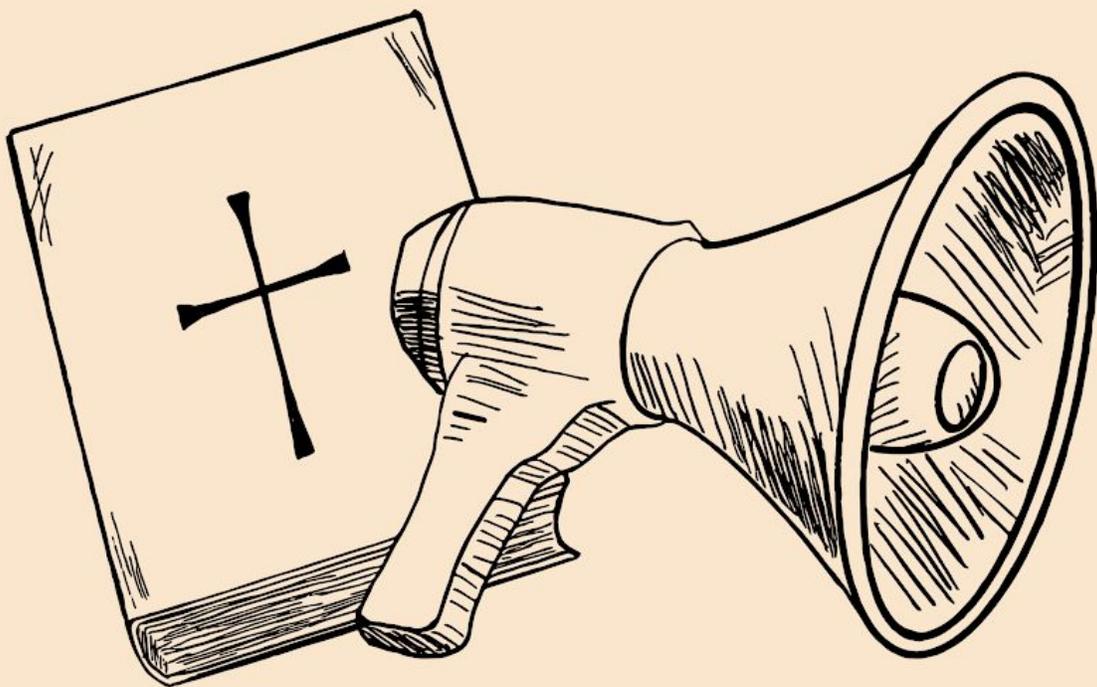


THE  
**EPISCOPAL**  
STREET ACTION  
HANDBOOK

INTEGRATING CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE  
THEORY WITH SPIRITUAL CARE IN A WAY  
THAT CAN BE USED ON THE STREETS



# EPISCOPAL STREET ACTION HANDBOOK

*Adapted from*

**The Atlanta Protest Chaplains Handbook**

*What is this handbook?*

This handbook is intended to integrate critical social justice theory with spiritual care in a way that can be used on the streets.

*How to use it:*

Aimed both at religious communities looking to be more involved in justice work and activist communities looking to integrate spirituality into their actions, this handbook is a resource for religious or spiritual leaders who will be involved in protests and are interested in providing spiritual care in the context of nonviolent direct action.

*Who is it for?*

Grounded in Episcopal social ethics, this handbook provides which can be used in interfaith settings and customized for use by those of other traditions.

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# **BLESSED, BROKEN, GIVEN:**

## ***The Eucharistic Nature of Justice-Making***

Throughout the ebb and flow of Christian history, the gathering of *The Way*, has gravitated around the sacred expression of oneness in the shared meal. The common act of speaking blessing, bread being broken, and cup being given, manifested an outward sign of mutuality. The shared meal is the nourishment that enables us to act justly in the world.

Each time we gather around the Table of God, we are engaging in the ritual of subversive love. Christ declared, "this is my body broken for you....my blood shed for you". When these words are proclaimed, we are being reminded of our Christian vocation to go forth and become what we partake of in the eucharistic feast; blessed, broken, given. Christ is showing us that the beloved community is established each moment we bless those who are labeled as unlovable, unclean, unchurched, sinners, unworthy. The words of Christ make it clear that every instance, when we allow our beings to be broken open and our blood to be spilled in compassion for others, we affirm the importance of healing through acts of solidarity. Our ability to be breakable, disposes us to be a blessing. When we are given over to the little ones among us, the non-human animals, the children, the edgy, the afraid, we become available to the sacrament of the present moment that in turn gives birth to God's radical grace. The eucharistic feast empowers us to recognize our duty to be the source of spiritual and political nourishment for those who are spiritually and politically deprived by those in power.

