

That we may speak...

OUR MINISTRY OF ACTION



A step-by-step guide to help congregations choose an issue and begin a ministry of advocacy



That we may speak: Our ministry of action

A step-by-step guide to help congregations choose an issue and begin a ministry of advocacy

Writers: Mark Cole and Faye Codding

Editor: Paul Lutz

Design: Sharon Schuster

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*A step-by-step guide to help congregations choose
an issue and begin a ministry of advocacy*



that we may speak...

OUR MINISTRY OF ACTION

The purpose of this guide

The study has been created to help congregations:

- gain insight and understanding about advocacy
- develop a plan of action
- launch (or improve) a ministry of advocacy.

To accomplish this, a group needs to come together to study the subject and to think through its implications for their own lives and the life of the congregation. Any group of youth and/or adults in the congregation could benefit from this study. It may prove particularly stimulating for leadership groups in the congregation—church council, elected committees, task forces, and others. It could, likewise, prove beneficial to create a new “advocacy team” of representatives of various groups in the congregation to study and initiate a ministry of advocacy.

A word to the leader

This is an opportunity to invite participants to select and advocate for an important issue in your community. You are responsible to plan the sessions, make sure resources are available to participants, guide the discussion, cover the material, encourage participation by all, help summarize learning, and help carry through on any possible action that may arise from your study.

This guide is designed to be used in a small group setting. There are four, 45- to 90-minute sessions. Each session builds on the previous session. In addition, “home work” is assigned at the end of each session that is used in the next session. Scripture passages are mentioned and discussed in each session. Inviting participants to bring Bibles or having Bibles available is necessary to the learning experience. It would be possible to complete the guide in a one time retreat setting. A more realistic—and fruitful—schedule would be a weekly, biweekly or monthly class, allowing sufficient time for participants to complete assignments between class sessions.

Read the complete study guide before your first session so that you can anticipate preparations and issues that may arise. *(Suggestions for the leader are written in the margins of each page. Activities that need advance preparation are*

labeled.) Your choices will help you plan how to go about your study and decide what additional resources you may choose to use. Be sure to check out the resource page and contact the appropriate organizations to order materials that will be helpful.

Session format

Opening Prayer or Song

Let's Get Started *(a focusing activity or question)*

Let's Focus *(an introduction to the session topic)*

Let's Talk *(questions for group discussion)*

What Does the Bible Have to Say? *(examination of biblical texts and commentary)*

Exploring Further *(to consider more of the topic)*

Before We Go *(guided conversation and suggested actions)*

Closing with Prayer

Enrichment Activities that will require advanced preparations for each particular class and will involve more class time, could include:

Session One Invite a local politician to share his or her perspective on “church and state.”

Session Two Invite a local person who has experienced a system that needs to be changed. Consider someone who works for minimum wage, a current or past welfare recipient, someone who has experienced medicaid either with a parent or their child, or someone who lives on social security.

Session Three Invite an advocate to share their work with your study group. Contact your state public policy office, a local coalition, social ministry organization, domestic violence organizations, county or state child welfare offices, nursing home association or other possible advocacy organizations.

Session Four Invite other people from outside your congregation who are working on the same issue you have chosen to focus on to share their experience. This may be someone who works in the government or a local coalition leader.



Session one

SEEKING THE LOST AND LONE

Opening Prayer

Lord, speak to us, that we may speak
In living echoes of your tone;
As you have sought, so let us seek
Your straying children, lost and lone.

Hymn 403, first stanza, *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

Let's Get Started

RESPOND TO EITHER OR BOTH OF THESE SITUATIONS

Have you ever stood up to a bully, perhaps someone who was picking on your little brother or sister? Maybe you didn't have to do more than say a few words. Maybe you simply stood there with him/her and the bully left him/her alone and went away. Briefly describe such a time.

Have you ever spoken up for someone who wasn't present? Perhaps you defended a friend against an unfair accusation or attack? Briefly describe such a time.

Let's Focus

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THIS OUT LOUD

"Advocacy" is defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary* as: 1. To speak, plead or argue in favor of. 2. One that argues for a cause; a supporter or defender. 3. One that pleads on another's behalf; an intercessor. The situations you described in the opening exercises are examples of personal advocacy. Simply put, advocacy is speaking with and on behalf of another in order to see that justice is done.

Public policy advocacy is speaking with and on behalf of those who have the least voice in our society. We speak in order to change public laws, programs and policies so that justice can be a part of their lives. Advocates work to change the systems that keep those who need the most help from getting it. For example, when a mother of a victim of a drunk driving incident began to organize others they were able to change the laws so that others would not experience the same injustices.

Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A GROUP

Are there members of the group who have been involved in the work of MADD, SADD, etc.? Share what such participation has meant in your life. Are there other individuals that participants know who are involved in advocacy? What difference do their efforts make in our society?

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Session one

Session one

SEEKING THE LOST AND LONE *continued*

Are there members of the group or their families who have benefitted from the advocacy work that has produced fair labor practices, health care changes, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps or Women, Infant and Children (WIC)? Share what such policy changes have meant in your life. Think about others in society who benefit from these programs. What difference do these efforts make in their lives?

What does the Bible say? Exodus 3:1-8

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ EXODUS 3:1-18. DISCUSS THESE QUESTIONS.

How does God know about the injustices being experienced by the Israelites?

What is God's response to this suffering?

Who does God call to serve as an advocate for the Israelites?

How does this individual respond to the call to serve as an advocate?

To whom does God send the advocate? What is the role/function of this person in the Israelite society?

What does this say to you about the nature of advocacy?

What does this story say to you about God's concern for the "lost and lone" of our day?

In what ways might this story speak to your congregation's ministry of advocacy?

ADVOCACY MINISTRIES OTHER CONGREGATIONS HAVE CHOSEN

Food stamps

Housing

Disabilities

Transportation

Immigration

International debt relief

Middle East peace

Should we be talking about politics in the church?

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING.

What do you think of when you hear the words "separation of Church and State"?

When the U.S. Constitution was written the founders wanted to protect each person's freedom. An important part of this protection has been the First Amendment. This amendment is primarily concerned with the right of people of faith and religious organizations to speak out on political issues. The Constitution gives religious communities freedom to speak out on many issues. This aspect of our Constitution has contributed to civil peace in our country. It has become even more important as our society has grown more diverse.

Over the centuries churches have been one of the most consistent forms of charity in our society. Yet God requires both charity and justice, and justice can often be achieved only through the mechanism of government. Biblical advocates like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos told of how governments as well as individuals will be judged by the way they treat the weakest and most vulnerable. In Scripture there is no separation of church and state. In fact, in biblical times the church and state were often one. Jesus frequently confronted the political leaders of his day to change the system to care for the marginalized.



Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A GROUP.

How would you describe the relation of church and state today?

What are the responsibilities of the "state"? What are the responsibilities of the "church"?

How ought church and state cooperate and work together? Where do you see that happening?

How would you define charity? How would you define justice? How are charity and justice related?

Does the ELCA Participate in Politics?

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING.

Yes! The ELCA Constitution authorizes and endorses advocacy as part of the structure of the church. The church is to:

- Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless and committing itself to their needs.
- Lift its voice in concord and work in concert with forces for good, to serve humanity, cooperating with church and other groups participating in activities that promote justice, relieve misery, and reconcile the estranged.
- Study social issues and trends, work to discover the causes of oppression and injustice, and develop programs of ministry and advocacy to further human dignity, freedom, justice, and peace in the world.
- Establish, support, and recognize institutions and agencies that minister to people in spiritual and temporal needs.
- Work with civil authorities in areas of mutual endeavor, maintaining institutional separation of church and state in a relation of functional interaction.

ELCA Constitution Chapter 4.03

ADVANCE PREPARATION: ENCOURAGE RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

What do you notice about these constitutional mandates?

What does your congregation's constitution say about the ministry of advocacy?

How does your congregation exercise its ministry of advocacy?

The ELCA responds to these mandates as a church body in several arenas. The Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs (LOGA) in Washington D.C. witnesses for social justice on domestic and foreign policy issues. The Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) in New York represents the ELCA at the United Nations. State Public Policy Advocacy offices advocate to state governments, in partnership with synods and social ministry organizations.

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Session one

SEEKING THE LOST AND LONE *continued*

The ELCA also responds to these directives through the Corporate Social Responsibility desk. This ministry provides investment criteria and counsel addressing corporations on a range of global and domestic issues through shareholder action and resolutions, and develops church and corporation dialogues on major corporate and economic issues.

What do these different arenas of advocacy say about the ELCA commitment to this ministry?
How would you describe the reason for this commitment to advocacy?

Before We Go

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ASSIGNMENTS AS A GROUP.

- 1** Make a list of issues that affect your community, people in the United States and people in the world, who are “lost and lone.”
- 2** After you have your list of issues, name the possible public policy connections between those issues. For example, homelessness can be connected to issues of minimum wage, mental illness/healthcare, and education.
- 3** As a group begin to explore what issue you might use during this study to explore the ministry of advocacy. Use the “Criteria for Selecting a Local Advocacy Issue” questions below in your decision making process. *Note: If you are unable to select an issue by the end of this first session, please agree about an issue prior to beginning session two.*
- 4** Close with prayer.

