

How to engage in faithful advocacy



3 goals to keep in mind

Relate. Most people are willing to hear your perspective if you take time to develop a positive, respectful relationship with them.

Educate. People you work with will want to clearly understand why an issue is important before they are willing to get involved. Take time to lay the groundwork. The more people understand, the more enthusiastic they will be as advocates.

Act. Studying and discussing social issues among ourselves isn't enough. We need to become a part of the public witness and advocacy process. Visit your members of Congress when they are in town. Invite them to address your church. Send a card, letter or e-mail to legislators. Make phone calls. Write letters to the editor. Talk to friends and neighbors. Take a stand.

Let your voice be heard!

Sign up for 'Faith in Action'

The General Board of Church & Society's briefing and action newsletter. Go to www.umc-gbcs.org/fia to see recent issues and to register at no charge.

Sign up for UMPower Action Alerts

At General Board of Church & Society's Web site www.umpower.org. You will be alerted when bills are being considered that need immediate response.

- Sign up for all GBCS alerts or join a particular Action Network:
 - Alcohol & Other Addictions
 - Civil and Human Rights
 - Economic Justice
 - Environmental Justice
 - Health and Wholeness
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Peace with Justice
 - United Methodists Against the Death Penalty
 - United Nations (Isaiah Circle)
 - Women & Children's Issues

Read and study the Social Principles

Teach them at church and seminaries. Include the Social Principles in new member, confirmation and Sunday school classes. Teach them to pastors and lay leaders, young adults and Volunteer in Mission teams. To arrange this, contact Neal Christie, (202) 488-5611 or nchristie@umc-gbcs.org.

Bring a group to a UM Seminar

Seminars, in Washington, D.C., explore in depth a justice issue you choose. Contact Susan Burton at (202) 488-5609 or sburton@umc-gbcs.org for more information.

Bring a confirmation class to The United Methodist Building

On Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Contact Clayton Childers at (202) 488-5642 or cchilders@umc-gbcs.org to schedule a visit.

Study current public policy issues from a faith perspective

Think about root causes and effects. Look for the story behind the story. Read critically. Ask questions. Don't be satisfied with sound bites.

Promote United Methodist Special Sundays

Human Relations Day is in January; Peace with Justice is first Sunday after Pentecost. These provide resources to promote justice work in your annual conference and beyond. Free materials (posters, offering envelopes, etc.) are available at (888) 346-3862 or www.umcgiving.org.

Become a United Nations Advocate

In your church or annual conference. Interpret the U.N.'s work. Also advocate for U.N. reform so it might become an even stronger force for world peace, security and health. Contact Liberato Bautista at our office in New York, (212) 682-3633 or lbautista@umc-gbcs.org.

Organize a United Nations Ministry visit

Contact Liberato Bautista at (212) 682-3633 or lbautista@umc-gbcs.org.

Promote United Nations Sunday and Trick or Treat for UNICEF

In October. Contact our U.N. office at (212) 682-3633, lbautista@umc-gbcs.org or go to www.umc-gbcs.org for more information.

Participate in your local congregation's 'Church and Society' work

This will serve as an avenue for education and advocacy in your local community and beyond. Stay in touch. Learn from one another. Know you are not alone.

Participate with United Methodist Women

Like the General Board of Church & Society, the UMW offers excellent resources on a wide range of issues of public concern.



For more details, contact

The Rev. Clayton Childers

Director for Conference Relations

General Board of Church & Society

(202) 488-5642 or cchilders@umc-gbcs.org

Protect your tax-exempt status.

Do not lead your congregation to endorse particular candidates or political parties. Do not support these with the church's resources. This would put the congregation's tax-exempt status at risk.

Instead, focus on issues: What are the issues we need to be concerned about as people of faith? How can we add our voices to the public debate? How can we become advocates for God's Shalom in our community and throughout the world?

Why promote 'church and society' ministry

Remember: Advocacy ministry is biblical

Consider the ministry of Moses, Esther, Jeremiah, the other prophets. Remember Jesus challenging the unjust systems of his society that oppressed women, lepers, Samaritans, the poor, the ill. Remember the cleansing of the temple. Recall the public witness of the disciples and the Apostle Paul. Remember the early church's faithfulness even under oppression by the powers of the day. Remember "The Book of Revelation" written to the oppressed/persecuted church. Don't forget Micah 6:8's call to not only love kindness, walk humbly but also to "do justice." Advocacy ministry is **a central part of our biblical call!**

Remember: Our primary task is to 'make disciples for the transformation of the world'

Church and society ministry **helps form whole disciples**, who care about the world and its brokenness as much as God cares; compassionate disciples who respond not only with ministries of service and mercy, but who are also passionate about transforming the unjust systems that are failing so many of our world's "least of these." (Matthew 25)

Remember: Our call to Christian education

Lead the church to **learn what it means to be a faithful Christian**, to actually follow in the Christ's footsteps. At times we must be challenged to grow beyond our comfort zones, to be pushed by the call of Christ.

Remember:

Jesus' ministry in the public square

How much of Jesus' ministry was actually conducted in the temple or synagogues as opposed to the city squares, roads, villages, hillsides, lakes and plains? Jesus lived and worked in the real world. Where is our ministry as a church happening? Where is our energy expended? Are we really following in the footsteps of Jesus if we fail to promote the ministry of the church bearing **witness to the world-transforming love of God through word and deed**? We need an organized voice that helps extend the ministry of the local church into the "public squares" of our communities, states, nation and world.

Remember: Our call to evangelism

Many people have written off the church because they haven't heard **the whole message of God**: that God passionately loves the world and we are called to be faithful stewards of creation (ecology); that Jesus Christ is prince of peace and we are called to be peacemakers, (peace advocates); that we are called to love all people, welcome everyone in grace and love to worship and serve God; that our savior opened his arms wide on the cross, and in so doing proclaimed the message that "there is nothing you can do to me to make me stop loving you."

How can we reach religion's "cultured despisers," those compassionate, but secular people who might only think of the church as an "opiate of the people," preoccupied with pie in the sky and not about transforming the here and now? They see the church as detached from the world or even as a negative influence. **They need to be introduced to Jesus the person**, not the caricature.

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Share the message in positive ways

- Ways that invite learning together; that don't divide us into judgmental divisions of good and bad, righteous and evil.
- Consider how to talk more about what we are *for* and less about what we are *against*.
- Paint a vision of what God desires for creation.

For more details, contact

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