In our working for justice, let us keep in mind that our explorations of how we organize ourselves, what policies are legislated (in church & society), who is or is not present in social circles, are all opportunities for us to extend the Table of God, so that more of the global family may recognize their vocation to be; blessed, broken (breakable), and given.

### **QUESTIONS IN OUR ONGOING FORMATION OF BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:**

- How am I daily enfleshing my role of being a blessing to others?
- How is my ability to be breakable, vulnerable, an opportunity for others to be nourished and I as well?

- When I attend a demonstration, how do I intentionally incarnate Christ's radical message of love? Am I allowing myself to be a blessing during a demonstration?
- Where in my life do I need to have my pride broken so I may be an authentic instrument of peace?
- How can I and my community of faith, give up our need to be comfortable, in order for targeted communities to be truly welcomed?
- Where in my life and in the life of my faith community, is there a need for more of a commitment to action for justice?
- Have I failed at living in such a way that others are welcomed? Have I reached out to receive forgiveness?

## **PRAYER BEFORE ATTENDING A DEMONSTRATION**

**In the Name of the God of Peace, +the Nonviolent Christ, and the Liberating Spirit, Amen.**

God of Peace, as I prepare to participate in this demonstration, stir up in me the gifts I need to cooperate with you in establishing the beloved community, here and now. Through the witness of my brother, Jesus, may I incarnate the grace of nonviolence which calls me to envision a wider circle of authentic welcome. May I never shy away from my prophetic vocation by declaring your radical truth of justice, even when it is inconvenient to my career, unpopular to my social circles, or disturbing to those in power. By the power of the liberating spirit, may I always step forward into the fray and birth the solidarity that will save this world.

In the name of all that is good, holy, and beautiful, Amen.

**WHY A PROTEST CHAPLAIN?**

## The Need for Spiritual Care at Protests

There are many reasons to include spiritual care as part of nonviolent direct actions.

The first is the potential trauma and stress of protests. Between police brutality, arrests, tear gas, clashes with counter-protestors, and more, protests can be full of situations where people suffer injury and trauma (physically, emotionally, and spirituality). A spiritual caregiver can provide care, counseling, and a sense of the sacred in the midst of chaos.

Another crucial reason is the importance of spiritual grounding. Protests are a form of nonviolent action that requires training and concentration. Having spiritual grounding helps with cultivating discipline within nonviolent actions, and it is especially important to stay rooted in religious and/or spiritual values when a community of faith is engaging in nonviolent direct action.

{image}

### The Role of Protest Chaplain Spiritual Grounding

A protest chaplain can create “sacred spaces” by providing rituals, services, liturgy, prayer etc. - both before and after protest, as well as in the midst of it. They can be - similar to how military chaplains are understood - a reminder of the sacred in the midst of struggle.

### Spiritual Care

Protest chaplains can provide one-on-one care-giving with people involved in the protest, using skills of deep listening and counseling.

### Advocacy

Using the pastoral authority afforded to them by society, protest chaplains can, as religious leaders, be advocates for justice and for fellow protest participants with dealing with authorities and institutions.

### The Need For Grounding In Critical Social Justice Theory

Protest chaplains need to be grounded in critical theory (or, in activist parlance, “woke”), in order to understand the issues of the protest and how

nonviolent direct action can push for systematic change. For example, a protest chaplain at an anti-racism protest should understand that racism is not just a “personal” issue, but a systemic one.

It’s also important for protest chaplains to understand the systemic \*-ism’s of social justice theory to understand how care-seeker may be affected differently (e.g. a person of color is at higher risk of police brutality during a protest) and to be effective in their advocacy role (e.g. understanding the oppressive nature of the criminal justice system when advocating for those who have been arrested).

The protest chaplain must also be self-aware of their own privilege and biases which are a result of systems of oppression.

## **PROTEST CHAPLAINCY IN ACTION**

## *Before*

Before the protest starts, protest chaplains can give some practical and spiritual grounding. You may ask to offer some form of prayer, invocation, or guided meditation, to help with setting a particular tone for the action.

*PRO TIP:* If you are permitted to offer an invocation of prayer, it is deeply respectful to recognize that the land you are standing on is stolen land, and to name the Indigenous Nation(s) whose land you are privileged to be upon.