WHEN SELECTING AN ADVOCACY ISSUE ASK:

How urgent is the need to be addressed?

How many people are affected by the problem?

Is this a timely issue?

Will it be possible to address the issue in upcoming public policy deliberations?

What is the possibility of achieving the desired outcome?

How basic is this issue (does it cause or contribute to other problems of concern to the church)?

Is there a special reason for the ELCA (the church) to take a leading role in addressing this issue?

Is their sufficient time for effective advocacy? —ELCA Advocacy Plan 1999-2000

Session Two

TALKING WITH OTHERS

Opening Prayer

*Oh, lead us, Lord that we may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet:
Oh, feed us Lord, that we may feed
Your hungry ones with manna sweet.*

Hymn 403, Stanza two, Lutheran Book of Worship

Let's Get Started

RESPOND TO EITHER OR BOTH OF THE FOLLOWING.

Recall a time when you influenced a decision or changed someone's opinion on an issue by what you said. Describe. Describe a time when you were able to see the other side of an issue. What helped you gain that perspective?

Let's Focus

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING OUT LOUD. RESPOND AS A GROUP TO THE QUESTIONS.

Get five people involved in a discussion about the role of the government and the care of the poor and you get six different opinions! We disagree on how to care for the poor. But it is clear in Scripture that we are called to advocate for just policies that will care for the "hungry ones" of our society. When we have our disagreements, it is important to remember who we are advocating with and for. The ministry of advocacy calls for us to evaluate policies and laws that affect the poorest of our society. We need to think of them before we get caught in our own self interest. The church's voice is critical in helping shape public policy and to give voice to those often unheard. The needs of children, the elderly, homebound, the mentally ill, and others must be heard and represented by people like us. What happens when public policy advocacy is part of our ministry? What happens when we ignore public policy as part of our ministry to the poor?

Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP.

Who are "hungry ones" you have identified in need of your ministry of advocacy?

Share with each other what you have learned about these people.

Review the information gathered in response to the questions in the "When Selecting an Advocacy Issue" box on the previous page.

What other questions do you have about these "hungry ones"?

Where will you go to seek answers to these questions?

What are your hopes and concerns as you begin this ministry?

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Session Two

TALKING WITH OTHERS *continued*

What Does the Bible Say?

ADVANCE PREPARATION: INVITE SOMEONE TO READ PROVERBS 31:8-9, ISAIAH 10:1-2, AND AMOS 5:12.

How would you describe the theme of these Scripture verses?

Why do you think King Lemuel's mother would encourage her son in this way?

Who did Isaiah rail against? Why? Where might we find those people today?

Who did Amos challenge? Why? Where might we find those people today?

Why are the prophets concerned for the foreigner, the orphan and the widow?

How would you describe what the scriptures say about defending the rights of the poor and needy?

In what ways can you "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves"?

Advocacy and the role of the Government

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING.

The religious community has a powerful history of caring for the poor. Churches, mosques and synagogues have been the front line of service providing clothing closets, feeding programs, shelters, and resettlement for refugees. These acts help to provide daily assistance for those who need help with daily survival. Yet, if we worked on the issue of fair wages for labor and challenged the system to give a liveable wage to those who work, we would permanently change the lives of the working poor. Then those who are the working poor would be able to gain dignity and leave our shelters and food pantries. Studies (Bread for the World, 1997) show issues such as hunger and housing could be eliminated with changes in public policy both here in the United States and around the world.

Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

What is the difference between giving someone a fish and teaching them to fish?

How would you describe the relationship between giving food to the hungry and changing the system that keeps people hungry?

In what way are both efforts parts of the ministry of advocacy?



“It is taught...that all government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order, and that Christians may without sin (be involved in civic matters)...”

—Augsburg Confession

Advocacy and our Lutheran Heritage

**ADVANCE PREPARATION: INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING.
ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS.**

1. *Civic involvement and the search for justice is part of our heritage and history as Lutherans. In the Augsburg Confession we read:*

“It is taught among us that all government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order, and that Christians may without sin occupy civil offices or serve as princes and judges, render decisions and pass sentence according to imperial and other existing laws, punish evildoers with the sword, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers, buy and sell, take required oaths, possess property, be married, etc.”—Article 16, Civil Government

2. *Martin Luther wrote in a time of unrest for the church. He wanted to challenge the ways and the understanding of the church as he knew it. As he explored Scripture and wrote the catechism he continually made mention of the poor and marginalized and invited the church to be involved with their care.*

■ *Look at Luther’s explanation of the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer in his Small Catechism where he asks the question “What is meant by daily bread?” What is the answer?*

