



Justice Advocacy:

A Resource for Churches

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God, grant us the serenity
to accept the things we cannot change,
the courage to change the things we can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

A Product of the Disciples Center for Public Witness





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Summary

What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

- *Micah 6:8*

How do we define justice advocacy?

It is a commitment as a church to organize people and resources in order to best live out Jesus' example of working against the dominant powers that sustain oppression, to go to the margins and be in community with whoever is there, and to support all others who have made similar commitments.

What is the purpose of this book?

It strives to inspire local church efforts to advocate for justice. Here in this written space, inspire your heart and embrace your visions. Together we discern the possible actions we can take individually and together in service of justice.

Our society needs churches to reflect on our capacity as religious and civic institutions to defend those on the margins. For many people who are left behind, the churches are the last lines of defense. This guide offers no magic solutions; rather we do two things:

- We try to locate and employ timeless truths about justice.
- We try to write into and brazenly embody our current historical moment.

What can this book do?

This book is centered within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), but we have tried to use a lens beyond specific traditions. This guide reflects the justice-seeking requirement of holding things in tension together.

The church as a whole is engaged in justice advocacy, but in many instances is hampered by a lack of resources that could empower advocacy. This book offers tips about discerning, organizing, educating, and communicating justice movements in local congregations.

Who contributed to this book?

This project was made possible because of the gifts of clergy, authors, and advocates whose words you will read across these pages. They are the innumerable saints who work everyday in trenches of justice. This guide endeavors to honor their contributions by sharing their experiences and stories.



Note On Book Format

In order to save paper, this book was designed to be read as a PDF on a screen.



There are a few pages (like the next page) that are made such that they can be printed individually as flyers or worksheets.

If you would like to request a print edition of this book, or a version for your e-reader, please fill out the [contact form](#) at the Advocacy Project.



This [photo](#) of the dome at First Christian Church, Fort Worth was taken by flickr user pallrokk and is used under a Creative Commons [license](#).

Justice Advocacy Notebook

The process of doing justice advocacy looks different for every church. This sheet represents five broad phases that may characterize an advocacy campaign. It is the guiding framework used by this book. Use this sheet to jot your notes as you go. Use as a reference for future activism and reflection.

Storytelling

what stories were created by or were important to your work at this stage?

Discernment

Organizing

Educating

Direct Action

Reflection

What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

- Micah 6:8





Introduction

Humans are historical beings. Our stories and our traditions span human lifetimes and generations. Our hidden histories and traditions shape our lives today in ways we can sometimes sense but can not always name or figure out how what to do with. They influence how we interact and think and love and live. They influence the expressions of our faith.

Each one of us acts according to the deep roots of our traditions. But we are called to live into a future that is unabashedly ours.

All of ours. We do this by prophetic witness; we do this by telling stories; we do this by seeking a justice not beholden to any group or party or power but springing from God, from natural rights, and from human love.

The inspiration for this guide owes its creative peak to the 2015 General Synod of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio and the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Columbus, Ohio. At the lastter, conversations shared at tables sponsored by the Disciples Justice

Action Network and the Discipes Center for Public Witness were instrumental in shaping the content of this publication. At both denominatioal gatherings, people from all around the world came together to discuss their commitments to wholeness in a struggling world.

We saw people speak in favor of an end to systemic racism, skewed incarceration, and unchecked murder of Black Americans. We saw others advocate for the survivors of civil wars and bitter conflicts around the world. And we saw environmentalists take steps to counteract the ecological abuse that allows some people to pollute and damage our living environment.

It is important to note at the outset that not everything in this guide is pertinent for everyone. This guide is not the kind of resource that you should sit down and read straight through. Rather, we invite you to look at the table of contents, flip through the pages, and keep a copy of it close at hand. When situations arise when you need to emply certain creative techniques of justice you'll be ready.

The Work at Hand:

Social movements are collective actions in which the populace is alerted, educated, and mobilized, sometimes over years and decades, to challenge the power holders and the whole society to redress social problems or grievances and restore critical social values.

- Bill Moyer





Disciples Clergy Survey Results:

The faith and justice direction of this guide was shaped in part by Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) clergy contributed their thoughts about the current state of justice advocacy in their local communities.

We randomly distributed a seven-question online survey to 300 clergy whose contact information is available on Disciples regional websites. Forty clergy representing fifteen different states completed the survey.

Through these survey responses, and shared conversations at the Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN) booth at the General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, an image of our overall commitments to justice took shape.

The majority of local Disciples of Christ churches at least occasionally engage in

some type of justice advocacy. The most common form of advocacy churches report is *aiding individual members of their local communities* who are in some kind of need. More than half of survey respondents also say they participate in public justice-related actions and events.

Many clergy noted that they have a desire to be more active as a church in their advocacy, but that they lack some crucial resources. Some report being personally active, but that they primarily act on their own because their church lacks certain resources: people, a shared passion for advocacy, or money.

Several clergy reported that they are bi-vocational, or serve several churches, and are spread too thin in their work as it is. It's hard to think about organizing for justice when they are giving everything they have just to

maintain what basic church programs and services already exist.

Additionally, a few respondents believe that justice advocacy falls outside the realm of their church's call and mission. They explain that "justice advocacy" as defined in this project — organizing to improve some aspect of society — is too close to politics and their congregation does not go there.

A few pastors also noted that they would benefit from a stronger justice voice coming from the national level of the church. They

