

# Reflect and Reset: advocacy as an act of worship



**We believe that the gospel is a public truth – that the kingdom has come and it is good! Because the gospel is a public truth, we also believe that the church is a public body who have a vital role to speak into and shape the various public spaces and conversations that we inhabit.**

As good news people in our place, we are called to take up our image-bearing role – to subdue our patch of creation, and to multiply, create life and facilitate human flourishing in our everyday places.

We believe that biblical truths and values don't just speak to Christian communities, but have value for wider society and local communities too. When we speak these truths and values into policies and structures that shape society and culture, when we use our voice to raise issues within our local community – we do advocacy.

Advocacy as an act of worship might be actively responding to public consultations, communicating with local representatives to express concern or ask questions. It might be using various platforms, interfaces or relationships to respond to certain issues or needs with wise, informed Christian voices. It might be acting in the spirit of a critical friend as we ask important questions or highlight gaps in public conversations or policies.



## Have you ever considered the various ways in which your church community could enter into advocacy as an act of worship?

These questions are designed to help you and your leadership team to consider what advocacy might look like for your church congregation, in your local area. The questions are kick-starters for conversation – to stir your imagination, and sow seeds of thinking for how your church can engage in meaningful advocacy as an act of corporate worship and missional presence.

## Gathering

- ➔ Which current issues in your local community or wider society have featured in aspects of your whole church gathering (such as teaching, prayer, praise, communion, storytelling, and giving)?
- ➔ Consider: how could a whole-church act of prayerful lament or intercession on these issues could shape the discipleship of your church – and catalyse the church to deeper engagement in the community?

## Small groups

- ➔ Consider the content of your small group teaching and prayer materials. To what extent have these allowed for biblical reflection on issues in the public square, or needs in the local community?
- ➔ How might your small groups consider engaging in some intentional advocacy work on specific issues, as an act of worship (for example, filling out public consultations, praying for or writing to local representatives)?

## Leadership

- ➔ How would you describe the interaction between your leadership team and local representatives in your area? On which issues might you agree or disagree?
- ➔ What might a good relationship look like? What is your next step towards that?

## Scattered

- ➔ Can you identify people within your church community who are influencing change in community and societal needs? How might you empower and support them as Christians in this space?
- ➔ How might you work with these Christians to help the whole church reflect upon the biblical vision for public sectors such as:
  - the economy;
  - the education system; and
  - areas of health and social care?

## Programme

- ➔ In what ways have you engaged with community leaders to fully understand the issues in your local area? Is your church programme reflective of the most pressing community needs?
- ➔ *“Nothing about us, without us, is for us”* goes the saying; advocacy work is not only speaking for others but standing alongside them to create a voice of solidarity. Consider: how could the various activities in your programme become, not just a place where immediate need is met, but a place where shared solidarity can move into advocacy?

## Culture

- ➔ In a post-truth culture, the Christian faith is most powerfully communicated by a Christian community who are committed to living out a distinctively counter-cultural way of life. Advocacy work not only speaks truth into the public square, but it models a better way of life in practice.
- ➔ To what extent is your church presenting a counter-culturally distinctive lifestyle on:
  - money, materialism and consumerism;
  - relationships, marriage and family;
  - hospitality, friendship and welcome; and
  - diversity in lived experience, eg relating to race, disability, social class or age?

## Civic life

- ➔ Consider the local representatives within your local area. How might you pray for these leaders more effectively?
- ➔ Consider on which issues, and with which representative, you might seek to engage in community transformation.



## Community

- ➔ What other agencies are active in the work of community transformation? To what extent have you engaged with these agencies towards advocating for the needs present in the community?
- ➔ What might a good partnership look like – have you considered what you have to offer to these community stakeholders (such as building, volunteers or relationships)?
- ➔ How might you articulate and express the unique motivation and role of the church in the community within these partnerships?

## Local churches

- ➔ How might you engage with other local churches to pray together for the key issues in your shared community and wider society?
- ➔ In what ways could some local churches in your area come together to advocate for and tackle some of these key issues?

As you have reflected on these questions alongside the “good news people in our place” graphic, identify three key action points as you reset the place of advocacy within your church:

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Check out the Evangelical Alliance’s free resource, [Connect](#), to support you in deepening your engagement with your local representative.