■ *Look at Luther’s explanation to the petition “Thy will be done” from the Lord’s Prayer in the Large Catechism. Note especially where he writes: “In a good government there is need not only for good builders and rulers, but also for defenders, protectors, and vigilant guardians.”*

■ *Look at Luther’s explanation to the Eighth Commandment from the Lord’s Prayer in the Large Catechism. Note especially where he writes: “Everyone should help his neighbor maintain his right. He must not allow these rights to be thwarted or distorted but should promote and resolutely guard them.”*

■ *How would you describe the emphasis Luther’s writings place on using civil institutions to promote justice and order?*

3. *Has the study or experience of advocacy been part of your religious education? What difference do you think it would make if advocacy was part of faith formation of children, youth, adults and elders?*

4. *Since the time of the Reformation the church has continued to be involved in the reform of our society through the ministry of advocacy. Today, the ELCA uses its messages, statements and resolutions to comment on and guide the church concerning issues of social importance. (See page 23 for an overview of messages, statements and resolutions). Through its own efforts and those of predecessor church bodies, the ELCA has over 100 position papers outlining its perspective on a variety of issues. ELCA social statements are resolutions that are adopted by the Churchwide Assembly. Copies of these statements are shared with the congregations to help them discern the ways they can speak out on these issues. ELCA messages are approved by the ELCA Church Council. ELCA advocacy ministries use these papers to evaluate their position on issues and encourage ELCA members to be involved in caring for our world.*

What experience does your congregation have with messages, statements and resolutions?

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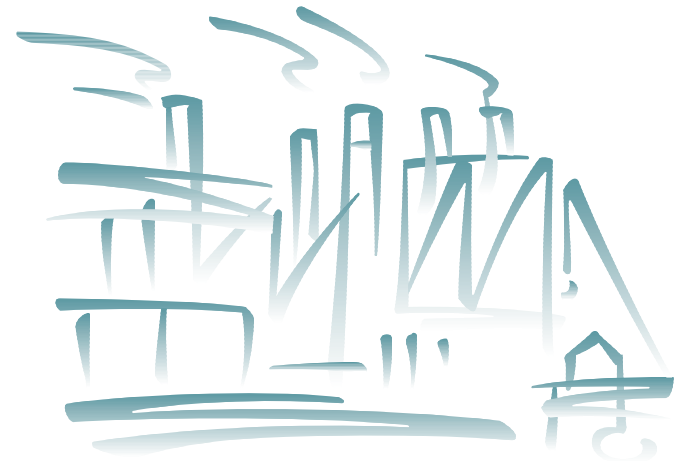
Session Two

TALKING WITH OTHERS *continued*

Before We Go

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ASSIGNMENTS AS A GROUP.

1. Discuss what you see as the role of the government and the role of the church in helping the poor and marginalized. How are they related? How are they different?
2. Assign members of your group to study the issue you have chosen. Be sure to answer the following questions as part of your study:
 - How does your issue affect the poor and marginalized?
 - What is happening with your issue today? Is there any current legislation being worked on?
 - What do the ELCA messages, statements and/or resolutions say about this issue?
 - Check with the advocacy offices of the ELCA to see if they are working on this issue and if they can provide resources.
 - Find out if members of your congregation are already working on this issue—either through advocacy or direct service (ministry to the homebound, food pantry, youth program)
 - Who else is working on this issue? Can you find other local or national coalitions?
 - What government agencies (county, state, national, international) are involved?
 - What are the positions of your elected officials on this issue? Find out their positions by checking their homepage on the Internet or calling their offices and asking their staff.
3. Begin a discussion on what your congregation might do on this issue. How will you get others involved and what do they need to know to be committed to this issue. Don't, however, finalize any plans yet. Instead, use this time to gather answers to the items mentioned above.
4. Close with prayer.



Session Three

DEVELOPING A PLAN

Opening Prayer

*Oh, teach us, Lord, that we may teach
the precious truths which you impart;
And wing our words, that they may reach
the hidden depths of many a heart.*

Hymn 403 *verse 3* *Lutheran Book of Worship*

Let's Get Started

**ADVANCE PREPARATION: USE THE FOLLOWING BIBLE PASSAGES
TO INFORM YOUR RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION.**

Divide the passages listed below among the group. Have each group identify Jesus' advocacy action in each story.

Mark 6:30-44	Luke 16:19-31
Mark 10:17-22	Luke 19:1-10
Luke 4:16-21	John 8: 1-11

Based on your study, what public policy issues might Jesus talk about today? Who would he invite for dinner? What issues would he confront?

Let's Focus

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING OUT LOUD. RESPOND AS A GROUP TO THE QUESTIONS.