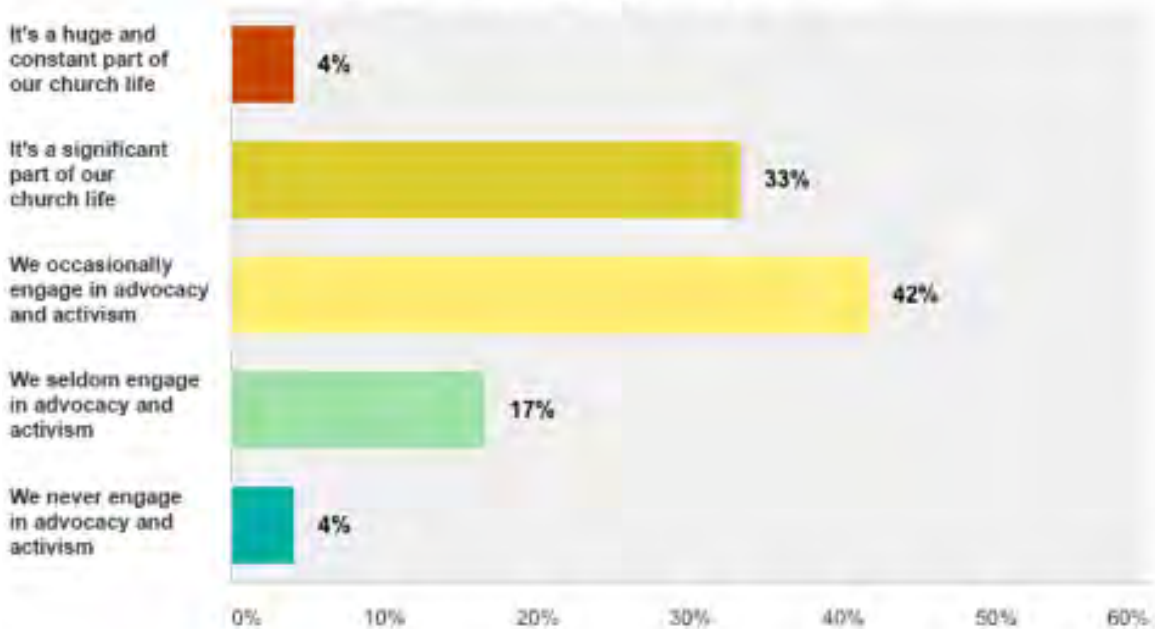
believed this would help to guide their local efforts.

The diversity of opinions reflected in our survey reflects the overall diversity of opinion in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We hold a great deal of knowledge and expertise among our many parts and so there is a lot we can learn from each other. Hopefully the results of the survey as shown on the following pages will help us learn from each other and move forward in justice together.



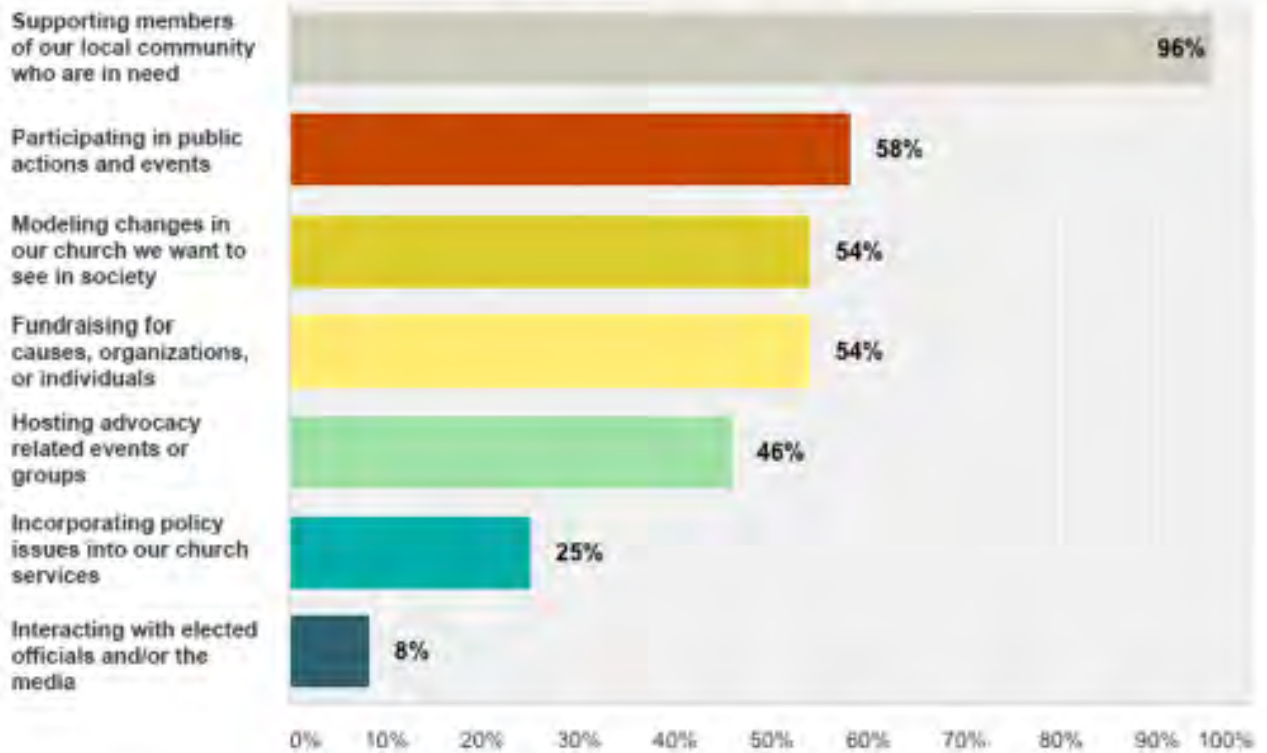
Question 1:

What role does activism and advocacy play in your congregation's life?



Question 2:

We engage in advocacy by:



Question 3:

“Do you want to change the way you conduct advocacy and activism in your church?”

The response to this question was fairly split, and some people were unsure. Forty-six percent said that they don't want to change. Fifty-four percent said that they want to change in some way.

But within in those two categories, there is also a range of opinion. One pastor talked about wanting to change the level of awareness about justice issues in her congregation and that change might result from that.

Other responses by the clergy included:

“While it is important for some of us, I would like to make it a more important priority for us as a whole.”

“Nothing is wrong with what we are doing but we are always looking for ways to make a greater impact and involve more people.”

“I'd like to see my congregation get more involved in hands-on, systemic change work.”

Justice is not cheap. Justice is not quick. It is not ever finally achieved. It is a hard, ongoing process in constant need of new commanders and soldiers who fight and win small wars in big battles

- Marian Wright Edelman

“I would like for our church to be more active in advocacy and to see that there is a difference between charity and justice.”

“I do not want advocacy and activism in my church.”

Question 4:

“What are the most essential social issues for churches to commit themselves to today?”

The extensive list of responses included the following issues:

- Aging Issues
- Bullying
- Climate Change
- Crime
- Criminal Justice
- Domestic Violence
- Education
- Environmental Issues
- Food and Hunger
- Gun Safety
- Healthcare
- Homelessness
- Immigration
- International/ Human Rights
- Labor Issues
- LGBTQ Rights
- Mental Health
- Poverty
- Racism
- Reproductive Rights
- Religious Freedom
- Sex Slavery
- Substance Abuse
- War
- Wealth Inequality

What are the most important issues on this list for you?

