

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## *Action*

### 2. Use Your Voice to Advocate for Climate Justice

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

—The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Recommendation:** We encourage church members to become faithful advocates, putting our faith and our voice into action on issues we care about.

**Background:** Actions to reduce our personal household toll on the environment can only take us so far in avoiding the most catastrophic climate impacts. Systemic change in government policies is necessary and urgent.

For many, communicating directly with legislators, testifying at legislative hearings, writing op-eds for newspapers, or joining in protest marches are big jumps beyond personal comfort zones. But faithful advocacy grounds the conversation in values: It's heart-centered, it seeks justice and equity, and it's hopeful. When you share your story (who you are, your personal connection to the issue, and what you value as a person of faith) with your legislator, it is immensely impactful and provides them with the backup to take a strong stance on an issue. *The faith community brings the moral voice to the table.*

As 501(c)(3) nonprofits, faith communities *can* take a position on a legislative bill and *can* educate others and ask them to act. What churches *can't* do is lobby for the election of a particular candidate.

**Taking Action:** We are fortunate to have two local nonprofits in Washington—Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light and Faith Action Network—that provide training, leadership, and support to individuals and congregations in using their voices to be effective advocates for the health and well-being of communities and the environment. In addition to providing notification about opportunities to testify or submit written comments on issues, they provide alerts about upcoming marches or protests where we can put our bodies forward in witness to injustice, standing with those most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation

Although we can take the following actions as individuals, supporting each other as a congregational group is the easiest and potentially most rewarding way to start engaging actively in being an advocate:

- Join one or both of these organizations so you are alerted about training opportunities early in the calendar year where you can hear about faith-community legislative priorities and learn how to testify, in advance of the legislative session.

- Register to participate in Faith Advocacy Day and/or Environmental Lobby Day, when both organizations coordinate meetings and conversations with your representatives.
- Once you've established a relationship with your representatives, follow up when you receive alerts that a particular bill is being discussed or voted on.
- Talk to your family and friends about what you care about and actions you've taken.
- Write a letter to your local paper, expressing your opinion about what needs to change for climate justice. Share that letter with your friends to give them ideas of what they could write.
- Write to your Congressperson or Senator with your personal story about why action is important on a pending bill in Congress.
- Join a protest march, vigil, or ceremony as a witness and in support of those who need our voices and our numbers to bring to light climate injustice. Bring a friend or cohort from your church with you. Share your stories afterward.
- Study the dynamics of structural and environmental racism and systemic inequality to better understand how to assist those harmed by it.
- Study the history of whiteness and white culture to understand how it has contributed to present climate justice problems.

**Results:** Legislation and other political action will be taken to address climate justice issues.

## Resources:

- **Blog.** Episcopal priest Margaret Bullitt-Jonas is the Missioner for Creation Care in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts and the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ as well as Creation Care advisor for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. She preaches, writes, and blogs extensively, including about her own transformation into a passionate advocate for action on climate change: <https://revivingcreation.org/category/blog/>
- **Book.** In *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*, Dr. Katharine Hayhoe shows how to have small conversations with those who don't agree with you, basing your conversation on shared values. She is an Evangelical Christian and one of the most effective communicators on climate change.