FROM
The Pew
TO THE
Public Square

Called to Faith, Justice,

Tools for The Episcopal Church

and Movements for Community Change

THE DEPARTMENT OF RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE, AND CREATION CARE
Episcopalian understand our Christianity as something that impacts our social and communal lives as well as our private or personal lives. As a result, Episcopalian are called not only to live Christ-like lives personally, but to work for the good of our communities by seeking structural change.

Baptism

In Baptism we make several promises, or have promises made on our behalf that we accept at confirmation. We promise to:

- Resist evil
- Seek and serve Christ in all persons
- Love our neighbors as ourselves
- Strive for justice and peace among all people
- Respect the dignity of every human being

Following Jesus

Jesus worked to restore people to physical and spiritual health but also to heal and restore communities. We can learn from Jesus’ actions of reconciliation and community building.

Jesus of course showed an interest in working at the personal or individual level to restore people to physical or spiritual health. However, this work was always about also restoring people to wholeness in the community. It was never just about individuals.

Jesus worked to protect communities from structural injustice. When Jesus kicks the money changers out of the temple, he shows us that worship of God cannot take place alongside economic exploitation. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus teaches that social justice is the Good News.

Everything Jesus does enacts liberation. Just as Jesus liberated people by exercising demons, Jesus worked to liberate communities from the evils of hunger, prejudice, and oppression.

WAYS TO ENGAGE

Voting

Voting in national, state, Tribal, and local elections. Educating ourselves about candidates and issues voting rights.

Direct Action

Using actions such as sit-ins, boycotts, divestment, vigils, marches, and protests to draw attention to an issue or disrupt an unjust system.

Policy Advocacy

Getting issues on ballots and before lawmakers, such as petitions, legislative outreach, and awareness campaigns.

Prayer

Transforming evil unjust systems to bring about a just and equitable world through private prayer, public worship, teaching, and preaching.

Mobilizing Resources

Organizing resources of people, time, space, and money to create systemic change that you want to see in your community.
Five Levels of Change
Different political decisions in the United States belong to federal, tribal, state, and local governments. The United States sees decision making power as ultimately vested in the body of citizens. However, all voices are not always heard.

Effective political engagement for structural change requires some knowledge of how the system works. Taking time to study the mechanics of U.S. government, whether at your local library or with some deep Wikipedia dives, will make your efforts much more effective.

Levels of Engagement
CIVICS 101

For those eligible to vote, casting ballots is a critical way to impact politics. While it may seem counterintuitive, the more local an election, the more important it is to vote!

Solution to systemic issues require engagement at all government levels. Here's how to find out how to get involved at each one.

Voting

LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT
Understanding how your strategy addresses the problem you’re facing

Where do you start from? What are the obstacles in your path? What resources do you have to address them? Faith communities must analyze and the problem and find a strategy for change. Strategies are how we move from problems to the right solution.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT
EXAMPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Federal
Deals with concerns impacting the whole country

Tribal
Sovereign nations with unique relationships with federal and state governments

State
Has authority over anything not given to federal government

Local
Deals with local concerns and those delegated to it by the state

1 Federal
Know your senator’s and representative’s contact info and contact them and the president by mail, email or by phone to share your stance on these kinds of policy decisions. Deals with things like the military, immigration, and civil rights.

2 Tribal
Know the structure of your Tribe’s decision making and who to contact. Consider seeking appointment or running for office. For residents of Native American Tribes, these governments handle much of what states do, such as education or land use.

3 State
Like with the federal level, know the contact info of your state senator and representative. Things like education and prisons fall under the authority of states.

4 Local
Go to council meetings and forums, go to city hall and meet your officials, and consider serving on commissions or running for office. Local governments like counties, towns, and cities are often overlooked in favor of flashier issues related to state and federal politics. However the things that most impact daily life, like police, fire, water, land use, and parks, are overseen by local governments.

1 2A
Imagine you come upon someone fallen in a river and save them, only to discover that more people continue to float by needing saving. You can keep saving them one by one, or you can go upriver and see why people keep falling in so that you can work on a solution to the underlying cause of people falling in.

It's important to see in this scenario that one solution is not better than the other. Both are needed. Without the individual effort of pulling people out of the water, those people will stay stuck and possibly drown. Without work on the underlying structural problem, people will keep falling in.

The point is to help you choose strategies and be clear about what your expectations should be for success at pulling people out of the river or building a bridge to keep people from falling in. And this one among many tools to help you find your strategy.
By their nature, systemic challenges resist simple solutions. Here are two models for addressing a complex issue. We are using gun violence as the example.

**Five Dimension Model**

**INTERPERSONAL**
Suicide and domestic violence account for the largest share of gun deaths. Learn to prevent suicides and aid domestic violence victims.

**PERSONAL**
If you are a gun owner, you can learn and use proper gun safety, such as trigger locks, safes, and taking safety courses.

**ENVIRONMENT**
These are population-focused efforts that change social, physical, and economic environments.

- The social environment is the immediate culture, people, and institutions that a person interacts with. Changes at this level that could impact gun violence include challenging toxic masculinity or promoting nonviolent conflict resolution.
- The physical environment includes things like the built world and “natural” world. Changes to this realm may include efforts to put physical obstacles in the way of guns (safes or trigger locks).
- The economic environment includes how people get necessary and desired resources. Gun violence can be reduced here by reducing socioeconomic lack of mobility, increasing gun costs, or requiring gun owners to have insurance.

**SYSTEMIC**
Work to reduce structural factors that correlate with gun violence, such as high economic inequality and low socioeconomic mobility.

**POLICY**
Support research- and data-driven policy solutions to gun violence, such as broadened criteria for firearm denial.

**CULTURAL**
Promote efforts that devalorize portrayals of violence (e.g., gun violence) and encourage safe and responsible gun use (this includes nonviolent conflict resolution).

**Three Dimension Model**

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**SYSTEMIC**
A focus on organizational systems, processes, and infrastructure to reduce gun violence. This approach examines the way guns are bought, sold, exchanged, and used. It may take the form of implementing processes to identify risks and risk factors for domestic violence or suicide, and getting potential perpetrators effective help before violence occurs.

**POLICY**
Includes laws, contract language, ordinances, standards, resolutions, zoning, or rules that reduce gun violence. Think of the solutions above as well as policies of private organizations to limit or eliminate guns on their premises.

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