What is missing? Add yours:

[The Advocacy Project.](#)





Of the 25 social issues cited by clergy, the most commonly recorded in this survey were:

1. **Racism (68%)**
2. **Food and Hunger (58%)**
3. **Homelessness (53%)**
4. **Poverty (48%)**
5. **Wealth Inequality (48%)**

This question was framed in a way to ask individuals about the broader work of churches generally. The comments from clergy drove home the fact that their work and thinking about the church's role in social issues is primarily local.

Here are some of the responses the clergy offered to this question:

"No one congregation can address all of them but all are important. Different communities will address different issues. For our congregation, the most pressing are criminal justice, racism, and LGBTQ rights."

"It depends on the local context and what people in the congregation have interest in. You can't organize what you can't imagine and you can't imagine what you do have interest in."

"While all of these are issues the Church should be involved in, I've selected those that directly impact us as a particular community of faith."



Question 5:

Do you have the resources to conduct effective faith advocacy?

The response to this question about resources was exactly 50-50. Interestingly, respondents in both categories -- those who feel equipped for advocacy and those who don't -- both say they are looking for more "connection points." There is a sense in the responses that people are inspired by the actions of others and they want to know more.

"I would appreciate seeing more of what other Disciples churches are doing with advocacy."

Some need help identifying their needs and their resources, and then some help in learning how to connect the two.

"We have the resources to conduct some faith advocacy and could always use more...time, energy, money."

"A voice from the national level; more volunteers; funding."

"I feel that we are effective, but could always do more if more resources were available... For congregations who have limited financial resources, printed Disciple pamphlets and literature are out of our price range, but would help the members to feel more connected to the larger church..."

Question 6:

What favorite resources, books, organizations, or websites inspire your faith advocacy?

[See the full list online](#)

Print Resources::

- The Bible
- Newsletters from local non-profits
- [Disciples of Christ justice pamphlets](#)
- [Newsletters from Disciples Home Missions](#)
- [Disciples Week of Compassion](#)

Websites:

- [Evangelicals For Social Action](#)

- [PRISM Magazine](#)
- [Patheos](#)
- [Red Letter Christians](#)
- [Christianity Today](#)
- [Christian Century \(Reflections\)](#)
- [Faith In Public Life](#)
- [Sojourners](#)
- [Textweek.com](#)
- [MoveOn.org](#)





Organizations:

- [United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries](#)
- [Bread for the World](#)
- [National Organization for Women](#)
- [NAACP](#)
- [Moral Mondays](#)
- [Common Cause](#)
- [350.org](#)
- [PICO National Network for Clergy Organizing](#)
- [Interfaith Power and Light](#)

Question 7:

What is the biggest issue your church is responding to right now?

With very little variation, the answer to this question was hunger and homelessness.

Poverty, college debt, and unemployment were issues that echoed the two most common issues.

Others cited their coalition work against racism, and their movement toward becoming open and affirming congregations.

Here are some of their voices:

“We regularly raise money for projects locally and around the world providing food and other essentials to people in need. For example, right now we are collecting shoes for those who need them, and money for clean drinking water in Pakistan.”

“Food security. This congregation, which averages 70 on Sunday morning, is involved in four hands-on programs that provide food to people in the community. In addition, the congregation has a ministry at the local juvenile detention center.”

“A few individuals in the congregation are struggling financially. We help them in ongoing ways.”

“Currently we are addressing racism with other congregations in our area through a faith-based community organizing effort. We also work on LGBTQ rights as those issues arise.”

“Homelessness and poverty. We have learned that they are very influential in educational success.”

“Income gap - extreme poverty and limited mental health benefits leading to homelessness”

“Just became open and affirming; also working on common sense gun legislation and gun safety.”

“We reach out to our wider community in many ways including direct service with those in need. The problem is that we haven’t found ways to connect those personal stories with wider justice issues.”

Our Religious Landscape

The National Congregation Survey (2012) conducted by Association of Religion Data Archives offers additional context for our understanding of congregational justice advocacy in the United States across religious and denominational lines. A few highlights:

Assess Community Needs?

Does your congregation assess community needs? (2012)

| | Liberal/moderate Protestant | Conservative Protestant | Black Church Protestant |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| YES | 56% | 52% | 66% |

Does your congregation assess community needs? (All Religious Traditions)

| | 1998 | 2006 | 2012 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| YES | 37% | 48% | 57% |

Social Service?

Has your congregation participated in social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects in the past 12 months?

| | Liberal/moderate Protestant | Conservative Protestant | Black Church Protestant |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| YES | 80% | 50% | 60% |





Has your congregation participated in social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects (All Religious Traditions)

| | 1998 | 2006 | 2012 |
|-----|------|------|------|
| YES | 58% | 45% | 54% |

Volunteer Opportunities?

Have people at worship services been told of opportunities to volunteer to provide assistance for people outside your congregation (2012)

| | Liberal/moderate Protestant | Conservative Protestant | Black Church Protestant |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| YES | 92% | 96% | 84% |

Sick and Needy?

Does your congregation have any organized effort to provide help (cooking meals, financial assistance) for members who need it? (2012)

| | Liberal/moderate Protestant | Conservative Protestant | Black Church Protestant |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| YES | 92% | 96% | 84% |

Discuss Politics?

Have there been any groups or meetings or classes or events specifically focused on discussing politics? (2012)

| | Liberal/moderate Protestant | Conservative Protestant | Black Church Protestant |
|-----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| YES | 8% | 2% | 5% |

Storytelling

First and foremost, this justice guide recognizes and supports the power of stories. One of the church's greatest gifts is that clergy are often innate and well-practiced pulpit storytellers and accomplished keepers of local histories.

The public narratives we tell are not just about testifying; they are about empowering. Through the telling of our personal and collective stories, we become more ourselves in community. This act of telling stories also embodies the life-source of justice activism.

The great storytellers of the church are the ones who weave the threads of history. The work of storytellers is essential to the work of organizing for justice work.

The initial challenge for an organizer — or for anyone who is going to provide leadership for change — is to figure out how to break through the inertia of habit to get people to

pay attention to your message.

