

A Public Call to Protect All People

Implementation Guide

“No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.” Luke 8:17

What Is This “Call”?

A group of authors, pastors, scholars and leaders has asked congregations and other assemblies to reach out to one another and jointly make public commitments to their communities. It is not a petition or sign-on project; it is a call for congregationally-based response on a local basis.

Why Might My Congregation Respond To This Call?

Because your congregation or assembly is meant to be a light to your community.

Because your light will burn more brightly and bravely if it is combined with the lights of other congregations and assemblies.

Because this is a time in our history when many people are anxious, confused or feeling at risk.

Because to be the light your community needs, your congregation/assembly may need to form new relationships, get ready and stay alert.

How Do We Start?

Anyone who is reading this can start the process. The time is past when we can afford to think others will do what is necessary. We ourselves will have to do what is necessary.

Take this Call to one or two others in your congregation or assembly, discuss it, and plan a course of action for engaging your broader membership. Among yourselves you will find the wisdom you need to act.

The beginning is simple; there is really no excuse for not starting. Your working assumption should be that most of the resources you need are already present in your group. So seek wisdom from others wherever it can be found, but know that you already have most of what you need.

Will It Be Difficult?

It might be. Should it be easy?

One response will be “There’s nothing new here. We’re already doing all of this.” Another will be, “It will take forever to get our congregation, or group, to agree on this.”

So which is it: too little, or too much? Get on with the discussion!

What Specific Outcomes Might Be Achieved?

1. Your congregation or assembly will form at least one new working relationship with another congregation or assembly.
2. Your congregation or assembly—in collaboration with at least one other congregation or assembly—will increase its capacity to respond with wisdom and care to divisions, anxieties, provocations and fears within your community.
3. Through your use of conventional or social media to publicize your commitments, your community will be informed of your commitments and be encouraged by them.
4. If and when your community needs your light, you will be prepared to offer it.

How Might The Decision-making Proceed?

Assemble a group—small or large—to start with. Congregations or assemblies numbering over 100 will probably want to start the process with discussion in smaller units: fellowship groups, adult education classes, house churches or an ad hoc interest group.

Distribute copies of the Call and list of signers. Have someone read the document aloud from beginning to end. Discuss each of the four commitments in turn, identifying what it would mean locally to make them.

Next, list reasons why you should go public with these commitments. Follow with reasons why you should not do this.

Carry on this conversation until your group has concluded either it is or is not prepared to go public with these commitments. This may take one meeting or a month of meetings.

Along the way—toward the beginning of the process, in the middle or near the end—two or three leaders from your group will want to engage the leadership of at least one other local congregation or assembly about its interest in going through a similar decision-making process and perhaps work together on this.

Assuming you and another group decide to move ahead, you will make your commitments public. Then begins the work of doing what you have told yourself and your community you will do.

Specific Q & A

1. May we add to or subtract from the four commitments? Or amend them? *Yes, this is meant to be a locally owned and locally-led process of dialogue, capacity-building and community-engagement. There is no national structure apart from the initiating Call.*
2. This statement is framed as a “call” from leaders, pastors, scholars and authors who are “followers of Jesus.” Can it be implemented on an inter-faith basis? *Yes, as decided locally. We see this in the 4th commitment—seeking relationships of solidarity across creedal lines.*
3. The Call associates the election of the new President with “threatening, authoritarian messages.” It expresses concern about “radical attacks on human rights and democratic processes here in the U.S. [and] . . . more reliance on military threats and force abroad.” How might a congregation or assembly process such statements? *The quoted phrases explain why the Call’s initiators felt compelled to speak. Congregations are not being asked to endorse their explanation, only to embrace local commitments similar to the four identified in the Call. The core question is this: amid our anxious social and political climate, would your community benefit from your congregation’s public, collaborative engagement?*
4. How is this initiative being publicized and supported? *The originating committee is publicizing the Call via media releases, social media and the websites listed below. Please encourage your denomination or national network to publicize the Call and add supporting resources. Contact members of the Originating Committee at email addresses shown with their names in the Call Document.*

Supporting Websites

<http://tinyurl.com/znrde62> (Baptist Peace Fellowship)

<http://tinyurl.com/zhno2b8> (Peace & Justice Support Network of Mennonite Church USA)

www.forusa.org (Fellowship of Reconciliation)

<http://tinyurl.com/gwho4vb> (If Not Empire, What? A Survey of the Bible)

www.1040forpeace.org (\$10.40 for Peace)

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