

Chapter 2

Advocacy for Economic Justice

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the practice of actively supporting a cause, an idea, or a policy. Advocacy can even be done on behalf of an individual, a corporation, or an institution. There is at least one scriptural reference to Jesus as our advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1). As used in this manual, advocacy will refer to the practice of seeking change in a program or policy, sometimes a public policy, sometimes in the practice of a private corporation, or sometimes even within a religious institution such as the Episcopal Church.

When advocacy is carried out by an individual, that person can be called an “advocate” or sometimes an “activist.” Organizations that engage in advocacy primarily or exclusively are referred to as advocacy groups or advocacy organizations. Many professions have an advocacy component. Thus, we speak of advocacy planning, advocacy journalism, and advocacy law. Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, has done more than perhaps any individual in recent history to illustrate the potential impact of advocacy. Advocates often provide leadership or serve as a charismatic catalyst for a social movement. We associate Betty Friedan with the modern feminist movement; Marian Wright Edelman with children’s rights, Cesar Chavez with the farm workers’ movement, and Martin Luther King with the civil rights movement.

Why is the Episcopal Church involved in public policy advocacy?

Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, in the introduction to *Engage God’s Mission: Policy for Action*, makes the case for church involvement in the public policy area. “My

answer is always the same. In the words of Jesus: ‘Just as you did it to the least of these...you did it unto me.’ Americans are possessed of enormously generous spirits; our policies need to reflect our national spirit of generosity and caring rather than reflecting the immediate concerns of particular interest groups.”

The Presiding Bishop goes on to say: “In the recitation of our baptismal covenant, when we are asked if we will ‘strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being,’ we respond boldly, ‘I will with God’s help.’ The terms of the baptismal covenant are quite clear... they root us in the historic faith of the undivided church... Our religious voice in the public square is a staple of who we are as part of the Anglican Communion.” [See EXAMPLE A]

Advocacy is rooted in our biblical faith, our Anglican identity and our role in carrying out God’s mission. “We live in a world that cries out for reconciliation, and reconciliation, as our prayer book tells us, is nothing less than the mission of the Church.” (Bishop Griswold, 2003). The prophetic tradition, which goes back to the Old Testament roots of the Church, is a rich source of inspiration for advocacy. The existence of justice is indeed the major Old Testament criterion for whether God’s people are keeping the covenant.

*Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream*
(Amos 5:24)

The idea that God expects his people to work for justice as well as charity is explicit in such passages as these:

Example A**Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)**

The Mission: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) brings together Clergy and Laity from all faiths to achieve a just society that proclaims human dignity for all people, particularly in the areas of low-wage work and health care.

The Goal: To organize among clergy and laity in support of living wages, just working conditions and health care for all workers in the Los Angeles Area.

The Program Activities:

1. Promote the principle of Living Wages as public policy,
2. Support workers organizing for better wages and working conditions, and
3. Advocate for a strong safety net for the unemployed and underemployed.

Current programs at the center include programs for nursing home workers, hotel and restaurant workers, LAX airport workers, home care workers and a chaplaincy program.

The History and Methods: CLUE was formed early in 1996 by people of faith in Los Angeles who wanted to add the voice of clergy and laity to the struggle for a living wage ordinance. Early on CLUE drafted and adopted a brief theological statement as its purpose statement.

In the Los Angeles living wage campaign, CLUE's sustained involvement at several levels over a period of 18 months was crucial to its successful outcome. Subsequent to that, CLUE obtained funding from foundations and religious groups and set up an office. In the years since, CLUE has been in the forefront of workers' struggles for justice in the region, for example, organizing major processions to support hotel workers in their fights to obtain fair contracts and for Los Angeles Airport workers and Janitors in their quest for a living wage and the right to join a union, speaking out at City Council and City committee hearings on behalf of workers' rights, and joining in the effort to get real wages for Workfare recipients. Since its founding, CLUE has widely promoted yearly "Labor Day in the Pulpit" liturgies, activities and sermons, using materials produced by Interfaith Worker Justice. Educationally, CLUE has produced a widely-used 30-minute video, recently translated into Spanish.

CLUE has grown significantly and now includes well-known religious leaders and representatives of most major faiths. It has firmed up its structure and programs, established working groups overseeing various program components, and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization. The president of its Board of Directors is the Reverend James M. Lawson, Jr., a nationally prominent civil rights leader and justice advocate. Represented on the board are workers in addition to clergy and laity of various faiths, with diversity in ethnic and gender representation.

