

From the Pew to the Public Square, 2020
Created by the Department of Reconciliation,
Justice, and Creation Care



THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

episcopalchurch.org

FROM
**The
Pew**
TO THE
**Public
Square**



THE DEPARTMENT OF RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE, AND CREATION CARE

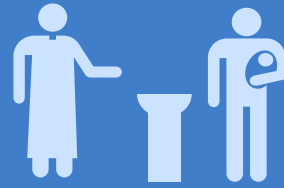
Creating Change

Episcopalians understand our Christianity as something that impacts our social and communal lives as well as our private or personal lives. As a result, Episcopalians 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 exorcising demons, Jesus worked to liberate communities from the evils of hunger, prejudice, and oppression.



5 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.

LEVELS OF CHANGE

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

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.



CIVICS 101



Effective political engagement for structural change requires some knowledge of how the system works.



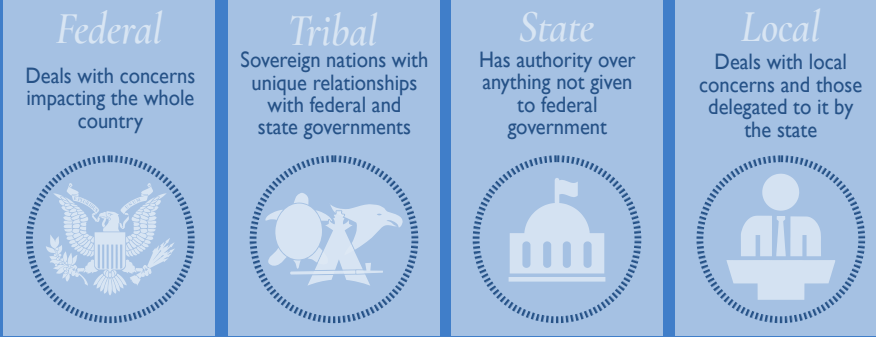
Taking time to study the mechanics of U.S. government, whether at your local library or with some deep Wikipedia dives, will make your efforts much more effective.

VOTING

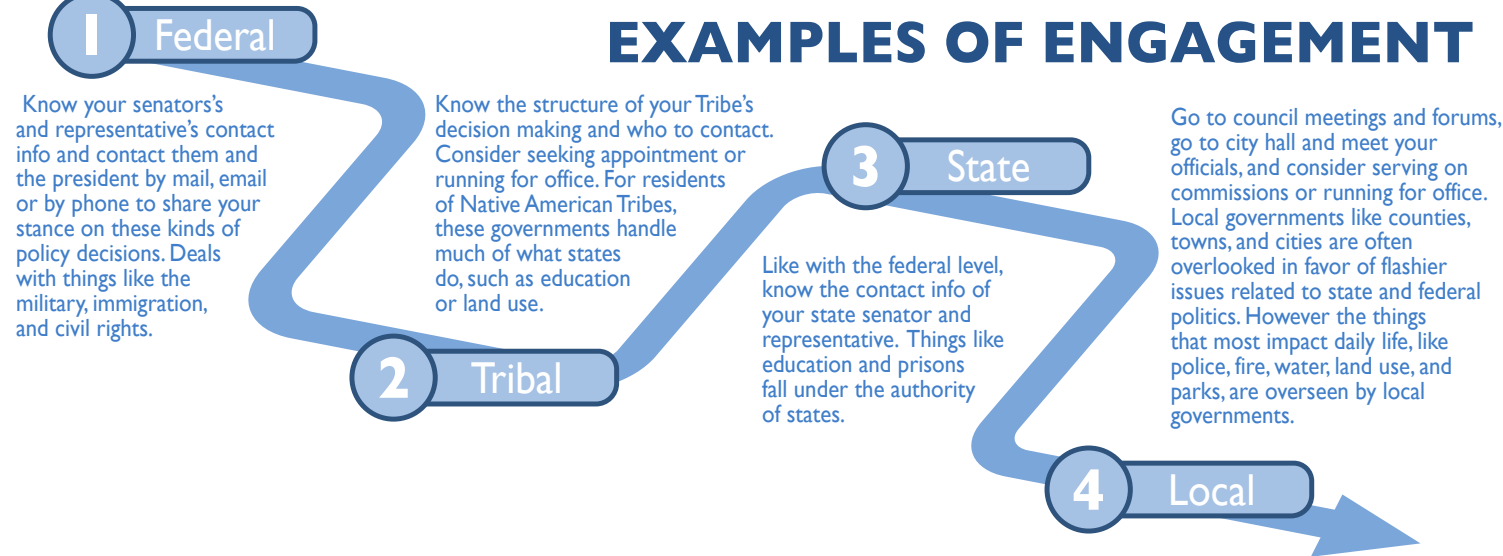
For those eligible to vote, casting ballots is a critical way to impact politics. While it may seem counterintuitive, the more local an election, the more important it is to vote!



