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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 Unitarian Universalism, this handbook provides pluralistic resources which can be used in interfaith settings and customized for use by those of other religious traditions.

# THE PROTEST CHAPLAIN'S HANDBOOK

## A GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL CARE AT PROTESTS

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# WHY A PROTEST CHAPLAIN?

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## 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 spiritually). 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 direct action, and maintaining a commitment to nonviolent action requires training and concentration. Having spiritual grounding helps with this discipline, and it is especially important to stay grounded in religious and/or spiritual values when a religious community is engaging in nonviolent direct action.



# THE ROLE OF A PROTEST CHAPLAIN

## SPIRITUAL GROUNDING

A protest chaplain can create “sacred spaces” by providing rituals, services, liturgy, prayer, etc.—both before and after the 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 protests, using skills of deep listening and counseling.

## ADVOCACY

Using the pastoral and/or spiritual authority afforded to them by society, protest chaplains can, as religious leaders, be advocates for justice and for fellow protest participants when 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 systemic 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-seekers 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

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# BEFORE

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Before the protest starts, protest chaplains can give some practical and spiritual grounding.

## PRACTICAL

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

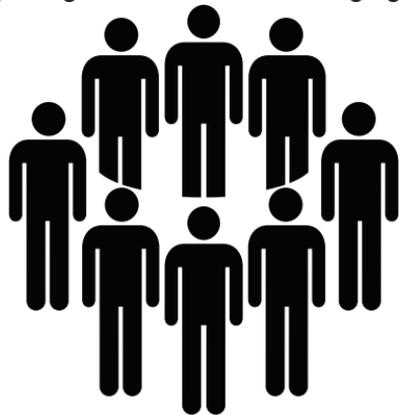
Give chaplain contact information (it's helpful to have a prepaid "burner" cell as a way for people to call/text you without having your personal number).

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?

## 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, prayer, etc. to affirm the group's solidarity and passion.

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



# DURING

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During the protest, a protest chaplain can fulfill 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-protesters, 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 or description & where being taken

### HOSTILE/CO-OPTING GROUPS

- Isolate with a line of peacekeepers if possible
- If not, alert lead peacekeepers
- Stop the back of the march & move front 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

# AFTER

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The aftermath of a protest can vary. Sometimes the mood is joyful, and major goals have been accomplished. Other times, people may have been arrested, or violence or police brutality may have taken place. A protest chaplain can act both as a spiritual caregiver and an advocate after the protest ends.

## SPIRITUAL

### RITUAL

Once the protest is over, you can mark the end with a prayer or closing words. If it is possible, it is also helpful to hold an ingathering service with song, prayer, ritual, etc. to promote healing and courage and to affirm the group's solidarity.

See the "Spiritual Resources" section of this handbook for guides and resources for leading this kind of service.

### SPIRITUAL CARE-GIVING

Many people will need to debrief after the action. You can hold a time for debriefing as a group, or meet one-on-one with people for caring conversations. This is also a chance to follow up with people who you might have noticed during the protest as being involved in traumatic situations.



It can also be helpful to make yourself available (via a phone number or other mode of contact) to individuals who may need spiritual care in the wake of the protest.



## ADVOCACY

First, the protest chaplain will want to work with the other leaders/organizers of the action to take measure of the aftermath of the protest. This includes figuring out who was arrested, injured, etc.

Then, you should work with other advocates (e.g. protest organizers, lawyers, other organizations) on the work that needs to be done, such as:

- showing up at the jail
- raising bail bond funds
- making statements to the press
- facilitating the flow of information between the legal system, unarrested group members, and family and friends at home
- coordinating rides for those released
- and more...

Basically, figure out what needs to be done and where your spiritual/religious authority as a religious leader could be used most effectively.

# 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.



# SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

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This section of the handbook provides a selection of interfaith-friendly resources (mostly from the Unitarian Universalist tradition), including opening words, 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 services which could be held before or after an action, with room to customize for various religious traditions and kinds of actions.

All of the following resources printed in this handbook come from Worship Web ([www.uua.org/worship](http://www.uua.org/worship)), a searchable worship resource hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Association. The authors and artists featured on Worship Web have granted permission for these resources to be used by Unitarian Universalist Association member congregations for any worship service, including the printing of materials, projection onto screens, or inclusion in audio/video podcasts, with a full attribution to the author or artist.

For others with questions about permissions for Worship Web resources, please contact: [worshipweb@uua.org](mailto:worshipweb@uua.org).



# MAKE YOUR OWN PROTEST LITURGY

## SERVICE BEFORE THE PROTEST

### INGATHERING

Call participants to gather together. This may have already occurred if they were gathered for other announcements being made.