Each program creates a committee formed by clergy and lay persons. Strategic planning advocacy and leadership development are part of the fundamental teachings of the committee. CLUE engages in direct collaboration with the support of workers in their work places.

Prophetic Tradition

How terrible it will be for those who make unfair laws and those who write laws that make life hard for people. They are not fair to the poor, and they rob my people of their rights. They allow people to steal from widows and to take from orphans what really belongs to them (Isaiah 10:1-2)

The Psalms

God always keeps his promises; God judges in favor of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry (Psalm 146: 6-7). Happy are those who are concerned for the poor; the Lord will help them when they are in trouble (Psalm 41: 1 TEV)

The Wisdom Literature

If you refuse to listen to the cry of the poor, your own cry will not be heard. (Ws. 21:13) Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Defend the rights of the poor and the needy. (Ws. 31:8-9)

These and other passages invite us to reflect on such questions as:

- What are unfair laws?
- What does it mean today to judge in favor of the oppressed?
- What are the rights of the destitute?
- How do these Biblical views of poverty differ from the so-called Protestant ethic which says the poor are undeserving and morally defective?

James, in his teaching, affirmed the Old Testament tradition for the new covenant when he admonished the twelve tribes in the dispersion: Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in

their affliction... (James 2:27). We are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 2:22).

The example of Jesus is our guide and inspiration. He had a special sense of mission to poor and oppressed people – evidence that, in him, the Messianic promises were being fulfilled. At the outset of his ministry, Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and read from the prophet Isaiah (Rev. J. Bennett Guess, UCC ministries, www.ucc.org/cgi-bin/advprint.cgi):

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has appointed 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 Lord's favor. (Luke 4: 18-19)

Further Old and New Testament references can be found at

<http://www.ucc.org/justice/bf.htm>.

The Episcopal Church has a long tradition of social advocacy. The current era of practice began with the founding of the Detroit Industrial Mission by Hugh White in 1956 and is now firmly institutionalized in two ways – (1) the adoption of resolutions that address public policy and corporate practice by General Convention and Executive Council and (2) the work of the Washington Office and the Episcopal Public Policy Network which it organizes and supports.

How do we do advocacy?

The Episcopal Church engages in advocacy through resolutions at General Convention, Executive Council statements, or, on occasion, statements by the Presiding Bishop. In Episcopal Church polity, policy statements often filter up from the individual congregational, diocesan, or provincial level rather than from the top down. Once an advocacy position is adopted through a resolution, the Washington Office, through the

Episcopal Public Policy Network, seeks to engage Episcopalians nationally to express the church's position to legislators or other policy makers. The Peace and Justice Ministries Office based in New York also plays an important role in implementing the official policies of the Episcopal Church, but this is mainly through program development rather than policy advocacy.

Episcopalians who join the Episcopal Public Policy Network receive regular policy alerts that help them to track legislation. Statewide and diocesan public policy networks help members keep up with state legislation. The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ) helps keep its members informed through a listserv. ENEJ also provides economic justice education materials, issue briefs, and other support to network members and others.

Many Episcopalians are also engaged in local community-based organizations that advocate for changes in local, state or federal policies. Examples of these are included both in this section and in the section on community organizing. Local and statewide organizations often work together to schedule "advocacy days" in state capitals. At these events, large numbers of people demonstrate and lobby with state officials to oppose or propose legislation affecting "safety net" services for working families, including health, education, and other community services. There are current campaigns in several states to raise the minimum wage. In other states, current economic justice issues under consideration include equity in education and expanding health coverage for children. Immigrant rights is currently another major issue for advocates both at the federal and many state levels. **[See EXAMPLE B]**

In Chapter 5, we address those aspects of social advocacy related to socially responsible investing. These include shareholder resolutions. Product boycotts are another means of advocacy. In the sixties, for example, Christians were asked to

boycott grapes in support of farm workers' efforts to organize. More recently, certain retail stores have been boycotted because of their labor practices. Close to home there is the issue of fair compensation for church workers. Steve Knight of Holy Trinity of New York City points out that all church staff should be paid a living wage by local standards. He also suggests that if the ratio separating the highest and lowest compensated staff is greater than 5:1 immediate redress is called for.