Before attending an action, whether as a Protest Chaplain or as a participant, it is wise for individuals to participate in a variety of trainings in order to garner the necessary skills for doing specific work that might arise before, during, or after an action.

Some recommendations for trainings:

- De-escalation Training - to learn skills for preventing conflicts from rising to a level where violence may occur, or your action goals are unable to be accomplished.
- Active Bystander/3rd Party Intervention (this second name is a legal phrase) - this is a very specific training which focuses on implementing certain skills within very specific interpersonal conflict scenarios (i.e. when a black person is harassed by a racist on the streets)
- Rapid Response (including a special emphasis on evasion tactics) - this training equips participants with the necessary organizational skills and quick-thinking skills to create a plan in a short amount of time for responding to quickly escalating conflicts, with emphasis on evasion in case individuals need to leave a demonstration that has escalated to a point of extreme violence.
- Protest Health & Safety Training - to learn tricks and tips for increasing the likelihood that participants will be in a space where physical harm is low and an overall culture of support is present.
- Security Culture Training - to learn how technology can be used to better practice solidarity with targeted communities who are often the focus of police, or federal surveillance and what implications this may have for your participation in an action.

Often organizers of actions will form teams which function in specific roles on the street or away from the action. These teams focus on practical tasks and

Protest Chaplains can easily operate in any of these teams. Below you can see what these teams do.

#### **Media Team:**

- Establishing a media team with the distinct purposes of staying away from the demonstration to monitor mainstream media
- pushback against false narratives/rumors, fact check, craft press releases (before, during, and after)
- hold press conference before and after demonstration, promote specific people & info to divert attention from problematic individuals/groups
- Get predetermined or organic hashtags to trend on various platforms, particularly Twitter and Instagram.
- Dedicate at least two (maybe 3 depending on size of demo) livestreamers and promote only their feeds in order to help keep control of narrative.

#### **Peace Team:**

- A group of people, predetermined and voted upon by all organizers, to be persons dedicated to monitoring demonstration to identify agitators, help mediate when unnecessary conflict arises (particularly unhealthy conflict that occurs between activists) with an emphasis on reminding folx of our shared agreements (i.e. this action is black led, women led, and we defer to the pre-decided leadership).
- These human beings are not intended to act as “peace police” mimicking the same oppressive behavior of law enforcement – Peace teams are catalysts of meaningful expression.
- If the organizers wish to communicate demands or requests to police that might be present, this team of beings are people who could serve as liaisons if that is something determined to be acceptable by the organizers.
- All team members should be well versed in de-escalation tactics, cultural sensitivities, and mediation strategies.
- Mental health counselors, pastoral counselors, clergy, and other care professionals could be members of this team but they all should have additional training pertaining to the vital skills every peace team should have when operating as a peace team at a demonstration.

### **Legal Team:**

- Should be individuals who have the main purpose of observing and documenting human rights abuses with the intent of filing briefings and lawsuits as/if needed.
- The legal team should work collegially with the peace team, particularly in relation to police liaising.
- *The political philosophy of the legal team, or a particular legal observer is irrelevant to their duty as a legal observer. They have an ethical obligation to maintain political neutrality on determinations; if this is something that a particular legal observer cannot maintain, they should be removed immediately from the process and not utilized.*
- **Jail Support:**
  - Raise funds for arrestees
  - Designate people who will pick up arrestees and be sure they have a peaceful transition.
  - Have a backup group in case any jail support people are arrested, although jail support should consider not participating in the demo and maybe help the media team.

### **Medic Team:**

- The medics are trained first aid responders and riot medicine professionals that know the necessary information and skills to treat wounds, tear gas symptoms, bandaging, identify heat stroke or dehydration, and have the ability to determine if a person needs to be removed from the demonstration for further medical attention.
- *The medic team is not there to provide mental health services.*

### **Practical**

Introduce yourself and what you will be doing in your role as a protest chaplain.

Give chaplain contact information (it's helpful to have a prepaid "burner" cell as a way for people to call/text you without having your personal number or creating a Google Voice number which can be used for protests).

Let people know how to find you. Will you be wearing something recognizable (e.g. clergy robes, a bright-colored hat)? Will you be located at a certain position/place during the action?

When preparing to operate as a Protest Chaplain it is important to make intentional decisions about clothing and personal items that you wear/bring with you to an action.