(See the challenges of breaking and harnessing habit in Charles Duhigg's book [*The Power of Habit*](#)).

The great story scholar Marshall Ganz writes that, "Hope is what allows us to deal with problems creatively. In order to deal with fear, we have to mobilize hope. Hope is one of the most precious gifts we can give each other and the people we work with to make change."

This quote speaks to an against-all-odds virtuous cycle of positive thinking that can be infectious within a community. Ganz's point is that we communicate hope to each other through stories.

People generally want to learn how to be agents of change, and to be confident making good choices in uncertain and unsettling





times. Stories help people with this process.

Learning how to respond to new and unknown situations is also assisted by telling and listening to stories.

“That’s why most of our faith traditions interpret themselves as stories, because they are teaching our hearts how to live as choiceworthy human beings capable of embracing hope over fear,” continues Ganz.

We are characters in a story that extends beyond the span of our lives.

Ganz writes that a leadership story is first a story of self; then comes the story of us, which seeks to put what we share into words. And finally is the story of now.

The story of now helps us realize that the world is not as it should be. That the story we tell about now has an ending that we can help shape.

By taking an active role in living in to the stories that we tell each other about the world we live in and the world we want to live in, we are growing into leadership positions.

Stories help us lead in times of uncertainty. We have to be able to tap into the creative energies of the people around us to forge ahead in our work for justice advocacy.

Discernment

Justice activism is a process. It’s a process of filling an unfilled need, changing a status quo, or altering a broken system. It’s also a group effort that requires people who are passionate about justice work.

Discernment requires the **contributions of passionate people**. Sometimes they will come to you. Sometimes you need to go find them.

You need to **learn and develop your thinking as a group**. Not everyone should agree

with each other about the work of discernment, but there needs to be a sense that the group is working through something together.

Where you can, **seek diversity** so that many needs are filled by different people with different skills. Pray together and **lift up the voices of the many**. Learn together to lift up the minds of the many

Set goals and keep track of your progress. Be mindful of your past accomplishments as a



group and continue to build on them at a pace that reflects the change you are working toward. The journey toward justice is just as important as arriving at the change itself.

Engage others outside the church, especially the experts and those who are most affected by injustice. The church is concerned with the souls of individual parishioners, and the health of the society in which they live.

How your community moves through its

process is as important as anything else. Be kind to one another. How you get to your destination through discernment reflects the ultimate success you can achieve.





The Art of Everyday Listening

There is an art to listening well that stems from asking good questions. Krista Tippett recently interviewed Dave Isay, the founder of StoryCorps. They spoke about the work of listening. Listening done well articulates the fact that every life matters. It also helps people and institutions figure out where they want to go in the future.

Some great questions from the StoryCorps website that may be helpful to you in your work include:

- Who has been the most important person in your life? Can you tell me about him or her?
- What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?
- Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
- What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
- If you could hold on to just one memory from your life forever, what would that be?
- If this was to be our very last conversation, what words of wisdom would you want to pass on to me?
- When in life have you felt most alone?
- How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?
- What does your future hold?
- Is there any message you want to give to your great-great-great grandchildren when they listen to this?

Nonviolent Thinking

Incorporating nonviolence into justice advocacy requires forethought, group conversation, and education. It requires more than a commitment to refrain from physical violence.

As Dr. King said, non-violence is an honorable way to achieve justice. Thanks for the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence in Providence, Rhode Island for some of the following tips about incorporating non-violent thinking into your justice advocacy:

- 1.) Nonviolence is not for cowards but is a way of life for courageous people
- 2.) The beloved community is the goal
- 3.) Attack the forces of evil, not the persons doing evil
- 4.) Accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause
- 5.) Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as physical violence
- 6.) The universe is on the side of justice

Checking In Conversations

Sometimes the language that we use to talk about the things that are happening in our world have extreme importance, especially in relation to our relationships with each other.

When we engage in intense conversations about our beliefs, people are going to be at odds with each other.

But we have to remember that people who work for justice are on the same team, and we need to check in with each other on a regular basis.

When someone says something that you don't agree with, something that might be oppressive to another person or a group

of people, we are inclined to discount that person for their "mistakes."

At these moments we need to remember that we are each others resources. As congregations beyond church walls we need to enter into relationship and hold each other accountable in ways that honor what has been given to us to make change.

That means sitting down with people you disagree with and talking about how you disagree and why, but honoring them as part of the overall change you seek.





Organizing

People. Stories. Relationships.

These are the things that move people. These are the things you as a justice organizer need to track and foster in your work.

A great place to start is with databases.

Databases

As simple as a pad of paper and a pen, as complex as a church management software.

I had a conversation with a clergy-person who runs a mission ministry with five different Appalachia churches. Her region is in mining territory (or “fracking territory”).

Our conversation reminded me just how different the set of issues that can confront people in rural areas (and just how difficult the challenges are for clergy).

Oregon’s “Rural Organizing Project: Advancing Democracy in Rural Oregon” provides organizing resources and instruction on keeping an organizing database.

They begin with how to keep your local advocacy group alive. First of all you need core leadership (three to seven people) who can do the little things: maintaining databases of people/resources, structuring meetings, coordinating communication, moving forward a plan of action. Teams are stable and support continuity in a way that one person doing everything does not.

They remind you to value personal contact. Postcards and email are great, but phone calls provide higher levels of accountability. “The more interaction you have with your supporters the better information you’ll have about the people you’re working with.”

Databases are indicators of organizational strength. Information needs to be updated (and backed up) regularly. Maintaining a database also reminds you to engage in active recruitment and cultivation of relationships.

They also speak to the power of action. Education is important but action is essential. They advise incorporating simple actions into every meeting to help people get in the pattern of acting.

And finally planning. Planning is about setting objectives and finding a way to achieve them. New groups should think about setting short term objectives. Established groups can think about planning out a yearly plan. Be realistic in your goal-setting, but aim high enough that you can keep your group moving forward.

Educating

Education is the thing that makes change stick. It multiplies the loaves. It transforms the ordinary.

The church is already a place of education. Incorporating justice into the existing education from the pulpit and among parishioners can be a natural progression.

Invite local speakers to address attendees of a shared meal. Host community movie nights that feature documentaries that speak to our most pressing social issues.