In the line of the Hebrews prophets, Jesus is also an advocate. He had a heart for the poor and oppressed people. At the very beginning of his ministry Jesus reading from the prophet Isaiah announced : *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor* (Luke 4:18-19).

How did the government officials respond to Jesus' feeding the hungry, speaking out about the possible dangers of wealth and reminding people that he had come to bring good news to the poor?

How would the government system today respond to Jesus' message about the poor?

In what ways does the church today challenge the government to care for the poor?

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Session Three

Session Three

DEVELOPING A PLAN *continued*

Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

*Have you ever thought of Jesus as an advocate before?
If you did, what helped you see him in that role?
If you didn't, what kept you from seeing it?*

What Does the Bible Say? Mark 14:3-9

ADVANCE PREPARATION: INVITE SOMEONE TO READ MARK 14:3-9.

*What do you think Jesus meant by the words "for you will always have the poor with you?"
What difference do you think it means that Jesus makes this statement on the eve of his crucifixion?
Read Deuteronomy 15:11. Were Jesus' words an excuse for accepting the presence of the poor?
Explain your response.*

How does society's greed and unjust laws work against the poor? Do you know or have you heard of an example when someone can't make it because the system seems against them? This may be a story of racism, sexism, taxation, or simply laws that favor others.

How Can We Help the Poor?

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS.

*What are the reasons people are poor?
Do you associate poverty with laziness or lack of initiative? Why or why not?*

Although there are people who are poor and lazy, statistically poverty is experienced most by the elderly, children and those who have some type of physical or mental infirmity. For those who can not care for themselves, poverty is a cruel and unjust way of life.

What are some of the possible impediments to people making a living wage?

The current minimum wage is not a liveable income. Those who work only one job and are paid the minimum wage must either supplement their income by working several jobs or rely on the religious community, government programs, and/or family and friends to make ends meet. For minimum wage workers the cause of their poverty is the amount of income they earn. This is often complicated by lack of medical insurance, affordable childcare and other benefits that are available to those with a higher discretionary income. The ministry of advocacy calls us to not only provide direct service but to examine the causes of poverty and advocate for change in a system that contributes to poverty.



Let's Talk

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP.

*What are some of the ways you and your congregation can join in advocating for just work policies?
What might be the benefit of arranging a conversation with those who are affected by unjust work practices?
How could you find out what needs they have? How might you respond to those needs?
What are the ways your congregation or individual members are already advocating for the topic you have selected?
What prompted such advocacy work?
Would more people join in this ministry if they knew about it?*

Who me? Change the system?

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE NEXT SECTION. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPANTS TO DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS.

In our opening devotion we read “wing our words, that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart.” Changing a system that will affect the lives of God’s people involves telling people about your issue and changing the hearts of those who have the power to make the difference. It is a process that can often take many years to accomplish. Is it worth the work? Explain your answer.

As you examine and identify the issue your group would like to address, it is important to find out what changes need to be made. They can range from the simple to the complex. You may need to change both state and county and/or federal programs to accomplish your task.

Who do you need to persuade to change the system that affects your issue? Make a list.

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WISCONSIN CHURCH TACKLES WELFARE REFORM

A congregation in Wisconsin began working on welfare reform after an adult forum on domestic abuse. The presenter expressed concern that the coming welfare reform would exclude many women in need of the program

The pastor and a lay member read an executive summary of the plan and made a list of questions. After meeting with their state senator, who helped write the reform plan they realized there were many unanswered questions, and that the plan would not work for those who would slip through the cracks.

They then brought a resolution to their conference convention and their synod assembly urging congregations to educate themselves about the reform plan and to get involved in shaping their own county’s plans. After gathering others, the congregation then pledged itself to this effort and founded an ecumenical action group with partners from other congregations. They became involved with county committees and helped them find solutions for childcare, transportation, employment and other issues.

Congregation members supported the work of those on the committees with their prayers, written letters and continued involvement in advocating for those in their community.

Session Three

DEVELOPING A PLAN *continued*

Before We Go

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ASSIGNMENTS AS A GROUP.

1. Using the research you have done on your chosen issue put together a plan for advocacy.

Consider these ideas as you plan:

- Write down your goal. Be sure it is specific, attainable and measurable.
- Once you have your goal, make a list of what you need to accomplish it.
- Who do you need to be in contact with?
- What other groups do you need to be in contact with?
- Who will you recruit to help?
- What is your time line?

2. Get the word out to your congregation (use your newsletter, adult forums, youth groups, stewardship talks, bulletin boards, and/or a direct letter to members of the congregation).

Write and mail your own letters and publicize any responses you receive.