Some recommendations for things to wear:

- A Comfortable (and breathable) Top (whether Clerics or Street Attire)
- Shoes that are good for long walking distances and running
- Jeans that fit well and allow for moveability (stay away from jeans which may have holes, tears, or might be too tight)
- Religious Garb (Stole, Cross, Cassock, etc.) Just be mindful that such attire may not be appropriate if you are at a demonstration that is organized by a community that has been historically oppressed by religious institutions.  
*PRO TIP:* It is a good habit to contact the organizers and verify if *they* would like you to wear religious garb.
- Bandanas/Masks to help with protection from poor air quality, tear gas, and to help with preventing the spread of airborne viruses.

Recommendations of Things to Bring:

- Water/Juice (Refillable water bottle is best)
- Bandages (for yourself & others)
- Over the counter meds like Advil/Tylenol
- Snacks
  - Portable fruits like bananas or apples
  - Protein bars
  - Small bags of chips
  - Candy in case blood sugar drops

# YOUR PROTEST KIT

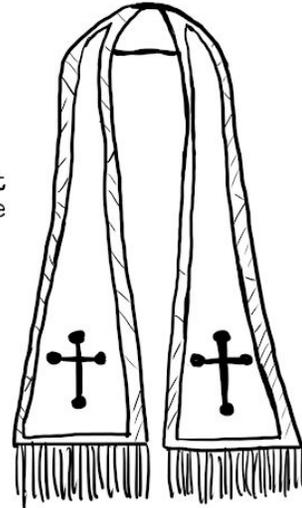


Cell phone  
(possible a burner)



Cash

Protest  
Stole



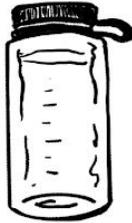
Cell phone  
power bank



Sharpie (to write  
important info on your body)

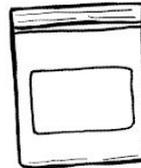


Snacks



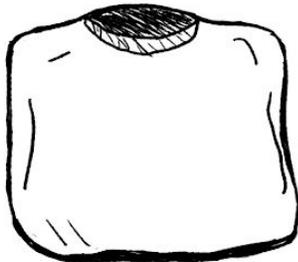
Water (for hydration  
and first aid)

Plastic bags for  
wet/sticky objects

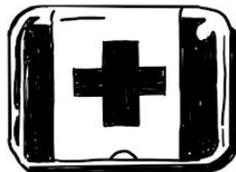
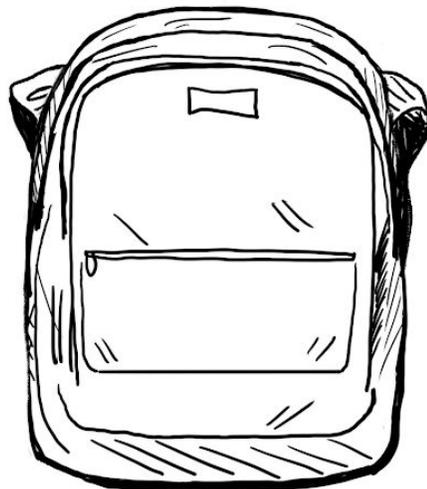


The Episcopal Street  
Action Handbook

Extra  
T-shirt



Backpack  
to carry  
everything



First  
aid kit

## Spiritual

Make sure that the action begins in a spiritually grounded way. You can offer an opening invocation, prayer, or words. If you have time, you can even lead an energizing opening service/ ritual with singing, solidarity, and passion.

See the “Spiritual Resources” section of this handbook for help with planning and leading a service like this.

## *During*

During the protest, a protest chaplain can fulfil multiple different roles.

## Spiritual

In the midst of the action, the protest chaplain can make themselves available to spontaneously offer prayer or words of care. It can be helpful to some participants just to see the protest chaplain among them – as the military puts it, the chaplain acts as a “visual reminder of the holy” in the midst of struggle.

If you have given out a chaplain’s number, be attentive to calls or texts that might be coming in on the phone, alerting you to spiritual care situations where a chaplain is needed.

The protest chaplain should also keep an eye out for situations of conflict or trauma where care-giving may be necessary. Examples of this include clashes, between protesters and counter-protestors, police brutality, fights, health issues, and other problems.

See the list on the next page for ways to deal with such problems, and keep in mind that people involved with these situations may want a caring conversation later.