Example B

Interfaith Prayer Service for Immigrant Dignity and Recognition Arizona State Capitol

At a time when legislation would further restrict the rights of immigrants, Interfaith leaders of Arizona called on people of faith to gather at the state capitol for an interfaith prayer service. Its purposes were defined as follows:

- To call for moderation and civility in the dialogue about immigration
- To call for a leadership with vision that uplifts the aspiration of the community
- To present the contributions of immigrants to our society
- To remind the community that immigrants have enhanced, not diminished, our community.

Arizona State Capitol Senate Lawn
1700 West Washington, Phoenix, AZ
Tuesday, April 4, 2006
10 a.m. - Noon

A recent example of advocacy is that of Executive Council (March 2006) declaring strong opposition to any legislation that would make it unlawful for faith-based organizations to relieve “the suffering of undocumented immigrants in response to the Gospel mandate to serve the least among us and our Baptismal Covenant to seek

and serve Christ in all persons.” Episcopalians throughout the country joined others in public demonstrations and in writing to members of Congress.

Steps in the Advocacy Process

If your congregation is ready to consider adding advocacy in addition to the charity work you are already doing this manual offers an array of resources. You may want to begin using the charity and justice material from Chapter 1. Then engage in Bible study using material and the above citations. Further material is provided in Appendix A and more advocacy models are listed in Appendix F. Then follow these suggested steps in the advocacy process.

1. Prioritize an issue relevant to your community. This may be done through local consultation or survey or by reviewing the issue papers provided in this manual (Appendix D) or the summary of General Convention Resolutions (Appendix E).
2. Engage in reflection and discussion using materials from this manual, EPPN, or your local or diocesan advocacy network or public policy staff.
3. Join the ENEJ listserv and EPPN to receive policy alerts. For advocacy ideas and campaigns in a particular area, consult one of the internet enhanced networks such as Interfaith Worker Justice, Children’s Defense Fund, or Episcopal Global Network. Links to these and other networks can be found at <http://www.enej.org/Resources.htm>.
4. Set up an email list and/or telephone network.
5. Select appropriate means of communicating with policymakers. These can include testimony before city council or other public bodies, letter writing campaigns or petitions, or vigils or other demonstrations.
6. Continue the education of parishioners through established congregational channels such as sermons, vestry meetings, education hour. [See EXAMPLE C]

Example C

Program

The Church of Our Saviour (COS) has numerous active ministries. These include a youth program and an adult education (GED) program. The congregation is diverse in terms of race, class, and sexual orientation. Advocacy work includes support for hotel workers (SEIU) and local 911 which is organizing hospital workers. The church is, in effect, a worker support center reaching out to low wage, largely Hispanic, workers.

Theology

The church should make a difference in the world. Christians should be willing to confront injustice and take the discomfort that goes with that. Faith is supposed to transform the world. Members of our congregation understand how the liturgy reaches into the community and accomplishes solidarity (with the oppressed).

Methods

1. COS is known as an activist church committed to social justice. Requests come frequently to help with various causes.
2. The vestry discusses requests and makes commitments to sanction the activity and/or allocate resources.
3. An elaborate church bulletin goes to an e-mail list.
4. People also hear about events and campaigns in church. Through speakers, literature, and announcements. Recently, some of the SEIU workers came to speak.
5. Members use sign-up lists to volunteer for rallies and other events. The Church responds and builds relationships in the movement.
6. The church facility and hospitality is available to workers, to meet, worship or celebrate.
7. There is always preparation going on in the parish to make the connection between what faith does and what liturgy enacts with what is happening in the world.
8. Pastoral care is provided to worker groups.
9. Liturgy. Special services are held on Hispanic feast days (e.g., Day of the Dead) combined with an action downtown to support hotel workers organizing efforts. On Ash Wednesday, the service emphasized the need for societal repentance and the need for justice.
10. Parishioners who cannot participate support efforts by prayer and letter writing.

Contact:

Mother Paula Jackson
 Church of Our Saviour
 65 East Hollister Street
 Cincinnati, OH 45219
 (513) 241-1870
www.forministry.com/45219cos

National Justice for Janitors Day

From the bulletin of the Church of Our Saviour, Cincinnati, Ohio

SAVE THE DATE! National Justice for Janitors Day Wednesday, June 15, 2005 4:30 pm Fountain Square

“Justice for Janitors is about a better future. Although my company makes threats and harasses janitors, we are going to continue to stand up for our rights. We are fighting for respect and to be treated like humans.” – Wilberto Pacheco (Jancoa Inc. janitor fired for his union support).

