



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Welcome to the Justice and Advocacy Week, *Small Group Guide*. You can use this guide with one other person or a group. Some of the responses may be helpful in determining how to establish a justice and advocacy group within your church. Similarly, there are existing links to established groups, such as Baptcare, Baptist World Aid Catalyst Groups, Surrender, and others.

The framework for this guide has come primarily from the book, *Healing Our Broken Humanity: Practices for Revitalizing the Church and Renewing the World*, by Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill. We are indebted to them.

We are praying that this week stirs our imaginations, compassion, and hearts for our neighbours, the disenfranchised and our world. God loves our world and invites us to participate in ways that foster a deeper engagement and action in reconciliation and redemption.

Blessings

BUV Support Hub Advocacy Group

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REIMAGINE CHURCH

Scripture: Ephesians 2

Jesus calls us, the church, the new humanity in Christ. This new identity nurtures a deep commitment to grace, forgiveness, and love. In a world full of division and conflict, the church needs to embrace the ministry of reconciliation and peacemaking. We are primarily one people, united as one body in Jesus Christ. As a new creation and a new humanity, we are “a people on pilgrimage together, a mixed group, bearing witness to a new identity made possible by the Gospel, God calls us to show the world what reconciled, redeemed, and restored humanity looks like.”

Reflect together on what this means for the church.

Questions:

1. How do we go beyond our own needs and become concerned for the wider world?
2. In what ways might we as “the new humanity” reach out and make a difference in areas of conflict and division?
3. Where might there be opportunities as the church to witness love, grace, and forgiveness?
4. What needs to change for you and your church to encourage inclusivity and openness to all?

Practices:

1. Serve with other groups in your community.
2. Visit Christians from a different race and ethnicity than your own.
3. Start “Listen and Learn” Nights - Invite someone from a different faith, ethnicity, theological perspective etc, to come and share their story. The aim is to listen and learn.



RENEW LAMENT

Scripture: Psalm 22

Lament is a demonstrative, strong, and corporate expression of deep grief, pain, sorrow, and regret. Lament and repentance deal with issues of the heart. They pave the way for outer change. Lament is a personal and corporate response to many things; evil, sin, death, harm, discrimination, inequality, racism, sexism, colonization, oppression, and injustice. It is about mourning the painful, shameful, or sorrowful situation, about confessing sin and complicity and sorrow, about calling God to intervene and to change the situation. Finally, lament is about offering thanksgiving and praise to God, knowing that God will intervene and bring change, hope, and restoration. The Psalms and the book of Lamentations provide a model for present-day lament.

Questions:

1. What breaks your heart?
2. What grieves you in church and in culture?
3. What relationships or situations bring you pain?
4. What do you rage against?
5. What injustices do you lament?

Practices:

1. Together choose an issue or subject that angers or grieves your group. It might be racial injustice, environmental destruction, the treatment of undocumented immigrants, or some other issues.
2. Brainstorm why this issue is important and why it angers, grieves, and pains your group.
3. Write a lament together.
4. Spend time together in prayer over the themes in the lament.



5. During the week, make sure everyone in your group gets a copy of your shared lament. You may even ask your pastor whether you can share your group lament during a Sunday Service.
6. There may be something you or your group choose to act upon – e.g. join a network that supports anti-slavery, domestic violence, asylum seekers etc.

Some resources:

<http://www.practicetribe.com/>



REPENT TOGETHER

Scripture: Acts 3

Our world is plagued by the pursuit of power and control, and by injustices, exploitations, and racial disparities. There are political, social, and racial problems, but there are also personal and social sins. As God's people, we must embrace repentance and change. These are the right responses to racism, sexism, greed, and other forms of social and personal sin. But what is repentance?

Repentance involves key changes in people, groups, and communities. It includes our minds, hearts, and wills. Repentance can be personal, but it can also be corporate. Repentance includes a *metanoia*, a change of mind and a turning around. Scripture says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Repentance means that we change our ways and turn toward God. Apart from individual sins, corporate sins are committed by society and institutions that we as individuals become complicit in. We fail to speak up against institutional sins such as racism, sexism, and injustice in many of our systems.

Repentance is a four-stage process:

1. Conviction
2. Contrition
3. Commitment
4. Change

With repentance we practice a new way of being in the world. This is the way of repentance, righteousness, humility, justice, love, and reconciliation. Godly sorrow leads to faith, hope, and love.

Questions:

1. What attitudes do I need to repent of?



2. What systemic injustices does the church need to repent of?
3. What injustices that we ignore that we need to repent of?
4. Do we need to make a public season of lamenting over our complicity in racism, sexism, rampant impact of individualism, selfishness, entitlement, destruction of the environment, ungraciousness, etc?