## Dealing With Problems

Protest chaplains can often help during protests by fulfilling roles similar to peace keepers. The main goal is to observe, be aware of, and prevent problems which may arise. The list below is from Organizing for Power’s “Peace Keeper Quick Reference” guide:

## Techniques For Dealing With Problems

- Isolation/Containment
- De-escalation/Intervention
- Songs/Chants
- Circling to isolate/contain/for protection

#### Accidents/Illness/Fainting

- Clear area around victim & have people circle to keep crowd back
  - If more than simple first aid: alert medical team, make access path
  - If no medical person: alert police, they can get help quickly
- If removed from area: get name of description & where being take

#### Hostile/Co-Opting Groups

- Isolate with a line of peacekeepers if possible
- If not, alert lead peacekeepers
- Stop the back of the march & move from forward to isolate group

#### Provocateurs

- Watch & observe, enlist other peacekeepers if suspicious
- Alert legal observers if you have strong suspicions
- Alert police if you think they are armed

#### Fights Within The Group

- Isolate from rest of crowd - line or circle of peacekeepers
- Physical presence may stop fighting
- Attempt communication, make human contact, listen, do not argue
- Physical interposition

If an action escalates to the point that violent dispersal methods (i.e. tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper spray) are used by police, it is good for a Protest Chaplain to be ready to help coordinate the necessary steps to help address these violent behaviors. Having everyone damp cloth to hold up to their faces, helps to mitigate some of the pain that will arise from tear gas or pepper spray. Protest Chaplains can have a number of shirts which can be easily torn and used for bandaging, if needed.

If violent dispersal tactics are used by police, Protest Chaplains should help coordinate with those who are dedicated to medical care.

#### *After*

### Spiritual Care For Those Arrested

Being arrested and held in jail can be a traumatic experience - physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As a protest chaplain, be prepared to provide care for those who are arrested, both while they are held and after they are released.

### Spiritual Care-Giving

Both while people are in jail and after they are released, try to be available to provide spiritual care (you may be able to speak to them over the phone or by visiting when they are in jail).

Being held in jail can affect people in many harrowing ways. As Organizing for Power's "Coming Out of Jail Stronger" details, the experience can result in feelings of rage, self-blame, fear, exhaustion, and depression. People can often have a difficult time with re-entry. These are all issues a protest chaplain should be prepared to encounter and work through with care-seekers.

### Showing Solidarity

An important way to support those who are being held is through displays of solidarity outside the jail. The protest chaplain can help to organize and lead vigils, marches, singing, drumming, and chanting outside where those who were arrested are being held.

### Upon Release

Try to be present when people are released from jail, so that you can be there with cheers, support and a readiness to hear about their experiences in a caring conversation. When everyone is released, it may be helpful to organize a support group to debrief together.

Protest Chaplains can help with the physical and spiritual wellbeing of activists by facilitating the nourishment of those who participate in your action by coordinating a shared meal for after the demonstration has taken place. This shared meal can take place at a sacred space such as a church, synagogue, or mosque, but also can be arranged to be held at a restaurant where you can provide a public witness to why you are there.

Taking time to have a shared meal with fellow activists helps to meet the physical needs but it also builds a sense of togetherness, mutuality, and provides the protest chaplain an opportunity to assist those who have some spiritual questions regarding their role in the work of justice.

# SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

This section of the handbook provides a selection of liturgies, readings, and prayers, which can be used for providing spiritual care and grounding. This section also includes “Make Your Own Protest Liturgy” rubrics, which provide models of service which could be held before or after an action, with room to customize for various religious traditions and kinds of actions.

## ***Make Your Own Protest Liturgy***

### Service Before The Protest

Ingathering

Opening Words

Words of Motivation

Community Building

Scripture

Sending Forth

### Service After The Protest

Ingathering

Opening Words

Words of Reflection

Community Building

Prayers

Closing

“The protest is over, but the work of justice-making is never complete  
Honor the work which was done - reaffirm the community commitment - go with care.

## ***Songs for use at Demonstrations or Protests***

### **Come by Here (Kum ba ya)**

Come by here Lord, come by here

Come by here Lord, come by here

Come by here Lord, come by here

Oh, Lord, come by here

### ***Alternative Lyrics:***

Black lives matter Lord (come by here)

We need justice Lord  
Burdens heavy Lord  
Transform our system Lord

**This little light of mine**

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine;  
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

*Alternative Lyrics:*

All around the world (I'm gonna let it shine)  
Jesus gave it to me  
I got the light of peace and love  
I got the light of freedom  
Everywhere I go

**We are marching in the light of God (Siyahamba)**

We are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, marching, We are marching, (ooh)  
We are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, marching, We are marching, (ooh)  
We are marching in the light of God.