Here are a few other ideas of simple actions that connect to our big issues right now:

Ask Your Police Dept. About A Ride Along

America is in the midst of a national policing crisis, say lawmakers from all political persuasions. It's a conversation in which America must confront its racism, its history of oppression, and a history of over-policing of minor crime.

Clergy are called to respond in several ways. One is forging relationships with law enforcement.

Clergy get to know law enforcement; you can help communicate the work and mindset of the police department to your congregation. Police get to know clergy — the two sides come to see where their work overlaps and where partnerships are possible.

“What we're trying to do in the role of the clergy is to increase solidarity in the community, provide a sense of hope that things can change, things can get better, we're not in it

alone,” a Erie, PA clergy-person said in a AP story on the topic.

Susan Thistlethwaite offers three things that clergy can do regarding law enforcement to foster a more decent society:

Demand that those in law enforcement who are shown to have used excessive force be disciplined, and where warranted, prosecuted and jailed.

Work with your local government to create re-training for law enforcement in proven methods of community policing that reduce violence and create more trust.

Bring the full force of your religious faith and humanist values to the public square, calling for real racial justice, accountability and respectful treatment of every human being.





Church Environmental Assessment

Weather and climate affect the lives of all people on earth. Changes in patterns of weather and climate affect food production, public health, and public safety. But we don't feel these changes like we do the visceral and immediate impacts of hunger, homelessness, and poverty.

The challenge we face is taking care of our immediate issues while also looking at how our actions will affect people in the long term.

Churches are stewards of the local environment. No church can change anything on a global scale. We enter into stewardship knowing that we live in an inescapable web

of mutuality. "Whatever affects one directly, affects all." But we know that the net sum of all our actions can yield a cultural shift and a tangible change.

The first step is research. The flyer on the next page represents some questions you can begin to contemplate as a church. Perhaps post the flyer somewhere in your church. Invite members to research the specific answers and fill them in. Hopefully this will sustain conversation on how we can be good keepers of God's creation.

Knowing about your local habitat is the first step to protecting it.

Stewards of God's Creation

Our Environmental Contributions and Impacts

Where does our church's trash go?

Think about who and what lives near that trash.

How much electricity does our church use a month?

Think about how much and what kind of energy is used to manufacture it.

What's the closest renewable energy generator (solar, hydro, wind, geothermal) to our church?

Think about who owns the generator and what that energy powers.

Where is the paper we use in our church made?

Think about all the steps that went into getting this paper to our church.

What transportation alternatives (bicycles, buses, rails, carshare) exist in our community?

Think about who is using these alternatives. What would it take for more people to use them?

How do we show our church is thinking about the environment?

Think about how our public signs of environmental concern influence our wider community.

The purpose of these questions is to share information as a community about how we interact with our local environment. Our church's values are tied to the answers of these questions. May our reflections and our stewardship continue to be part of our church life, our faith, and our legacy.



Direct Action

What is Direct Action?

According to Tom Cordaro, direct action is something done publicly in order to influence public policy or articulate/challenging social, religious and political values.

It's also usually nonviolent. Another name for nonviolent direct action is public witness.

Some examples include passing out leaflets, participating in a public prayer vigil, holding

signs on a picket line, collecting signatures on a petition, writing a letter to the local media, marching in a demonstration, or risking arrest by breaking a civil law.

“Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community... is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Going Online

I believe that clergy are encouraged to be in many ways counter-cultural. But the local church is also a community institution, enmeshed in the life of the people who attend the church or not.

It's also a place where the gifts of individuals are nurtured and where we pass down our traditions. It's where we enable our members to be faithful and contributing members of society.

Part of being a contributing institution means being a focal point. It means good communication. The local church is an

organizing body. It takes stock of the available gifts among its members and creates situations where those gifts can be used.

Many churches have taken to online methods of organizing people and keeping conversations going beyond the walls of their congregation.

To varying degrees, churches have found places for new technology in their ministry. This guide focuses on those types of technology that congregations have found helpful in organizing for social justice.

Social Media

This is one tool among many that allows churches to participate in community dialogues. It should not be your primary method of communication with anyone, but you should be present in this space in some way as you are able.

The social media landscape, the new public square, is constantly changing. But if you are just getting in to this scene, having a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram presence will bring you up to speed and prepare you to adapt to the conversation when it changes again.

Facebook (Longer Updates, Article Sharing)

Twitter (Short Updates, Article Sharing)

Instagram (Photos and Videos)

Social media doesn't replace traditional organizing models and relationship building, but can support them.

Social media can plug into an influence the legislative process. It can also reinforce that there is a person behind an action or movement— it's the modern day equivalent of the letter to the editor.

Faith organizations mostly don't go for shock factor on social media. Rather, they say that our faith compels us to speak about an issue and that we think that people might want to

hear from us.

When writing on social media, use a tone of voice that reflects your position in the church.

Bullet points, lists, short paragraphs are helpful as online writing styles.

As a general rule of thumb (from Chip and Dan Heath's book "Made to Stick") keep in mind the SUCCEsS model when writing creating content for online. Your material should be:

Simple

Unexpected

Concrete

Credible

Emotional

Stories





Your Church on Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a global encyclopedia. People commonly use it to look up all kinds of different information. Because it's such an established source, articles on Wikipedia commonly show prominently when people search for your church.

Education and information is a part of any justice work. People in your community may want to know more about your church when they see your members in the community. If

your church doesn't have a Wikipedia page, consider contacting a church member or local student who is interested in church history, or web development, or social media.

Send them this guide. Ask them if they want to try writing the church's Wikipedia page. It's a great learning opportunity for them, and a chance for your church to highlight its history and significant work in your community.

