Prayers of Commissioning for Retirees

This service of commissioning is to be used as a response to the Word on a standard Lord's Day service. It has many elements that can be contextualized to fit in your church with your retirees. Sharing of retirement plans might work in a smaller church, but be too cumbersome in a large congregation. You may or may not want to offer a small gift. Use this as a template for ways you might choose to honor your retirees and pray a blessing over them in the next phase of God's work in their lives.

Statement of Purpose
(spoken to the congregation) In the fullness of God's creation, we recognize Christ's work in the world through God's people. Throughout Scripture we see God calling the people to work, gifting people to work, delighting in the people's work and then calling them to rest from their labors. Today we recognize those who are transitioning away from one kind of work, and into whatever work God has next in store for them - at home, with family, with volunteering, travel, and rest.

Please come forward as I call your name (OPTIONAL)

Recognition of the Retirees
Each of these faithful servants before you have worked hard. And by God's grace, they will continue to work in many different ways. But we want to take this opportunity to recognize Christ's faithfulness to them in their careers - through successes and struggles, promotions and layoffs, earning and giving. And so as a reminder of Christ's faithfulness, and continued call in this new phase of their working journey, we offer this small gift to mark this milestone in gratitude.
Each recent retiree shall receive a small gift such as a wall cross, a framed word art bible verse, etc.

Sharing of Retirement Plans
(spoken to the congregation) As we gather around these recent retirees, we want to celebrate with them: the work that is done, and the work that is yet to come.

(spoken to the retirees) And so I'm going to ask each of you to share a little bit of what you're up to with the congregation. Please share your name, what you have retired from, what you're up to in your retirement, and how we can pray for you in the coming months.

> *Having been given advanced warning, each retiree is invited to the lectern to share their name, what they are retiring from, what they plan to do in their retirement, and a prayer request. Each should be told to give one-sentence answers at most. Pastoral flexibility should be taken in adapting these questions so as not to corner someone into feeling like they need to share details they are not comfortable sharing with the community: be that medical reasons for an early retirement, being fired as a reason for retirement, or other potentially embarrassing situation. This is a time of celebration, not embarrassment.*

Commissioning Litany

Leader: All of God's children are given gifts in Christ.

People: We are called to use those gifts for Christ's work in the world.

Leader: All of God's children have been given healthy rhythms of work and rest.

People: God calls us to enter into seasons of Sabbath

Leader: As these, God's people enter into new means of work in your kingdom,

People: We praise God for each of these recent retirees.

Leader: And so we give thanks to the Lord for each of Christ's servants here. Having worked in their professional lives, they now find themselves at this transition into retirement.

People: We bear witness to good work done and we eagerly await Christ's new call in their lives.

Leader: We ask for Christ's blessings on each of them, and on their families in the transition. We pray for their former coworkers, bosses, clients, and partners in their work as they adjust to not having them. We pray for the community organizations and retirement jobs that are gaining the gift of these retirees. And we lift up this faith community as we acknowledge Christ's grace at work in our friends. Therefore, let us pray:

All: Eternal God, creator of the universe, maker of all people, caretaker of creation, grower of our lives, and giver of all grace, we thank you for each of these disciples who have heeded your call.

We are grateful for the new call on their lives to enter a season of retirement, and ask for faithfulness in seeking your call for each of us.

May this season be fruitful, as it offers new opportunities to love and serve you.
May this season be life-giving, as it offers a new pace and way of being.
May this season be blessed, as it offers new prospects and chances to care for your people.
May this season bring glory to your holy name in which we pray. Amen.

Congregational Song –

We Are God's Workers

Lyrics by Greg Steible 2023
To the tune of We Are Forgiven, Hal H. Hopson 1995 (Glory to God #447)

We are God's people,
We are God's workers;
Christ's holy hands,
Christ's holy feet.
We are God's workers,
Called for Christ's Glory.
Thanks be to God,
Thanks be to God!

Other appropriate songs for the occasion may be sung, such as:

How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord, Fred Pratt Green 1981 (Glory to God #432)
God's Glory Fills the Heavens, Carl P. Daw Jr. 1982 (Glory to God #690)
Lord of All Hopefulness, Jan Stuther 1931 (Glory to God #683)

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