*Alternative Lyrics:*

Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'  
Marcharemos en la luz de Dios

**Don't be afraid**

*By John Bell*

Don't be afraid, my love is stronger.  
My love is stronger than your fear.  
Don't be afraid, my love stronger,  
And I have promised, promised to be always near.

**We are walking, demanding justice**

*(to the tune of I have decided to follow Jesus)*

We are walking demanding justice.  
We are walking demanding justice.  
We are walking demanding justice.  
No turning back, no turning back.

*Alternative Lyrics:*

Here together, we walk united  
The hate behind me, that love before me  
We'll keep on walking, till we have justice

**Set it right again**

Words by Ana Hernández [anahernandez.org](http://anahernandez.org)

Call:           There's a great trouble in the land  
Response:     We're gonna set it right again  
Call:           There's a great trouble in the land  
Response:     We're gonna set it right again  
Call:           There's a great trouble in the land  
Response:     We're gonna set it right gain  
We're gonna set it right, set it right again.

*Alternative Lyrics*

Trouble's been brewin' too many years  
People need healin' all over the world  
Trouble keeps travelin' all around the world  
We need clean water and healthy food  
We must have housing we've a right to thrive

## PRAYER FOR AFTER A DEMONSTRATION

God of Justice, you have called us to be a people who stand for justice and peace. As this day comes to a close and this action ends, may all that has been started today, be the catalyst of freedom. May our words, thoughts, and deeds, lessen the likelihood for harm and empower others to take up the mantle of the prophet. May all that has happened, be pleasing to those who have stomped these streets in the past and who continue to trod down the way with us. Bring rest to our bodies and spirits so that this evening we may be refreshed for the next day's trials.

Keep guard over those in prison and those in the shadows. Protect those in harm's way, and liberate those who cry out.

We make this prayer in the name of all that is good, holy, and beautiful.

Amen.

## **PRACTICAL RESOURCES**

This section includes information about and links to organizations that work with nonviolent direct action and protestors' arrest, as well as links to other helpful websites and resources useful for nonviolent direct action and protest organizing.

### *American Civil Liberties Union*

[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)

The American Civil Liberties Union offers support on civil litigation to defend rights and provides other resources, including a downloadable "know your rights card" for protest participants.

### *National Lawyers Guild*

[www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org)

The National Lawyers Guild offers criminal defense work for protests and to protect rights and civil liberties, they also provide a variety of helpful online resources.

### *Organizing For Power, Organizing For Change*

[Organizingforpoer.org/action-resources](http://Organizingforpoer.org/action-resources)

On the Action Resource page, Organizing for Power has many incredible resources for NonViolent Direct Action organizing including:

Steps in a Nonviolent Direct Action Campaign

Action Organizing Manual

Action Check List

What to Bring to an Action

Training Agendas for Civil Disobedience and Nonviolent Direct Action

PeaceKeeper Training Agenda

How To Do Group Legal Support for People Who May Risk Arrest

Instruction for Legal Observers

Speaking for the Media

The Activist's Guide to First Aid

Responding to Trauma in Protest and Mass Mobilization

Direction Manuals

## *Books*

*Ferguson and Faith: Speaking Leadership and Awakening Community* – Leah Gunning Francis

*Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy* – Chris Crass

*Towards the “Other America”: Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter* – Chris Crass

*Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care* – Editor: Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook

*The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action* by Michael Nagler

*The Way of Conflict: Elemental Wisdom for Resolving Disputes and Transcending Differences* by Dr. Deidre Combs

*The Nonviolent Life* by Fr. John Dear

# NOTES

Use this section to take or attach notes about this action.

Do you have the contact information of the other protest organizers?

Do you have contact information for local organizations or legal aid resources, or one within your religious tradition? Is there a rendezvous point after the action finishes?

Here is a list of people whose contact information you should probably have:

Team/ March Leader

Police Liaison

Marshall/Peacekeepers

Security/Traffic

Media Person

Organizational Spokesperson

Drivers

Medical Team

Legal Team

Lawyers on Call

“Get Out of Jail” People and Drivers



## About

This handbook is produced by the Reconciliation and Creation Care team of the Episcopal Church in collaboration with the Rev. Jerry Maynard (“The People’s Priest”) and using an adaptation of the Protest Chaplain handbook project by Abigail Clatz, An Interfaith Chaplaincy MDiv. Student at Claremont School of Theology for her justice in Spiritual Care Class.

## Image Credits