

BUILDING ADVOCACY SKILLS

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This program is designed to train Church leaders in how to advocate for change. It teaches four ways to create change in a community or congregation. In the process of the seminar, participants will identify a change they want to make and develop a comprehensive plan for their congregation or group which they can then implement. The goal of this seminar is to develop a skill base for effecting change that incarnates the Baptismal Covenant [*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304].

The objectives of this training are:

- ▶ Participants will recognize, respect, and understand the four ways of creating change.
- ▶ Participants will develop a comprehensive action plan to implement a change they identify.
- ▶ Participants will learn how to design strategies for change that respect and use the different abilities, experiences, and temperaments of a variety of people.

We often think that learning a new skill, such as learning how to advocate, is a “secular” activity. This seminar is based on the premise that advocacy is part of what we do in response to God’s call to us to fulfill our Baptismal Covenant. It is a sacred activity that should be framed in the context of prayer, seeking God’s guidance and leadership.

Overview of the Program

Participants in the seminar meet in large and small groups for different discussions and activities, which facilitates both individual learning and skill-building, and the opportunity to gain a wider view of the process and experience larger group dynamics.

The *Building Advocacy Skills* resource consists of a leader’s manual, which includes schedules, outlines of activities and speaking material, and suggestions for implementation of the seminar; and pages which can serve together as a participant’s book, or individually as handouts for the participants. Handouts include identifying the components of “SMART” goals, an outline for writing an action plan, and mid-course corrections to an action plan, among others.

This seminar is designed for use as a one-day seminar (approximately 9:30 to 3:30) or a shorter afternoon/evening seminar. The longer design gives participants more time with the key steps in the process, and includes time for introductions and additional interaction time during lunch. This makes the longer format ideal for groups that don’t know each other well, haven’t done this type of work together before, or want to build team relationships. It is also the preferred model if your church or group has recently experienced a significant transition time, or if there has been recent significant conflict in the congregation or group—especially if the conflict is around the issue about which the group plans to advocate. The extra time to build relationships and discuss issues in depth is valuable in any group and often provides more benefits than may be readily apparent.

Facilitators

Seminars are led by one or more facilitators. While it is helpful if the facilitators for this training are experienced trainers, it is not necessary. Each step has been carefully described, often with suggested wording of how to present that step. Handouts, short talks, and what to write on the newsprint are all given in the training design.

The role of the facilitator is to guide the participants through a process where they will learn from their experience. The facilitators are not the experts on advocacy. They are the persons who will give and clarify directions, present concepts and information on the handouts, answer questions or assist participants if they become confused, and share perceptions or ask helpful questions to enable participants to gain greater understanding. Participants are responsible for their own learning—you can't make them learn anything they don't choose to learn. A facilitator is responsible for leading the seminar and thereby offering the participants opportunities to choose to learn.

Participants

This seminar is designed to be used by a group or several groups simultaneously. For example, it might be used by an outreach committee, an education group, a group interested in a specific issue, or the governing group of a congregation (vestry, mission committee, or parish council) or judicatory (diocese, synod, conference). Or a congregation or judicatory might gather the various committees together for a joint seminar. It can also be used to train facilitators or group leaders who will later lead their groups in developing and implementing plans.

A Partial Listing of Contents

Purpose of the Seminar
Outcomes and Objectives
Introduction to Advocacy
Identifying the Problem
Developing Strategies to Approach the Problem
Setting the Context with the Baptismal Covenant
Advocacy Theory
Four Methods of Creating Change
Brainstorming
Identifying Prior Advocacy Skills
Selecting and Constructing a Goal
Developing a Step-by-Step Action Plan
Identifying Resources
How to Overcome Barriers
Committing to the Plans

Building Advocacy Skills

Afternoon/Evening Seminar Schedule

Introduction	<i>Large Group</i>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of the Seminar Schedule and Norms Participant Introductions (names only) Outcomes and Objectives Introduction to Advocacy 		
Creativity Starter	<i>Small Groups</i>	15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small groups identify a problem Small groups identify three strategies to approach the problem Groups report strategies to the total group 		
Advocacy and the Baptismal Covenant	<i>Large Group</i>	5 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the context with the questions in the Baptismal Covenant 		
Short Talk	<i>Large Group</i>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Theory Four Methods of Creating Change 		
Skills for Advocacy	<i>Large Group</i>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm considerations that might dictate roles a person would play Identify prior advocacy skills 		
Select a goal and make it SMART	<i>Small Groups</i>	15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups select one goal Groups construct the goal using the SMART method 		
Identify Personal Preferences	<i>Small Groups</i>	30 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each individual identifies personal preferences, abilities, growing edges and experiences of working in coalitions Small groups discuss personal preferences and experiences 		
Break		15 minutes
Develop a Strategy	<i>Small Groups</i>	30 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small groups identify a strategy that incorporates each of the four methods of creating change The strategy is assessed within the big picture (organization, community, etc.) 		

