

The Call to Advocacy: Should faith communities be involved in public policy?

Faith communities should be involved in public policy issues because:

- When government determines a public policy it is making a choice, and choice is the basis of morality.
- In serving a God of justice, the faith community witnesses to that God through the legislative process.



Scriptural Passages from the Abrahamic Faiths about Social Justice

THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'an 76:8-9 ...they feed for the love of God the indigent, the orphan and the captive (saying): "We feed you for the sake of God alone. No reward do we desire from you nor thanks."

The Holy Qur'an 4:135 O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be rich or poor; For God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, God is well acquainted with all that you do.

The Holy Qur'an 6:90 God commands justice, the doing of good and giving to kins and forbids all indecent deeds, and evil, and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may remember.

THE HEBREW BIBLE

Psalms 82:2-4 How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Proverbs 31:8-9 Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. (NRSV)

Micah 6:8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (NRSV)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 John 3:17-18 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (NRSV)

James 2:15-17 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily need, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (NRSV)

Matthew 25:34-36 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was in prison and you visited me." (NRSV)

The Call to Advocacy: From Charity to Change

Charity & Social Service	Justice & Social Change
<p>Scriptural Reference: Good Samaritan Story</p> <p>The Gospel story does not attempt to survey the causes of highway banditry. The Samaritan provides temporary and immediate relief.</p>	<p>Scriptural Reference: Exodus Story</p> <p>Moses does not ask for food and medicine for Jewish slave labor force. He challenges the institutional system. Message: "Let my people go!"</p>
Private, individual acts	Public, collective actions
Responds to immediate need	Responds to a long-term need
Provides direct service: food, clothing, shelter	Promotes social change in institutions
Requires repeated actions	Resolves structural injustice
Directed at the effects of injustice: symptoms	Directed at the root causes of social Injustice
<p>Examples: Homeless shelters, food shelves, clothing drives, emergency services</p>	<p>Examples: Legislative advocacy, changing corporate policies or practices, congregation-based community organizing</p>