Contact the media, local library, community center and share your concerns.

Write a letter to the editors of local and community papers.

Write a sample letter on the issue as a model for others to use.

Prior to an election, invite candidates to share their views on this issue.

3. Put your plan in writing and assign group members to the various tasks.

4. Close with prayer.





Make your Letters Count: What to Say

1. *Spell name of official correctly. Use accurate title. For addresses see www.loga.org*
2. *Write your own letter. Don't use a form letter. Handwrite personally or neatly type.*
3. *Use personal stationary with your return address or organization letterhead if authorized to use.*
4. *Be brief! Short paragraphs, too! One page, if possible.*
5. *Be positive! Avoid criticism, veiled threats, name calling, and judgmental statements. Express appreciation for recent speech, vote, or action indicating both your courteousness and your knowledge.*
6. *Address only one issue in a letter.*
7. *State who you are.*
8. *State what you are writing about, what you want done. Come to the point quickly. Be specific.*
9. *Give the reason for your concern, commitment, or request. Draw on personal experience and specific situations. Identify the impact of the issue on people (your family, our community, people in other parts of the world). Identify the human justice aspects of the issue.*
10. *Ask specific questions. The more specific and original, the more thought provoking and the more thoughtful the response. Also ask, "So how do you plan to vote?"*
11. *Summarize and restate main point in last paragraph.*

E-mail or Faxes?

Some legislators are open to receiving letters from constituents by either e-mail or fax. Check with your legislators staff as to what it is the best way to communicate. Be sure to sign your correspondence with your mailing address as well as your e-mail or fax number.

Session four

Session four

T I M E T O A C T

Opening Prayer

*Oh, fill us with your fullness, Lord,
Until our very hearts o'er flow
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Your love to tell, your praise to show.*

Hymn 403 Verse 4 *Lutheran Book of Worship*

Let's Get Started

RESPOND TO EITHER QUESTION.

The ministry of advocacy is the ministry of helping others. The poet Henry Thoreau wrote, "A thousand wacks at the branches is not worth one at the roots." Advocacy is a direct "wack" at the systems that frustrate people and keep them from reaching their God given potential.

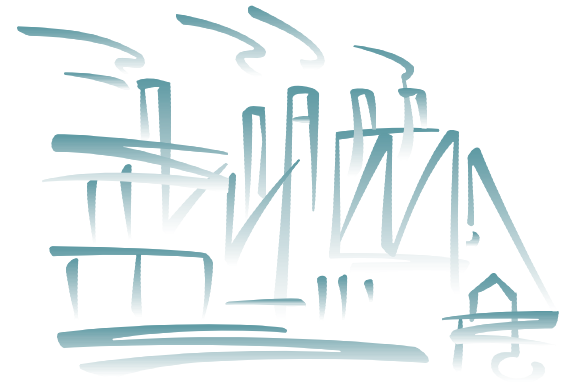
Do you remember a time you were frustrated by a system that kept you from reaching your God given potential? Do you recall a time you helped someone deal with a system that kept them from reaching their God given potential? Briefly describe such a time.

Let's Focus

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING OUT LOUD.

How would you describe the difference between lobbying and advocacy?

In the ministry of advocacy the word "ministry" is used intentionally. We look at legislation and our actions on how they affect poor people first and then ourselves second. This kind of faithful compassion sets us apart from others who try to influence public policy. When congregations often begin talking about advocacy they raise the concern about what is "allowed and not allowed" by the United States Government. There are many things we can do to reflect our faith, theology and spirituality as part of our ministry of advocacy. A number of these are listed in the box on the next page.



ACTION ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER:

- Host a Bible study on the connection between Christian faith and citizenship.
- Pray for all elected leaders, candidates and voters.
- Encourage/organize unbiased voter registration and participation (provide absentee ballots to the sick and shut-in, college students, and military personnel; provide transportation to polling places and day care for voters).
- Offer your church as a polling site.
- Develop a broad list of issues around which to determine candidates views (showing no bias for/against a particular party or candidate).
- Gather the opinions of candidates for a particular office on those issues (fairly-worded/unbiased candidate questionnaires, neutral candidates' forum).



Let's Talk

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SURVEY AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND DISCUSS YOUR RESPONSES AS A GROUP.