Join janitors and other political, faith, and community supporters as they march for justice on National Justice for Janitors Day. Cincinnati commercial office janitors are fighting for livable wages and affordable healthcare. Their struggle is part of the larger effort to confront the challenges of working poverty in our service-based economy. Justice for Janitors Day is a national day of action for the Service Employees International Union and will kick off this summer’s activities in Cincinnati. For more information, log onto www.cincijanitors.org. The Rector and Vestry of the Church of Our Saviour are among the many religious groups supporting Justice for Janitors.

Example D

Gulf Coast Bishops Call for Justice

The extent to which the concept of justice is now part of the consciousness of the Episcopal Church is illustrated by the letter three Gulf Coast Bishops addressed to Congress in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina:

“...the first devastation, before the havoc wreaked by wind and water, is in fact the poverty.” They cited our baptismal covenant’s call for justice and the dignity of every human being in laying out guidelines for reconstruction.

Episcopal News Service, November 15, 2005 citing a letter by bishops Gray, Duncan, and Jenkins.

7. Network or join forces with other groups in your city, metro area, diocese or state.

8. Establish an evaluation process. Any advocacy effort should include a means of reviewing and reporting results to the congregation to decide whether to continue or move on to other issues and start the steps again.

The steps above are adapted, in part, from material prepared for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Episcopal Appalachian Ministries (EAM). The ELCA web site is an excellent resource for congregations wishing to form an advocacy ministry. These resources include a Public Policy Interest Survey, guidelines for conflict management, issue selection and other aspects of an advocacy ministry. See <http://www.elca.org/churchinsociety/>.

Example E

Rural and Migrant Ministry

The Rev. Richard Witt, Executive Director

Program

For over twelve years, Rural and Migrant Ministries (RMM) has helped coordinate the Justice for Farmworkers Campaign in New York. In New York, as in many states, farmworkers are denied such basic rights as a day of rest and to bargain collectively. Through its advocacy work, RMM has worked to secure the passage of a bill in the state assembly.

Methods

1. The campaign brings together people of faith, labor, and students from across the state to stand together with farmworkers to address their grievances.
2. The campaign has organized marches across the state to help gain support of legislators for reform.
3. These efforts have inspired similar efforts in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.
4. The Episcopal Diocese of New York and three other judicatories became covenanting members.
5. Over 100 Episcopalians help provide ongoing support.

Similar resources are available from the Episcopal Public Policy Network (p. 2-12).

What are the legal limitations on church-based advocacy?

The Interfaith Alliance provides a very clear guide outlining the legal and ethical requirements for clergy and houses of worship. The guide is available at

[http://www.interfaithalliance.org/atf/cf/{05044A38-9516-4831-9AA2-](http://www.interfaithalliance.org/atf/cf/{05044A38-9516-4831-9AA2-E10AFAB8886A}/2004how.pdf)

[E10AFAB8886A}/2004how.pdf](http://www.interfaithalliance.org/atf/cf/{05044A38-9516-4831-9AA2-E10AFAB8886A}/2004how.pdf) The guide affirms the role of religious organizations in advocacy, but stresses the importance that clergy members and publications produced by houses of worship not give the appearance of endorsing or opposing specific candidates. This is the major activity that would put the organization's tax exempt status at risk. Congregations should also avoid allowing the distribution of partisan political propaganda on their premises.

Episcopal Resources for Advocacy

The Social Policies of the Episcopal Church

The Office of Government Relations (Washington Office) of the Episcopal Church publishes a summary of the social policies of the Episcopal Church in a booklet entitled *Engage God's Mission: Policy for Action: The Social Policies of the Episcopal Church*. This booklet provides a brief description of various resolutions adopted by General Convention or Executive Council. The categories cover a wide range of social justice issues including economic justice. To order, call (800) 228-0515, or see

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3654_48533_ENG_HTML.htm

The Episcopal Public Policy Network

The Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) is another service of the Washington Office. Individuals who join EPPN (free of charge) receive regular alerts regarding the issues they have chosen to monitor. This enables them to contact their legislators to register their opinion based on church teaching.

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn.htm>

Peace and Justice Ministries

Peace and Justice Ministries is responsible for developing various programs and resources that respond to and implement policies adopted by the Church. To explore

these ministry resources, including the Office of Jubilee Ministries and the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, see <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/peace-justice/index.htm>.

The Office of Jubilee Ministries

The Office of Jubilee Ministries operates a grants program and provides support and technical assistance to a network of some 600 “Jubilee Centers” throughout the United States and Province IX. Many of these centers operate programs that have an economic justice component. Descriptions of these programs are available in print and online at <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/jubilee.htm>. A sample of centers with economic justice ministries can be found in Appendix F.