Develop a Comprehensive Plan	<i>Small Groups</i>	20-30 minutes
Small groups develop a step-by-step action plan to implement strategy		
Small groups identify resources, barriers and plan how to overcome them		
Commitment	<i>Large Group</i>	20 minutes
Small groups report on their plan		
Groups commit to implementing plans, and identify support and accountability systems		
Closing	<i>Large Group</i>	15 minutes
Identify what we learned		
Seminar Evaluation		
Worship or Closing Prayer		

Total time (excluding breaks): Approximately 3 hours

Building Advocacy Skills One-Day Seminar Schedule

Opening Worship	<i>Large Group</i>	10-15 minutes
Introduction	<i>Large Group</i>	20 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of the Seminar Schedule and Norms Participant Introductions Outcomes and Objectives Introduction to Advocacy 		
Creativity Starter	<i>Small Groups</i>	20 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small groups identify a problem Small groups identify three strategies to approach the problem Groups report strategies to the total group 		
Advocacy and the Baptismal Covenant	<i>Large Group</i>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christian Advocacy Setting the context with the questions in the Baptismal Covenant and Catechism 		
Short Talk	<i>Large Group</i>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Theory Four Methods of Creating Change 		
BREAK		10 minutes
Skills for Advocacy	<i>Large Group</i>	15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm some considerations that might dictate roles a person would play Identify prior advocacy skills 		
Select a goal and make it SMART	<i>Small Groups</i>	20 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groups select one goal Groups construct goal using the SMART method 		
Identify Personal Preferences	<i>Small Groups</i>	30 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each individual identifies personal preferences, abilities, growing edges and experiences of working in coalitions Small groups discuss personal preferences and experiences 		
Lunch		1-2 hours
Develop a Strategy	<i>Small Groups</i>	30 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small groups identify a strategy that incorporates each of the four methods of creating change 		

The strategy is assessed within the big picture (organization, community, etc.)

Reality Check	<i>Large Group</i>	15-20 minutes
Small groups report on their goal and strategy		
Total group provides feedback		
Break		10 minutes
Develop a Comprehensive Plan	<i>Small Groups</i>	20-30 minutes
Small groups develop a step-by-step action plan to implement strategy		
Small groups identify resources and barriers, and create steps to overcome them		
Commitment	<i>Large Group</i>	20 minutes
Small groups report on their plan		
Groups commit to implementing plans, and identify support and accountability systems		
Closing	<i>Large Group</i>	15 minutes
Identify what we learned		
Seminar Evaluation		

Building Advocacy Skills

Seminar Design

Opening Worship

Large Group

10-15 minutes

One of the facilitators along with a group member can lead this, or one of the group leaders or members may prepare and lead it before introducing the facilitators and turning the seminar over to them.

Introduction

Large Group

10-20 minutes

Introduce yourself and your partner(s).

Explain the purpose of the program and review the schedule of the day.

Post the seminar norms; ask the group to suggest additional norms.

Participant introductions:

- Invite participants to find a partner, introduce themselves and tell about a time when someone advocated for something on their behalf, a time when they advocated for a change and were successful, and a time when they were not successful.
- Have each person introduce his or her partner to the group and mention one thing that she or he learned about that person.

Describe the expected outcomes.

Read the program objectives.

- Print these on newsprint before the session begins; during the next activity, move the newsprint to a spot where the objectives can be seen during the training.

Introduction to Advocacy (Present the following in your own words.)

There is an old story about a village next to a stream where a group of wounded, dead or dying bodies would periodically float by. The villagers always rescued the living, gave them food and shelter, and nursed them back to health. Finally one of the youngest members of the community asked why the wounded and dead people were in the river in the first place. When the villagers realized they could not answer the child, they organized a group to go upstream and investigate. When they found a group of bandits regularly ambushing travelers, robbing and beating them and throwing them in the river, they realized that their good efforts at rescuing people were less effective than they could be. So, they captured the bandits and ended the flow of bodies down the river.

If we were living in that village, it would be our Christian duty to pull the dying out of the river and try to help them. But if the bodies kept floating past, it might also be our duty as Christians to go upstream and find out who is throwing them in.

Similarly, while soup kitchens and shelters are important ministries, we are also called to work for the kinds of structural changes that will render these charities unnecessary. We are God's people, and we are called to work for justice.

The Scriptures are clear—from the Hebrew Prophets to the Christian Gospels and Epistles—we who are God's people are called to work with God to create a safer, more just and peaceful world. We are called to carry out Christ's work of reconciliation. We are called to be change agents.

To get start us thinking about the ways we can effect change, I want you to do a quick and fun exercise.

Creativity Starter*Small Groups***15-25 minutes**

Divide the group into subgroups of four or five persons.