FOUR LEVELS OF UNITED STATES Government



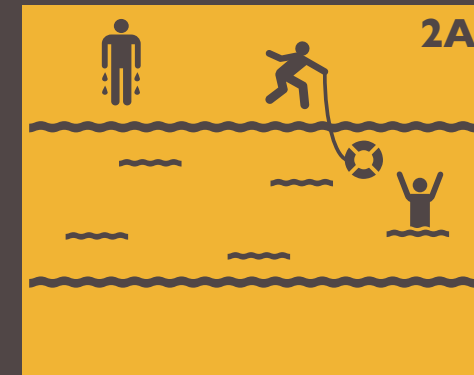
EXAMPLES OF ENGAGEMENT



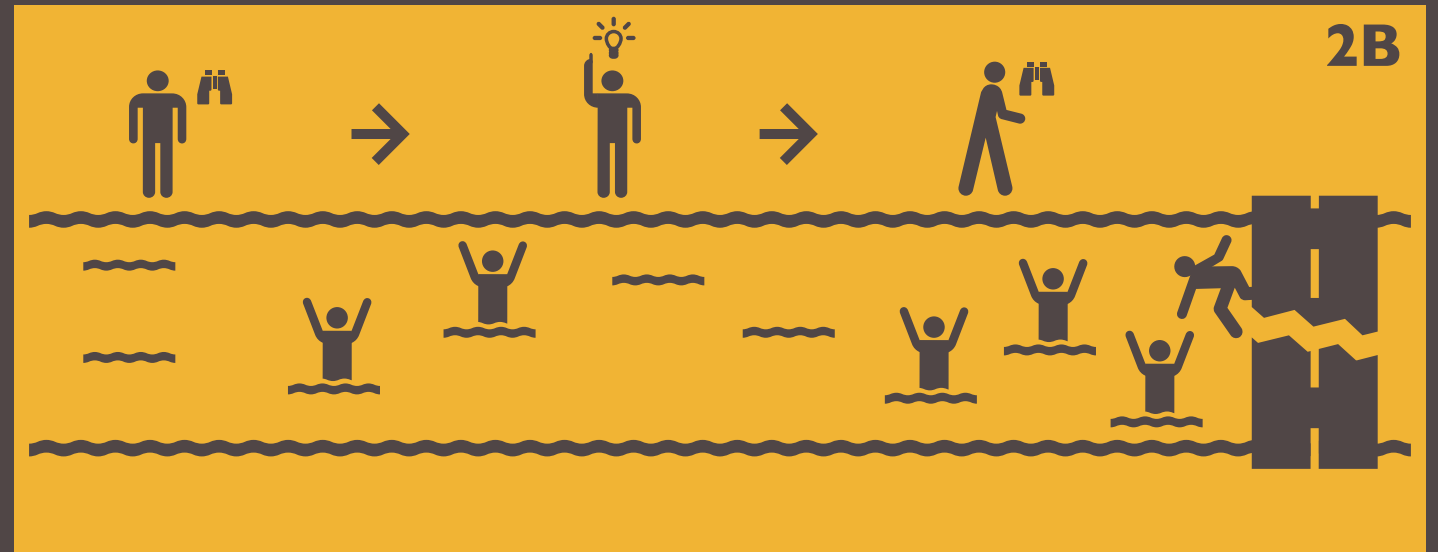
LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT

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.



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.

Gun Violence


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




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.

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.

SYSTEMS

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 signs and risk factors for domestic violence or suicide, and getting potential perpetrators effective help before violence occurs.

Three Dimension Model

Connecting the Dots

A method for identifying structural issues in your community, effectively building relationships, planning to solve those issues, and taking action.

1. Build Relationships

A. This work should involve accompaniment or working with the community. Build relationships with the community so you're working *with* them and not just doing things for them.



B. You can, among other things, get to know local businesses owners, volunteer in schools, attend community meetings, and serve on community boards.

C. An important way to build relationships is through interfaith, interdenominational, and community organizations.



F. Think about where your work can have the biggest impact based on what can be accomplished with your skills and resources.

2. Decide on the Issue

E. After hearing pressing community issues, use data to confirm how many others in your community face them to determine which issue can have the greatest impact.



D. Use community roundtables, attend local events, or employ community surveys to find out pressing community issues to tackle.

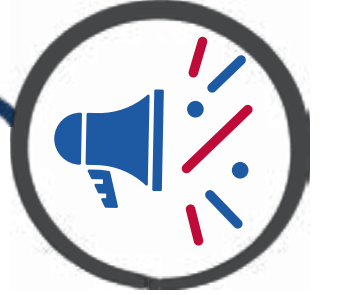
3. Take Action

G. Consider types of engagement like voting, policy advocacy, direct action, financial/organizational support, and prayer.



I. Coordinating safe, effective, and legal direct action (protests, vigils, marches, demonstrations) takes extra preparation and planning. First specify aims, talking points, and supporter roles.

H. Prepare before going forward: Collaborate with, and listen to, affected groups, prepare talking points and data, decide your approach (e.g., nonviolent), and create concrete goals.



4. Further Resources

Consider attending an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) training.

You can find further resources from The Episcopal Church at
<https://episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community>
<https://episcopalchurch.org/racial-reconciliation>
<https://episcopalchurch.org/social-justice-and-advocacy-engagement>
<https://calledtotransformation.org/taking-action/>