Article [Talk](#) [Read](#) [Edit](#) [View history](#)

Hillyer Memorial Christian Church (Raleigh, North Carolina)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

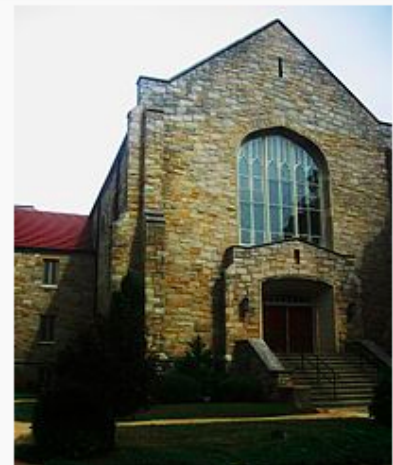
Coordinates:  35.7810°N 78.6500°W﻿ / ﻿﻿ / ﻿

Hillyer Memorial Christian Church is a historic church in downtown [Raleigh, North Carolina](#) located on [Hillsborough Street](#). The church is affiliated with the [Disciples of Christ](#). The current church was built in 1915. The church is named after the Hillyer family, who were patrons of the church and kept the church from going bankrupt during the [Great Depression](#) and the [World Wars](#).^[1] The church is under the jurisdiction of the Church of the Disciples of Christ in North Carolina.^[2]

References [\[edit\]](#)

- ↑ <http://www.hillyerchurch.org/AboutUsnew.asp>
- ↑ <http://www.ncdisciples.org/index.php>

Hillyer Memorial Christian Church



Basic information

Location [Raleigh, North Carolina, United States](#)

Affiliation [Disciples of Christ](#)

How to Write a Wikipedia Page

The first step is **research**. Look online for news articles or web pages about your church (if any exist). You will need to link to these later from your Wikipedia page. If you can't find any news coverage about your church online, then look for books and newspapers articles in print. Even if you know some fact about your church first-hand, on Wikipedia you need to be able to show someone else where to find references of your information.

- **Search.** Go on Wikipedia and search for your church to see if someone hasn't already written your church's entry. You don't want to duplicate someone else's work.

For instance, if you are from FCC Santa Maria in California, search Wikipedia for First Christian Church (Santa Maria, California). If the page does not exist, it will say: "*The page "First Christian Church (Santa Maria, California)" does not exist. You can ask for it to be created.*" Click the link that is the name of your church.

- **Log in / Create account.** You can edit Wikipedia articles without having an account, but to create an article from scratch, you need an account. Click on "Log in or create an account". If you have an account, then log in now. If not, click on "Join Wikipedia."
- Select a username and password (twice), and click "Create account". Assuming no-one else has taken your name already, your account should be created

successfully, and you can now create your article.

Once you have logged in, you will return to the page saying "**Wikipedia does not have an article with this exact name.**"

Click on the "Start the [your church name] article" link.

On the "Creating [your church name]" page, select the option to start your new article at Special:Mypage/[your church name]. There, you can "develop the article with less risk of deletion, ask others to help work on it, and move it into "article space" when it is ready."

- **Start writing.** If you need a template, [copy and paste this](#) into the editing box and then fill in the sections that are appropriate to your page.
- Use the "cite" tool on the top toolbar to show where you get your information from.
- Read [this page](#) for help with formatting.

When you have finished, click the 'save page' button. An option to submit your draft for review will appear. Someone from Wikipedia will then take a look at your page and either make it live, or tell you what next round of edits you need to make.





Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor

Publishing your writing on matters of local, regional, or national concern is a way of contributing to the public discourse surrounding issues of justice. As a faith leader, you have a voice and a perspective that may not be otherwise present or well represented in your community.

Whether you publish in your local newspaper or on your church social media accounts, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **The Right Outlet.** Consider where your writing will have the most impact. Look to see if the outlet has submission guidelines on their websites. Don't forget about blogs and alternative newspapers.
- **Your Perspective.** Tell us why you are the right person to provide your point of view. Offer your own insight and stories. Try to contribute something new, or in a different way. Don't just repeat things other people have already said.
- **Why Now.** Explain the reason you are talking about this issue now. If you can, try to weave other current events into your writing.
- **Make One Point Well.** Put your main point (your "hook") right on top. This is where you have to convince the reader to keep reading. Tell your reading audience why they need to care about your issue. If you can't do this in a few sentences, then

you're trying to do too much.

- **Succinct Format.** Most outlets require 750 words or less. Use short sentences and short paragraphs. Be sure to write in the active voice. You're trying to actively help change something about the world with your writing -- it's not going to change itself.
- **Big Finish/Summary.** Remind everyone what you just told them. Using a thought or image from your opening paragraph will complete the mental circle of your piece.

Most outlets require original content. They won't publish something that has been published or posted somewhere else before. So it's a good practice to only submit a specific letter or op-ed to one outlet at a time.

How to Write a Press Release

A press release is written announcement sent to members of the media telling them that something noteworthy is happening in your community. Newsworthy events in churches usually fall into four categories:

- **Milestones.** Your church is beginning a new justice initiative. You have served *x number* of hungry families in your community.
- **Events.** Your church is hosting a fund-raiser for an upcoming mission trip.

- **Programs.** Your church hosts a daycare program that has capacity for more children. Tout the history of your program and how it is benefiting the community.
- **People.** You have amazing members at your congregation doing important justice work. Share their stories and include pictures of their work.

On the next page there is an example of an effective church press release. Read more about this and other press releases on the [Advocacy Project](#) website.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2012

Contact: 616.842.6260

Wednesday “Free Meal for the Hungry” Night Added at St. John’s Episcopal Church

Grand Haven, Michigan — The free meal program at St. John’s Episcopal Church, in Grand Haven is being expanded to include a Wednesday night meal, beginning Wednesday, February 8.

For years, the church has served a free hot meal every Sunday, rain or shine, from 1 to 2 PM. The meal is available to anyone who shows up. Due to increased need, an additional hot meal will also be served Wednesday evenings, from 5 to 6 PM. These nutritious, complete meals are served in the Parish Hall of the church, located at 524 Washington St., across from City Hall in Grand Haven.

The Wednesday meal is available to everyone in the community from 5 to 6 PM. Children with adults are especially welcome. The schedule for the Sunday meal continues, from 1 to 2 PM.

“We are really pleased, during these difficult times, to be able to serve more people in the Grand Haven area,” said Carolyn Austin, one of the four kitchen managers for the program. “In the past 10 months, we have more than doubled the number of people we serve. Some Sundays, we have as many as 30 guests.”

Volunteers from St. John’s have offered this service for more than 10 years. In the last year, volunteers from community organizations as well as other congregations in the community have helped out. Recently, the Men’s Group from St. John’s Lutheran Church volunteered on a Sunday.

“The meals are healthy, nutritious, and often creatively prepared. We ask our lead volunteer, for each of the Sundays and Wednesdays to prepare a meal that includes something that our guests may not have had before,” Austin said. “Our meals range from spaghetti and meat balls to barbecues to Hungarian Stroganoff.”

“Please tell anyone you know who needs some good healthy food to join us,” Austin concluded.