The Resolutions of General Convention

ENEJ has prepared a brief description of the various resolutions of General Conventions held between 1976 and 2003 relating to economic justice (a somewhat narrower category than social justice). This summary of General Convention resolutions can be found in Appendix E of this manual.

ENEJ Issue Papers

Members of ENEJ’s Advocacy Committee have written short issue papers on many of the major economic justice concerns and issues in contemporary politics. In Appendix D of this manual, the reader will find brief expositions of predatory lending, living wage, taxation, social security, economic justice for women, outsourcing, affordable housing, immigration, socially responsible investing, fair trade, racism, and hunger. This list has been expanded in the second edition. Each paper has an explanation of the issue, church teachings on the subject, and suggested action steps for congregations.

Other Networks in the Church

The Jubilee Ministry network, mentioned above, is an official part of the Episcopal Church structure. The many grassroots networks also offer expertise in their areas of specialty. These include the Episcopal Urban Caucus, the Episcopal Environmental Network, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, Integrity, the Episcopal Aging Ministry and others. Some of their websites are listed here:

- Episcopal Urban Caucus: <http://www.episcopalurbancaucus.org>
- Episcopal Ecological Network: <http://www.eenonline.org>
- Episcopal Peace Fellowship: <http://www.episcopalpeacefellowship.org>
- Integrity: <http://www.integrityusa.org>

Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation (EGR)

This network, with support from the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund, promotes the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), EGR provides educational materials, a listserv, and other support to individuals and congregations wishing to help implement the MDGs. <http://www.episcopalglobalreconciliation.org/>

Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental stability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Every Voice Network

Every Voice Network (EVN) is a web-based ministry informing, supporting, and uniting progressive Anglicans engaged in peace and justice work. EVN

combines journalism, on-line discussions, curriculum, and movement building educational and advocacy events to share information, resources, and technology.

<http://www.everyvoice.net>

National Advocacy Networks

Children's Defense Fund

The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is the most important national child advocacy organization, with numerous state and local offices. CDF is renowned for its statewide reports on the status of children. Activists can subscribe to a listserv and receive regular information on legislative initiatives important to child welfare.

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

Interfaith Worker Justice

Interfaith Worker Justice educates, organizes, and mobilizes the US religious community on issues and campaigns to improve wages, benefits and working conditions for workers, especially low-wage workers. Resources include Faith Works newsletter, liturgical resources for Labor Day, Faithful Citizenship (voter rights) and summer internships. Local affiliates in many cities offer opportunities for involvement.

<http://www.iwj.org>

Related Readings

Inequality Matters: The Growing Economic Divide in America and Its Poisonous Consequences, James Lardner and David A. Smith, eds., The New Press, 2005

In 21 brief chapters, some of the leading commentators on U.S. social policy (such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Christopher Jencks, and Jim Wallis) describe the growing gap between rich and poor, issues of race and class, the erosion of middle class security and other aspects of the current economic scene in this country. Such chapters as Building a Moral Economy and A Prophetic Politics are especially geared to church people interested in advocacy.

The Impact of the Global: An Urban Theology, Laurie Green, Bishop of Bradwell, Anglican Urban Network, Bentley Press, 2001.

This book, a product of the emerging Anglican Urban Network, presents an urban theology within a global perspective. With increasing urbanization in the third world and the bifurcated economy of many metropolitan areas in the developed world, new patterns of urbanization are emerging. The trends are by no means all benign. Many countries maintain models of development based on a primary rural demographic. Bishop Green challenges Christians to become more active in the affairs of the new global city. He offers a view of advocacy based on direct encounter between the poor and the powerful, and calls for networking and a new global awareness.

The New Globalization: Reclaiming the Lost Ground of Our Christian Social Tradition, Richard W. Gillett, with a foreword by Kenneth Leach. The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

The Rev. Canon Richard Gillett is a longtime advocate for the rights of low wage workers and a leader in the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice. His book details growing worldwide inequality, growing power of international financial and corporate institutions, and the related changes in the cultural milieu. He discusses the history of poverty and addresses world debt and other contemporary global issues, and reviews the evolution of Christian and Anglican social teaching to call for a renewed religious engagement. The two final chapters offer advice on how Christians can engage in action and advocacy on behalf of social policies for workers and for human rights in general.