Practices:

1. **Conviction** - Open your hearts to God and ask him to convict you of areas he wants repented of. Find ways to go into your neighbourhood and communities and to be with people marginalised because of their race, sexuality, politics, religion, disability, language, socioeconomic status, etc. Some will be in your church, and others will not. As you spend time with them, (individually and with your small group), what is the Holy Spirit convicting you to repent of? Write these things down.
2. **Contrition** – This is Godly sorrow. Godly sorrow moves us to action. Write another group lament but this time choose one or more of the issues you wrote on your paper and apply the lament to this issue. Pray together over this issue and what God might want you and your group to do about it.
3. **Commitment** – Commitment is about determining together to change our minds, attitudes, purpose, desires, and ways. We need to make this commitment together and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. Practice commitment together. What new attitudes will you adopt as a result of this conviction? Share with your group and ask for prayer. Pray together.
4. **Change** – Reconciliation and forgiveness demand a new way of living in the world. Accountability within a group that is open, trusting, and empathetic will keep in check attitudes and actions that are distressing to God. If you do not have a small group that you feel you can share and be accountable to, start one yourself, or ask your pastoral leader.



RELINQUISH POWER

Scripture: Philippians 2 & Matthew 5–7

To relinquish something is to voluntarily choose to give it up. The church will never truly be the new humanity in Christ until it embraces relinquishment. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to relinquish our own righteousness, status, privilege, selfish ambitions, self-interest, vain conceit, personal gain, and power. Jesus practiced relinquishment, and Paul followed his example. In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul describes how Jesus emptied and humbled himself. Jesus chose the path of relinquishment, and we must embrace the same mindset. By doing this, we actually experience a deeper connection with Jesus, as the snares of the world do not interfere with our primary relationship.

For most of us however, our power (or powerlessness) is found in our wealth, education, age, intellect, cultural capital, social standing, gender, profession, religious status, political access, ethnicity, and race. Power can be destructive and divisive. But it can also be nurturing and healing when it is used for other's well-being and human flourishing. We relinquish power when we use all our energies to make sure the marginalised are heard, respected, honoured, and responded to. We relinquish power when we seek to give power away and move the margins to a welcoming centre – a multi-voiced, multi-peopled, multi-cultural, new creation, new humanity. We relinquish power when we say no to opportunities so that other voices can be heard. We relinquish power when we say yes to justice and action so that other voices can be honoured.

God weeps with the evil that is in the world, and most of the evil is based on attaining and keeping power. The Sermon on the Mount – Jesus' magnificent treatise on a new way of living; one where we relinquish all sense of entitlement and power, is what God calls the church to demonstrate.

Questions:

1. Where do you have most/least power and how does this make you feel? Where there any areas of power that you had not considered before?



2. How are you using the power you have?
3. To empower others like Jesus did, or holding onto it for status and feeling good?

Practices:

1. Pray together that God would help you see what power you have.
2. Pray that you'd learn to relinquish power (embracing the power of the cross and resurrection).
3. Pray that you'd use the power you have for the sake of others (and to confront injustice, advocate for the powerless/marginalized/silenced) and challenge the status quo.



RESTORE JUSTICE

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Justice is a central and complex biblical theme. The Bible presents God as a just God who calls for justice among his people, for creation, and in the world. We know what justice is when we know who God is. The just nature of God defines our understanding of Justice. Micah 6:8 says, “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” God requires all of us to engage in the work of justice.

Standing in the tradition of the prophets, Jesus showed a justice that was at once righteous and loving, ferocious, and compassionate, uncompromising, and gracious, visionary, and personal, truth-telling and forgiving, resolute and hospitable. Jesus wants us, his followers, to continue to show what justice means, as well as do justice. Jesus embodied the justice of God in his love, hospitality, truth, and grace. Jesus had a just mission, revealing the justice of God. He welcomed the stranger, rejected social discrimination, confronted economic injustice, spoke out against institutional power, and repudiated war and violence.

In this beautiful scripture, Jesus shows us his open heart of hospitality in seeking to address the injustices in the world. We discover the spirit of justice is “hospitality of the heart”.¹ When we open our hearts to hospitality, we feel compelled to seek justice. When we embrace creation, the poor, our enemies, strangers, foreigners, outcasts, and others (or even people who are different to us), we desire justice for them. We welcome without judging. We love our neighbours as ourselves. We reflect the justice, love, and hospitality of God. This hospitality leads us to desire and work for the flourishing, well-being, and good of others. An example of the spirit of justice is Baptcare, our own Baptist agency, who works hard to seek justice and aid our asylum seekers and refugees.