For more information, call St. John’s at 616-842-6260 or visit the website at <http://www.stjohn-sepiscopal.com>.

St. John’s Episcopal Church is a diverse Christian community in the heart of downtown Grand Haven. One of the oldest places of worship in Grand Haven, they seek to blend historic liturgy with challenging education and active outreach. They gather together for worship on Sundays at 8:30am and 10:45am and on Wednesdays at Noon.

###

Interviews for Radio or Television

Speaking in the media about issues that affect your congregation, or that you are otherwise knowledgeable about, is an important part of embodying a public leadership role in your community.

Giving an interview can be nerve-racking if you've never done it before (and even if you have!). When responding to someone else's questions, you will have less control over what and how you communicate than when you are preaching from a pulpit.

But good preparation will help you convey a powerful and pointed message. Giving an interview can be an important opportunity to engage in public witness on behalf of your congregation, so it's good to know how to prepare.

Getting Started: Perhaps a journalist will approach you to speak on a topic concerning your community, but more than likely you will have to volunteer yourself. If there is a topic in the local news that relates to the justice work of your church (such as issues regarding hunger or homelessness), call the local newspaper, radio station, or TV station and let them know you are available to speak.

If it is a large outlet, you may have to ask to speak to the "assignment desk." Be ready to explain your expertise on the topic. If you have spoken or written on the topic before, be ready to reference those times.

If the interview will not be live, indicate times when you are most likely to be available.

Giving an Interview:

- **Practice in advance.** Record yourself responding to questions you expect to answer, and play back your performance. Make sure that you have checked your facts and know your information.
- **Prepare a "sound-bite" and use lists.** Practice saying your core statement which is brief, memorable and to the point. Use lists, such as the top three things your community can do to help those who don't have enough food. Don't pretend to know things that you don't know.
- **Speak from your leadership position.** Focus on making statements of faith rather than partisan statements. If you are asked a leading question in a direction you don't want to go, lead the discussion back:

"I can't comment on that issue, but my community believes that..."

- **Think about your tone and choice of words.** As a member of the faith community, ensure that you use a tone that you are representative of your congregation. Stay focused. Stay relaxed. Answer questions succinctly and then quickly shift the focus to what you want to say.
- **Attention to detail.** Call the host by name. Explain the back story of your stories before you start telling them, and





define all the terms you use. Remember your audience may not know very much about your topic. That's why you are informing them!

After the Interview: At the end of the interview, or just after it finishes, be sure to thank your interviewer (and the producer if there is one). It's also good practice to send a thank you note after you leave. It increases the likelihood they will remember you and your church next time they need an interview.

How To Hold a Protest

"You've got to find a way to get in the way."

-John Lewis

1.) Figure out why you are protesting. Incorporate and highlight the people who are most affected by the entity you are protesting against.

2.) Make a plan. Write out your talking points and proposed schedule ahead of time.

3.) Consider coordinating with law enforcement if pertinent; secure a permit if necessary. Contact other groups and organizations that share your convictions and invite them to attend the protest. Write a media press release if your actions are newsworthy.

4.) Create signs and banners, visuals that convey your message. Share them on social media and invite others to do the same.

Rev. William Barber on justice activism:

What would happen if the church embraced its public role?

What if we led protests and civil disobedience in the states with the worst education, and healthcare?

What if we had communion while we were getting arrested?

What if we brought a kid who was hungry, or a teen who needed an education, or an immigrant who needed to be with her family, and that we wouldn't leave until we were arrested?

Conclusion

It has been a pleasure exploring and dreaming about justice with you. As stated at the outset, this book is an imperfect creation; but hopefully it will serve as a starting block for new conversations and approaches to action within your community.

Organizing our congregations for the causes of justice requires more than a series of isolated actions. It requires a continual process of discernment and action, building and reflecting, acting and resting. We learned that our best resources for justice advocacy in the church are our other colleagues, the people who have already begun to confront the issues that are important in your community.

Let us know what was good, what was unnecessary, and what was missing from these pages. We will continue to re-tool this resource for you as a sign of our commitment to witnessing to possibility, a process of organizing for justice.

Good luck!

Links for Further Reading:

[DC4PW website](#)

[DJAN website](#)

[Disciples Home Mission: Justice](#)

[Refugee and Immigration Ministries](#)

[Eccumenical Poverty Initiative](#)

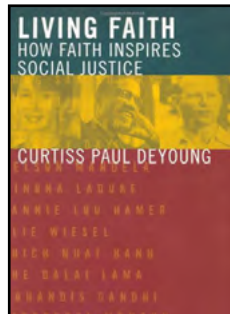
[National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#)

[Interfaith Worker Justice](#)

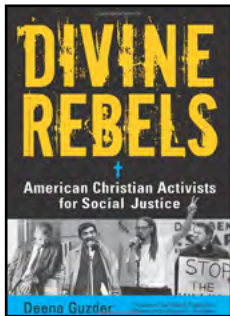
[Creation Justice Ministries](#)



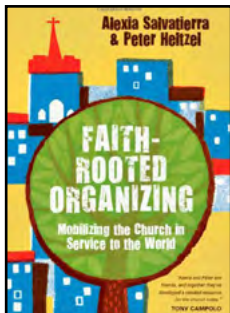
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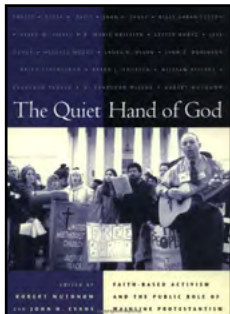
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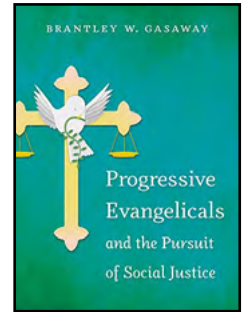


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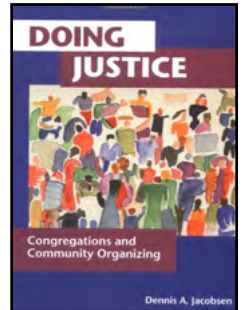