Ask each group to identify a problem that it would like to change. The problem should be specific to the community, not global (for example, “get a local grocery store to donate day-old bread”—*not* “end hunger”!)

Having identified a problem, ask each group to think of three strategies for achieving the change they seek. The first strategy should be fairly traditional—something like a letter-writing campaign. The second strategy should be more creative, and the third should be completely off-the-wall. For the third strategy, the wilder the better—it doesn't have to be something that you'd actually be willing to do. Just let your imagination go wild. Tell the groups how long they have (set a time between 10-15 minutes depending on your group size and amount of time you have available). Warn them not to spend too long selecting a problem, so they can devote most of their time to the strategies.

After 10-15 minutes, reconvene the large group and invite each small group to report their strategies.

**Advocacy and the
Baptismal Covenant***Large Group***10 minutes**

Advocacy can be defined as “active support,” as in active support of a cause. An advocate is one who speaks in favor of or argues for a cause, or is a supporter or defender of a cause. An advocate may also speak on behalf of others.

Advocacy in today's world usually encompasses both speaking and acting to create a change. Christian advocacy is based in the Baptismal Covenant which spells out the type of causes we are called to support.

Invite participants to turn to page 304 of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and to look at the questions after the Creed. Ask: What causes does the Baptismal Covenant call us to support? Take each question in turn and ask for examples:

- Living the Apostles' teaching, participating in fellowship, prayers and Eucharist

- Resisting evil, repenting and returning to the Lord
- Proclaim the Gospel by word and deed (note both speaking and acting)
- Serve Christ in all persons and love neighbor as self
- Strive for justice and peace; respect the dignity of all

Ask participants to turn to page 855 of the *BCP* and look at the first two questions. The goal of our advocacy is to restore people to unity with God and each other in Christ through prayer, worship, proclamation of the Gospel and promoting justice, peace and love.

These are the changes our advocacy seeks to create. They serve as the yardstick by which we measure which causes help to fulfill the mission of the church. Within the Christian community, our advocacy cannot just be personal wishes or desires. The changes we seek need to be discerned within the context of the Christian community and based on our Baptismal Covenant.

Short Talk:

Advocacy Theory

Large Group

10 minutes

(The following presents the concepts to cover in your short talk; prepare a presentation using your own words.)

Think about the different types of strategies we identified earlier. If you were trying to effect a change and could only choose one kind of strategy to be involved in, how many of you would choose the traditional strategies? How many would choose the creative strategies? And how many would choose the off-the-wall strategies? (Usually some will choose each.)

That's good. You see, the point of that exercise was twofold. One was just to free up your creative juices, but the other was to demonstrate that there are a variety of preferences when it comes to the kinds of strategies we choose.

It's good that we have a variety of interests and preferences, because it takes a variety of activities to effect change. So, how do we create change? Tina Clarke, an advocacy trainer from the Washington, DC, interfaith community used to say that change is created in four ways.

- Write each method on newsprint
or
- Project as an overhead, covering those below the one you are currently discussing and uncovering each new method as you introduce it in your presentation:

Four Methods of Creating Change:

Conversion
Education
Political Action
Direct Action

The first method is personal spiritual *conversion*: I change. I see the ways that my behavior contributes to the problem, and I change my behavior. If, for example, my concerns are for the environment and sustainable development, I begin to consume more carefully, using fewer of the world's resources, creating less waste and handling the waste I do create more responsibly.

Sooner or later, though, I look around and realize that my change is not enough. Perhaps I eat less, but people still go hungry. Perhaps I throw away less, but the earth still chokes in our waste. My conversion is simply not enough. So, I move on to the second way change is created: *education*.

I had a conversion which changed my behavior. You're a good person. If you had the same information and opportunity to reflect on your experience, you'd probably have a similar conversion. Then there would be two of us with changed behavior. And if we could just educate everybody.....

But we can't. And before long we discover that there are some people who have such a vested interest in the status quo that we could educate until we're breathless and they still would never change. Even if they hear and understand, they may still choose not to change. So we move to the third way of accomplishing change—*political action*.

We'll change the world by changing public policy. Often this works. But often it doesn't. Sooner or later we discover that many of those who determine public policy are the very ones who have too much vested interest in the status quo to be willing to allow change. We may apply political pressure, and often that works. However, sometimes those in power have sufficient power to ignore our political action. Which leads to the fourth way change is created....*direct action*.

Direct action can involve a variety of actions such as boycotting the purchase of products produced or getting a group of people together and simply building the playground your neighborhood children need. Sometimes direct action includes civil disobedience. If those in power choose to ignore us, sometimes the answer is to get their attention through civil disobedience, understanding that this involves accepting the consequences of that disobedience.

A couple of things to note here—we're talking about four ways to create change. You may have noticed that we've left out one very important way

—End of Sample Pages—

**For more information about
Building Advocacy Skills
or to be added to our mailing list call
LeaderResources
800-941-2218**