Dempsey goes on to say that compassion is the heart of justice; love and relationship are the wellsprings of justice; and peace is the fruit of justice. She says that justice is both an invitation and a vocation. It is an invitation and a

¹ Carol J. Dempsey, *Justice: A Biblical Perspective* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008).



vocation or calling for God's people to reflect the love and hospitality of Jesus into a hurting and unjust world.

Questions:

1. In what ways do you, or your church respond to the invitation of God to extend compassion and justice to those who are voiceless?
2. How might you and your church support a Baptcare initiative?

Practices:

1. Educate yourself and your group about the injustices within your neighbourhood, society, and the world.
2. Don't be afraid to discuss openly within your church the issues that are uncovered and how you can respond.



REACTIVATE HOSPITALITY

Scripture: Acts 11

Future churches are missional and led by people who are committed to diversity, multiethnicity and hospitality. We are a global church. We are enriched by indigenous, Western, diaspora, and Majority World voices and these all contribute to a deeper understanding of a God who loves us all. We also live in a world that is aching, lost, hurt and far from God. How should Christians respond to such need? In a word: hospitality.

We offer hospitality to all in the Spirit of Christ. Henri Nouwen writes, “Hospitality primarily means the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them a space where change can take place.” Hospitality is challenging. We need the Spirit’s help to welcome and embrace the other. This requires many conversions, from:

- Individualism to community,
- Autonomy to interdependence,
- Competition to collaboration and much more.

Hospitality will disappoint us as people will wound us, betray us, and refuse to reciprocate in kind. But hospitality makes us fuller, richer, and more Christlike people. This is our time to reactivate hospitality so that it infuses every part of the church’s witness and life together.

Questions:

1. How does the word “hospitality” challenge you?
2. How diverse is your church? How do you encourage a spirit of “welcome”
3. People have told us that their church is a welcoming church, but true hospitality is lacking; people don’t have time for sharing meals together, sharing personal stories and being inclusive. In what ways can you/your church increase in your true hospitality?



Practices:

1. Consider undertaking a faith based CQ (Cultural Intelligence) assessment as a church.
2. Commence monthly shared meals around table and conversation.
3. Look for ways to personally open your home to neighbours.
4. In your church, identify the place God has you and become pro-active in joining in with other agencies and not-for-profits who are engaged in hospitality.



RECONCILE RELATIONSHIPS

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5

Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish.²

Reconciled partnerships are about genuinely seeing and hearing and engaging with the other. Such partnerships require us to work through power dynamics so that these become equal, mutual, and reciprocal. Marginalized people must not become recipients, they must be partners. We need to take active steps towards community building. We should pursue conflict resolution, intercultural communication and problem solving. We must relinquish destructive power dynamics. These are all aspects of reconciliation. True reconciliation draws all these areas around the reconciling nature, story, and mission of God.

In addition to the evidence of huge need in the world for reconciliation, we also see in 2 Corinthians 5, that Paul challenges us to embrace this ministry of reconciliation. What is the core motivation for reconciliation? "Christ's love compels us." This extravagant love which was revealed in the life, message, and death of Jesus, and which was poured out for all peoples, compels us to pursue a ministry of reconciliation. Our fellow believers are new creations, and our ministry is to take this reconciling message to the world.

Questions:

1. How can you as a church increase in your witness to model the reconciling of relationships?
2. Are there relationships you need to reconcile with, personally, in your family and friendship groups, or through the church?

² Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).



3. What steps will you take to ensure that you and your church demonstrate reconciliation.

Practices:

1. One of our key partners at the Baptist Union of Victoria is Surrender. Surrender has become a voice for those on the margins for many years and champion the reconciliation of are relationships through their networks. In particular, they have a focus on the need for recognition and reconciliation of our First Nations people. Your church could join Surrender’s voice in making a difference.
2. Become active in our Baptist World Aid Australia Catalyst Groups that have recommenced.
3. Bapcare, our Baptist Social Services agency is eager to partner with our churches in order to continue their work with Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Aged Care Visitation, Fostercare, and much more. There may be something here for you?

SOME RESOURCES:

<https://www.surrender.org.au/>

<https://www.bapcare.org.au/>

<https://baptistworldaid.org.au/>

<https://www.micahaustralia.org/>

<https://www.parishcollective.org/>

<https://culturalq.com/>

Reference: Grace, Ji Kim and Graham Hill, *Healing Our Broken Humanity: Practices for Revitalizing the Church and Renewing the World*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2018.