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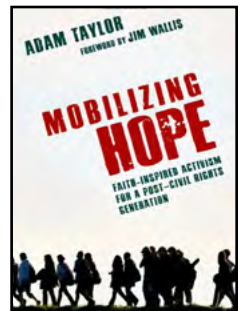
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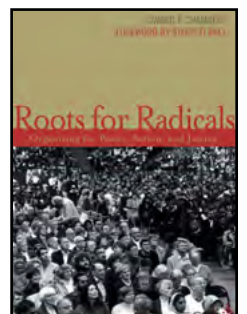
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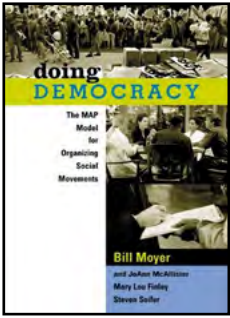


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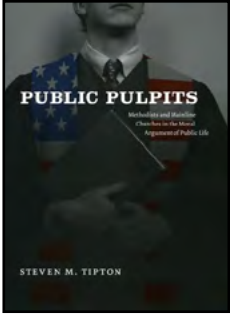
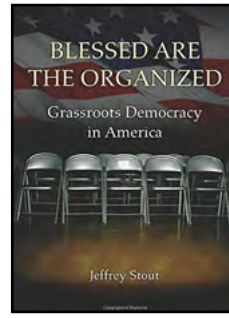
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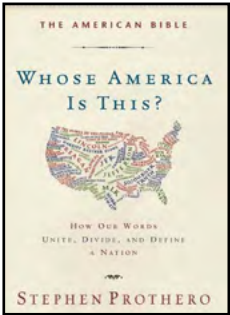
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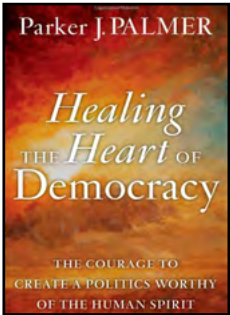
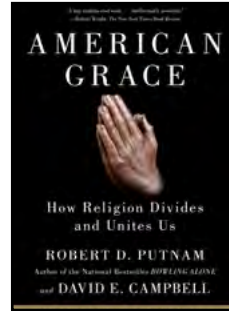
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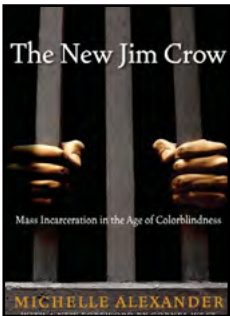
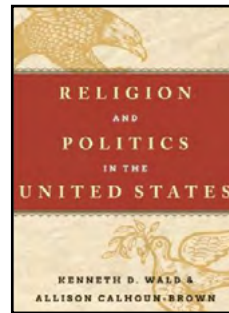
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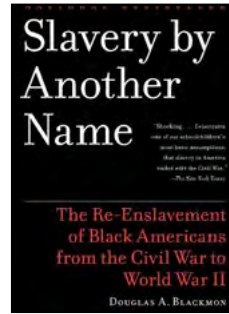
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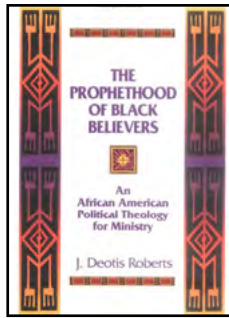
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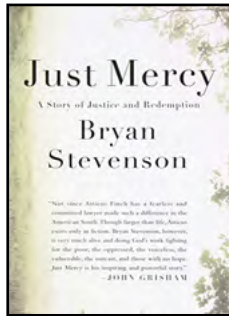
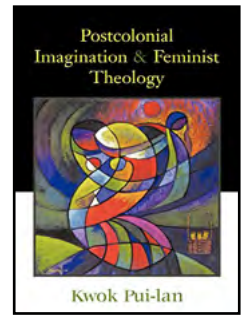
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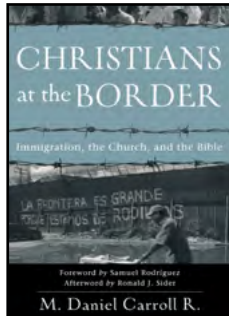
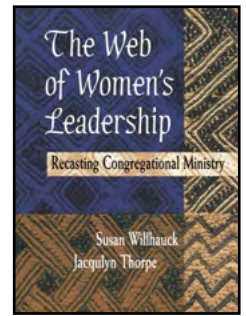
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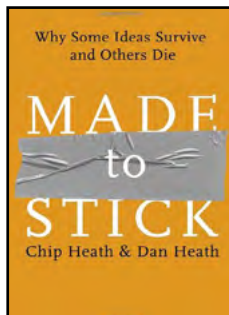
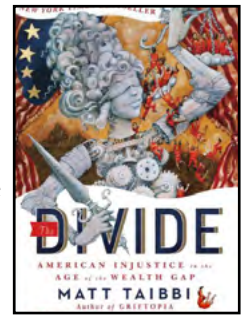
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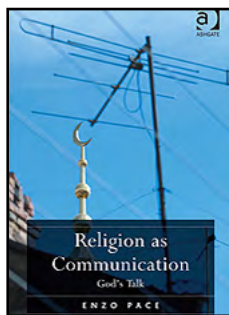
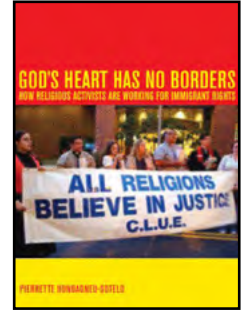
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Glossary

Term definitions at the [Advocacy Project](#).

- Ableism
- Acculturation
- Activist
- Advocate
- Anti-Black Racism
- Apathy
- Ally
- Biological Sex
- Cisgender
- Colonialism/
Imperialism
- Collusion
- Community
- Civic Engagement
- Cross-Dressing and
Drag
- Democracy
- Dialogue
- Direct Action
- Dominant Culture
- Economic Justice
- Ethnicity
- First Nations People
- Gender Binary
- Gender Expression
- Gender Identity
- Genderqueer
- Hate Crime
- Ignorance
- Intersectionality
- Intersex
- LGBTIQQ
- Naming
- Passivity
- Poverty
- Privilege
- Pronouns
- Race
- Racial Hierarchy
- Racial Prejudice
- Racism
- Sexual Orientation
- Silencing
- Social Justice
- Social Identity
- Solidarity
- Stereotype
- System of
Oppression
- Tolerance
- Transsexual
- Transgender
- Transition
- Unity
- White Supremacy
- Xenophobia