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| Is it proper for an individual to endorse/oppose candidates or parties? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Is it proper for a congregation to endorse/oppose candidates or parties? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Is it proper for an individual to contribute money/time/space/ mailing lists to a candidate/party? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Is it proper for a congregation to contribute money/time/space/ mailing lists to a candidate/party? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Is proper for an individual to distribute/display campaign literature? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Is it proper for a congregation to distribute/display campaign literature? | Yes ___ | No ___ |
| Do you agree with the statement: Churches may talk- and should talk- about issues, but never talk about the parties and candidates? | Yes ___ | No ___ |

Please note: Congregations who endorse only one candidate, contribute money/time/space/ mailing list to only one candidate, or display campaign literature for only one candidate may jeopardize their tax exempt status.

to next page

Session four

TIME TO ACT

continued



What Does the Bible Say? Luke 10:25-37

**ADVANCE PREPARATION: INVITE SOMEONE TO READ LUKE 10:25-37.
DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS A GROUP.**

Were you surprised that Jesus makes the Samaritan the principal actor in this story? According to the law of the day, a neighbor was another Jew, not a non-Israelite. Describe how Jesus turns this discussion from who is qualified for my help to what need can I meet.

The Good Samaritan model of advocacy reaches beyond those in our community to others in our world. How is your congregation involved in Good Samaritan ministry? Describe what it is like in your congregation when attempts are made to go beyond community concerns and become involved in national and global realities.

Good Samaritan Advocacy

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP

Imagine you are a part of this story. You know that almost weekly someone is being robbed and left for dead along this road. What is the advocacy potential here? As an advocate what is your action?

Now make the discussion more personal to your community. Who are the Samaritans- the people in your community that might not be considered neighbors? What needs to be done to help them in a time of need? What will you do to advocate for them?

Now make this discussion more global. Who are the Samaritans—those that are considered outcasts in our world? What needs to be done to help them? What is our role in helping them?

Advocacy and Elected Officials

INVITE SOMEONE TO READ THE FOLLOWING.

Many people are afraid of visiting with their elected officials about their concern. They conjure up images of being quizzed or challenged and not having enough information. Most elected officials are enthusiastic about meeting with their constituents. They often learn from their local people what issues are really important. They also concede that with the thousand of issues that are open for discussion they can not be an expert on all of them. They do not expect that from you either. What is important to remember in your visit is that your vote counts and that by telling them that you represent your committee your vote multiplies.

When we insist and persist to bring the needs of the poor and the marginalized before others then we are claiming their worth and God's love. Our ministry of advocacy is our witness for social justice to the world.

Before We Go

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP

Now you have a plan. You have picked an issue, studied the background material, looked for others to build a coalition, written a letter and started involving your congregation. What's next? Prayer.

- 1.** Encourage your congregation to pray for the ministry of advocacy and elected officials- even if it is not election time. Check out the prayers in the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 43.
- 2.** Check over your list of who else can you involve. Consider involving youth, confirmands, families and elders in an advocacy project. Ask the youth group or youth adult class to host the candidate night of your congregation. Consider a field trip to an ELCA advocacy office or to a legislators office who is willing to talk about their own faith and their political decisions.
- 3.** Look over your goal statement and time line. Is your time line realistic?
- 4.** Close with Prayer

Final words

One of the important parts of being an effective advocate is to understand that faithfulness is part of the witness we make. It is true that we will not win all our battles, sometimes even those that seem to be simple. What is important to remember is that we need to be present in the world of public policy to be an effective witness. We are in this discussion as witnesses of justice. That in itself is an important part of our effectiveness and our faithfulness.

Remember our opening prayer: *"Oh, fill us with your fullness, Lord until our very hearts overflow. In kindling thoughts and glowing word, your love to tell, your praise to show."* (LBW 403 vs.4) Our witness to the world of public policy is one of telling God's love for God's people. It is one of the ways that we show that overflowing love of God to others. When we insist and persist to bring the needs of the poor and the marginalized before others then we are claiming their worth and God's love. Our ministry of advocacy is our witness for social justice to the world.

It takes time to be effective. Members of congregations who have been involved in advocacy for a long time can tell you stories of how they worked with a legislator for a number of years before they were able to convince them of the necessary changes that needed to be made. They may also tell you that just "getting your foot in the door" is a great beginning. ■

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF...

One congregation which had a significant ministry with the homeless tried to get the county to add to its budget a line for funding health services for the poor. They asked for \$100,000 to begin with.

After several years they were finally able to convince the board of supervisors to put a line in the budget and fund it at \$15,000. Although this was far from what their original goal had been they were able to show that this was an effective program and gradually over the years they increased the funding to their final goal.

They were both patient and effective.

Pointers

HOW TO VISIT YOUR LEGISLATOR

Before your visit:

1. Make an appointment
2. Brief yourself about your representative
3. Define the objectives of your visit:
 - To get acquainted?
 - To discuss specific issues? (Limit the number.)
 - To share information? (Be well-versed on your subject matter.)

