



## Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

#### Program Summary

Consider your church, organization, JustFaith Ministries small group, and/or yourself as an individual:

- *Do you want to take action for justice, but you aren't quite sure how to get started?*
- *Are you already taking action for justice, but you'd like to learn how to be more effective in your work?*
- *Do you want to get your family, friends, church, or community involved, but you sometimes feel you are the only one doing the work?*

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, this program was written for you and your community.

*Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice* introduces participants to tools for action, advocacy, and organizing that are rooted in the Christian tradition and have inspired ordinary and extraordinary change-makers throughout history. This skills-based program, which can be conducted virtually or in-person, will begin by guiding your group in discerning a justice concern (e.g. creating more affordable housing opportunities or improving water quality) on which you will focus throughout your time together. Then, with that justice concern in mind, *Just Action* will introduce tools and principles to help you stand in solidarity with those affected by the issue, mobilize others for action, and advocate effectively for lasting change. During the final sessions, *Just Action* will guide participants in articulating an specific, achievable goal around their chosen focus area and creating a 1-3 month action plan that incorporates the skills introduced in the program.

*Just Action* reflects JustFaith Ministries' commitment to racial justice. Though we believe the tools offered in this program will be relevant to people across the political and theological spectrum, it is important that prospective participants be aware of JustFaith Ministries'



commitment to justice, particularly anti-racism.<sup>1</sup> In addition, this program requires a certain level of time and commitment: prospective participants should plan to attend all sessions, complete the reading assignments and spiritual practices (1-2 hours per week), and commit to taking action for justice both during the program and for up to three months after the program has finished.

*Just Action* is different from other JustFaith Ministries programs. This program is ideal for groups who:

1. Have completed another JustFaith Ministries program together, AND/OR share an interest in a particular justice concern, AND/OR live in the same town or city.
2. Can commit to carrying out a 1-3 month action plan after the program is finished.
3. Are ready to get to work!

## **Goals for *Just Action!* How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice**

- Deepen participants' understanding of biblical justice.
- Equip participants to take effective and sustainable action that reflects the values of their faith.
- Guide the group in creating an achievable and time-bound plan of action, which they will carry out together after Session 8.
- Introduce principles for working in solidarity with communities experiencing the effects of injustice.
- Provide tools for mobilizing churches and communities for action.

## **Overview of Sessions**

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<sup>1</sup> We define “anti-racism” based on this description from the National Museum of American History & Culture: “When we choose to be Anti-Racist, we become actively conscious about race and racism and take actions to end racial inequities (individual, systemic, and structural) in our daily lives. Being Anti-Racist is believing that racism is everyone’s problem, and we all have a role to play in stopping it.”



**Discernment Retreat:** During this three-hour time of prayer, sharing, and discernment, your group will begin building the trust and community you'll need to engage in faith-rooted action together. During the second half of the retreat, your group will discern a justice concern on which you will focus for the remainder of the program.

**Session 1: Storytelling** — Storytelling is deeply ingrained in the Christian tradition and is a powerful way to seek the justice of God's Kin-dom. During this session, participants learn to tell the story of who they are in light of their faith, their communities, and the justice concern their group has selected.

**Session 2: People Power** — Conventional wisdom holds that power rests at the top. However, through nonviolent action, ordinary people can strategically unite to overturn conventional wisdom by taking justice into their own hands.

**Session 3: Nothing about Us Without Us (Guest Speaker)** — During the first half of the session, participants hear from a guest speaker who is responding to the same (or similar) justice concern as your group. During the second half, the group discerns ways to stand in solidarity with communities affected by the injustices the group is seeking to address.

**Immersion** — The group practices conducting a research visit, during which they connect with another group or organization who is working on the issue the group is addressing.

**Session 4: Base Building** — Participants discuss tools for mobilizing their churches, workplaces, and communities to take action for justice.

**Session 5: Community Care** — A community often has the assets it needs to create change. .... But we often discount the gifts, skills, and resources of those experiencing the effects of injustice! This session introduces a technique for organizing a community's assets in order to help bring about the justice of God's Kin-dom.

**Session 6: Demystifying Advocacy** — The group discusses creative and effective ways to speak truth to power through advocacy.

**Session 7: Nonviolent Direct Action** — Following the model of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement, participants discern ways they can engage in nonviolent direct action to advance their work for justice.

**Session 8: Next Steps** — The group solidifies an action plan and accountability for moving forward.



## **Books for *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice*:**

- ***The Climate Resistance Handbook* by Daniel Hunter:** Though this book uses climate resistance as its primary case study, its practical tools for organizing and advocacy are directly relevant to whichever issue your group chooses to address.
- ***We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*, edited by Liz Theoharis:** This book introduces a theological foundation for advocacy, organizing, and action.
- **"White Supremacy Culture" by Tema Okun:** Though this article is free and available online, it is listed here because it is a major part of the program. Relationships are the building blocks to social change; Okun's piece guides participants in cultivating relationships in a way that honors God's image in themselves and others.

## **Immersion and Guest Speakers**

A key aspect of all JustFaith Ministries programs is the opportunity to enter into the story of others' lives. In *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice*, your group will do this in part by hearing from people who are already working on the same justice concern your group has selected. In this way, the group will practice conducting a research visit, an essential component of organizing and relationship-building.

Session 3 includes space to hear from a community leader who has experience with your group's topic. Between Session 3 and 4 is an immersion experience in which your group will visit with an organization working on your group's focus area. For example, if your group has chosen affordable housing as its focus area, you may invite a city council member working on the issue to be your guest speaker, and you might set up an immersion experience with staff at your local Housing Authority.

The timing of these events is different from that in other JustFaith Ministries programs because the guest speaker and immersion experience will lay the groundwork for partnership and solidarity, themes that are foundational to the rest of the program. Facilitators set up the guest speaker and immersion experience with the individual/organization and use the program materials to guide the group in prayerful reflection around their experience. Both opportunities can be conducted over video conferencing or in-person.

## **Virtual Tools**



Our programs are available for both in-person and virtual use. If you are meeting in-person, check with health guidelines to ensure that it is safe to do so. JustFaith Ministries provides training and support for using Zoom.

## **Facilitator Support**

The JustFaith Ministries staff is available to support you throughout your JustFaith journey. Whether you have a question about navigating a difficult conversation within your group, or if you aren't sure how to access an online video, simply give us a call and we will walk you through it. In addition, our website offers facilitator training tools, videos, and live events: <https://justfaith.org/resources/facilitator-training>

We encourage co-facilitation when possible. The role of “facilitator” is to ensure that all group members’ voices are heard, the guidelines for holy dialogue are followed, and the sessions are organized. You don’t need to be a clergyperson, be an expert on the material, or have experience leading conversations in order to facilitate a JustFaith Ministries program.