passionate beekeeper.

Beekeeping is an ideal practice for someone like Jemal because it's much cheaper than caring for livestock and can resist the effects of climate change. By selling the honey from his hives, Jemal has been able to bridge the gap in his agriculture-based income. He explained, "we just need a very small amount of help to be able to stay here and not have to leave to find work elsewhere."



While Jemal talked about his bees, he glowed with excitement. He told us that he loves to observe the behaviors of the hives and finds it interesting that they "have their own laws and regulations." He added, "it's difficult to explain, but these are natural creatures that give us both spiritual and economic support."

During our conversation, a mini Jemal, his son, remained glued to his dad. Jemal told us that they have a good friendship and that he hopes to pass on the practice of beekeeping to his son one day. He shared, "one who knows how to look after bees will never quit. It's a life-long devotion." Thanks to this life-long support, Jemal and his family can look to the future with peace, knowing that his family can stay in their beloved home for as long as they'd like.

MOMENT FOR MISSION: HAITI

Neighborhood.

When we think of our neighborhood, we think of block parties, garage sales, pool parties and children playing in front lawns. We may even think of homeowners associations.

But did you ever think that a neighborhood could save a life?

You made it happen in Haiti.

In a number of small towns in Haiti, your support helps cooperatives. These are groups of neighbors and community members who unite to accomplish together what none of them could do alone. They work on shared services, like improving roads and building bakeries. More importantly, these cooperatives become banking units that give out low-interest loans to members.

Without the cooperatives, families in need have to borrow money from wealthy landowners who charge huge interest rates. Think about the interest rate that you have on your mortgage. Or your car loan. How much is it? In Haiti, some of these rates were as high as 25 percent.

It was one of these loans that saved a life.

Marcel is a member of a cooperative called KABM. When his pregnant wife went into labor, the couple traveled to a nearby town for the birth. They couldn't afford to pay for the medical services, so they were being transferred from place to place without care. Marcel's wife had complications while she was in labor, and she needed urgent care.

Marcel called KABM, and they gave him a low-interest loan to help cover the costs of the care his wife needed. When he was telling this story, Marcel said, "It saved her life, it saved our family, and without her I wouldn't have been able to care for our kids."

We're told in the Gospel of Matthew: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and by supporting KABM, you helped ensure that Marcel could obtain the same support that you would want for your own family in that situation.











When that family needed help, and they needed it now, you were there. You are there when a cooperative builds a new school to empower the next generation. You were there when a vegetable nursery that a cooperative built had to be expanded three times to keep up with its flourishing production. You are with the people in small towns across Haiti's Northwest Department as THEY build the future that they deserve.

Thanks for being a good neighbor.



BEE THE CHANGE ACTIVITY

How can the members of your congregation "Bee the change"? All of us can approach our lives as ministry because we all have special talents and gifts we can share with others. Print copies of this page and cut out the cards. Ask your congregation to share how they are helping to make the world a better place. Display these "Bee the Change" testimonies on a bulletin board or another visible location in your church.

 <p>HOW WILL YOU BEE THE CHANGE?</p>  	 <p>HOW WILL YOU BEE THE CHANGE?</p>  
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