



# WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

## » Congregational Advocacy «

### » RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

Billions of people in the world are struggling with the problems of poverty, hunger, and disease. As people of faith, we can be involved in several different ways to alleviate this pain and care for those who are hurting. Although direct aid is helpful, many of these problems require structural or policy changes to provide long term relief. As congregations, we can influence people in power to make changes that will benefit people who are hurting around the world.

Participating in advocacy efforts as a congregation is an excellent way to be involved in making big changes in large problems. There are many different ways to engage in congregational advocacy. These are a few of the resources that we have found to be helpful in learning more about issues your congregation might be interested in and how to engage in advocacy as a body of faith.

#### Books

- *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* by Ronald Sider, Philip Olson, and Heidi Unruh. Using examples from churches across the country, the authors provide a resource for how to develop holistic ministries that meet both physical and spiritual needs. Their examples include ways to provide direct care to those in need and how to push for policy changes to benefit others.
- *Faith Works: How Faith-Based Organizations are Changing Lives, Neighborhoods and America* by Jim Wallis. This collection of stories provides spiritual lessons on how to put your faith into action. It provides hope that change is possible, and encourages activism on a number of levels.
- *Involving Congregations in Advocacy Now*. This booklet from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (see website below) is an excellent resource for congregations wanting to get involved in advocacy efforts. It provides biblical reasons why a congregation should engage in advocacy, ways a church can advocate, and tips on how effectively advocate.
- *Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations*. This booklet from the Internal Revenue Service explains the guidelines which churches as tax-exempt organizations must follow when involved in any sort of political activities. This document would be helpful to review before planning an advocacy activity and to have on hand during the planning process.

#### Web sites

- **Bread for the World** – [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)  
Bread for the World is an advocacy organization committed to ending hunger domestically and internationally. Its website provides resources to help individuals and churches learn more about hunger and offers ideas for how churches can be involved in hunger related advocacy efforts.
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** – Advocacy, <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy.aspx>  
This website provides information about a number of different social justice issues, and it provides resources specifically geared to help churches engage in advocacy efforts.

MORE ON BACK

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### **Sojourners** – [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)

Sojourners' publishes a monthly magazine focused on faith and social justice issues. Their church network offers opportunities to connect to other churches, sign up for a free monthly newsletter, access discussion guides, and get online sermon preparation tools.

### **Stepping Stones**

Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.

### **Pathways**

Learn from the first-hand account of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.

### **Food for the Journey**

A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.