While you're there

1. Introduce yourself, giving brief information on:
 - Place of residence
 - Church membership
 - Occupation, student status, volunteer involvements
 - Voter/political involvement
 - Group you are representing (if any)
2. Set climate of visit
 - Be on time
 - Be positive and friendly—not argumentative
 - Acknowledge areas of agreement
 - Acknowledge areas of appreciation
 - State reason for visit
 - Be concise and specific
 - Identify your position or that of the group you represent
 - Leave a written summary of your position, reference material and calling card.

During the conversation:

1. Meet and write down names of staff person assigned your issue of concern
2. Don't let questions or comments derail your purpose
3. Admit you need to think more about a new point raised; Ask if they will consider written response later.
4. Ask specific questions; request specific responses.
5. Explore options of attending committee meetings or hearings, visiting galleries, etc.

After your visit:

1. Debrief
 - Talk with members of your group
 - Inform others about what was learned
2. Write a letter:
 - Thank legislator for visit
 - Summarize the visit
 - Identify follow-up steps committed by legislator and self.



R E S O U R C E S

Messages and Social Statements

The ELCA Church Council has adopted eight messages:The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict (1989); A Changing Europe: Peace and the Churches (1990); Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment (1990); End-of-Life Decisions (1992); Community Violence (1994); Sexuality: Some Common Convictions (1996); and Immigration (1998).

The Churchwide Assembly has adopted seven social statements: Abortion (1991); The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective (1991); The Death Penalty (1991); Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice (1993); Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture (1993); For Peace in God's World (1995); and Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All (1999).

Copies of all Resolution, Message and Social Statements can be obtained by contacting the Division for Church in Society or downloaded at www.elca.org/dcs/studies.html

Resources

Division for Church in Society
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631
800-638-3522
www.elca.org/dcs.html

ELCA Advocacy Offices
Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs
122 C St. NW
Suite 125
Washington, DC 20001
202-783-7507
www.loga.org

Lutheran Office for World Community
777 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017
212-808-5360
www.elca.org/dcs.lowc.html

Corporate Social Responsibility
9625 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
412-367-7575
www.elca.org/dcs/corp.html

State Public Policy Advocacy Offices
122 C. St. NW, Suite 125
Washington, DC 20001
202-626-7936
www.elca.org/dcs/state.html

For specific resources on issues that may include background sheets, action alerts, education packets and study guides contact the appropriate ELCA advocacy office. Check the web sites for many resources and/or contact the office for recommendations on specific issues.

"Advocacy Sampler" A packet containing brochures, action alerts, bookmarks, and other materials to help congregations to become involved in the ministry of advocacy. Free. Contact the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs.

"Legislative Update" A bi-monthly newsletter that updates congregations on current federal issues and the ELCA's position. Free. Contact the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs for a subscription.

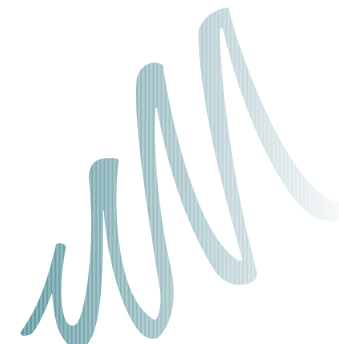
"A Voice in God's World" A 17 minute video that tells the story of advocacy in the ELCA. Includes skill building such as letter writing and visiting your legislator. Includes study guide. Contact Augsburg Fortress 1-800-328-4648. Order code # 67-1250. Cost: Shipping and Handling

"Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues" An introductory guide for congregations to engage in dialog on tough social issues. Can be downloaded at www.elca.org/dcs/studies or Augsburg Fortress at 1-800-328-4648. Order code # 69-8681. Cost \$1.00

"The Giving Market" A hunger resource offering children a hands on opportunity to learn about hunger as they respond to local and global needs. The Market features a Global Deli and a Do It Yourself kit with Step by Step Resource Guide to help set the stage for your very own deli and market. Augsburg Fortress at 1-800-328-4648. Order code #67-3613 for Resource Guide and #67-3611 for the Accessory Pack.

The Study Circles Resource Center offers study materials on a variety of social issues and offers training to congregations wanting to explore community issues with other congregations in which faith perspectives are part of the process. Study Circles, P.O. Box 203, 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret, Connecticut, 06258, 860-928-2616 www.studyircles.org

To find your nearest Lutheran Social Ministry Organization contact Lutheran Services in America, 2177 Youngman Avenue St. Paul, MN 55116. Phone: 651-696-0324, www.lutheranservices.org/html





That we may speak...
OUR MINISTRY OF ACTION

*A step-by-step guide to help congregations choose
an issue and begin a ministry of advocacy*