### OPENING WORDS/RITUAL

Symbolically open the service with a ritual marker. Unitarian Universalists may light a chalice, while other traditions may begin with a prayer or recitation.

### WORDS OF MOTIVATION

Say some words about this specific action—and the community engaging in it. What is the goal of the action? What issues are you working toward? What is the spiritual significance of this action—and why is it important that you all are doing it in community?

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

This is your chance to build the energy of solidarity among the action's participants. You could sing a song together, practice chants for the protest, do a responsive reading, do a group blessing or "laying on of hands," or any other type of ritual that builds a sense of connection between people.

### MANTRA/THOUGHT TO CARRY

What theme or thought do you want participants to carry with them as they engage in this nonviolent direct action? Share a reading from a sacred text, a quote, or some other thought for them to carry into the action.

### CLOSING/SENDING FORTH

With a song, closing words, reading, or other ritual, energize the participants and send them forth ready to engage in the protest.

# SERVICE AFTER THE PROTEST

## INGATHERING

Gather participants together. This may be directly after the action (at the rendezvous point) or later, in a sacred or set-aside space.

## OPENING WORDS/RITUAL

Symbolically open the service with a ritual marker. Unitarian Universalists may light a chalice, while other traditions may begin with a prayer or recitation.

## WORDS OF REFLECTION

Say some words about how the protest went. What happened? Were goals accomplished? Did participants suffer trauma? Were some participants arrested? Depending on how the action went, your tone here may vary.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

This is a time to reaffirm the community's commitment and connection to each other. You could choose a song, a responsive reading, or another ritual where people come together in spiritual community.

## CONTEMPLATIVE TIME

After protests, people are often exhausted and drained. This time for contemplative practice allows people to rest and heal after the intensity and stress of nonviolent action. Practices could include prayer, meditation, lighting candles, chanting, writing, art, or small-group sharing.

## CLOSING

The protest is over, but the work of justice-making is never complete. Use a song, words, benediction, or other closing ritual to honor the work which was done at the action and reaffirm the community's commitment to continue—with, of course, self care.

# RESOURCES

## **AFFIRMATION OF HOPE** *LORETTA F. WILLIAMS*

We, bearers of the dream, affirm that a new vision of hope is emerging.  
We pledge to work for that community in which justice will be actively present.  
We affirm that there is struggle yet ahead.  
Yet we know that in the struggle is the hope for the future.  
We affirm that we are co-creators of the future, not passive pawns.  
And we stand united in affirmation of our hope and vision of a just and inclusive society.  
We affirm the unity of all persons:  
We affirm brotherhood and sisterhood that allows us to touch upon each other's humanity.  
We affirm a unity that opens our eyes, ears, and hearts to see the different but common forms of oppression, suffering, and pain.  
Yet we are one in the image of God, and we celebrate our hopes for human unity.  
Within ourselves and within the gathered community, we will discover the strength not to hide in indifference.  
Affirming that hope, publicly expressed, energizes and enables us to move forward. Together we pledge action to transcend barriers — be they racial, political, economic, social, or religious.  
We pledge to make our tomorrows become our todays.

## **ONLY BEGUN** *WILLIAM SINKFORD*

Spirit of Life and Love, dear God of all nations:  
There is so much work to do.  
We have only begun to imagine justice and mercy.

Help us hold fast to our vision of what can be.  
May we see the hope in our history,  
and find the courage and the voice  
to work for that constant rebirth  
of freedom and justice.  
That is our dream.  
Amen.

## **A WORLD ATTAINED** *BARROW DUNHAM*

And now, since the struggle deepens, since evil abides,  
and good does not yet prosper,  
Let us gather what strength we have,  
what confidence and valor that our small victories may end in triumph,  
and the world awaited be a world attained.

**WE ARE NOT DONE** *AUDETTE FULBRIGHT FULSON*

Do not think we are finished—  
oh no  
we will never be finished  
never just done  
until the light of justice is lit behind every eye.

Do not think we will be silent—  
no  
there will not be silence until the world has sung the names  
of the dead with full throats and still  
we will sing on.

Do not think fear is the end of us—oh  
you are broken in mind and heart if you even imagine  
that our fear for our lives is the end of this story.

We are braver than you have ever conceived  
and you  
will not be the end of us.

We have come to take back the world  
the world that is the inheritance of better children  
better lovers  
better days.

There will be love again but justice is our demand now.  
You will not take us down  
We are endless  
firelit  
determined  
and we  
are coming  
for you.

**WE HAVE COME INTO THIS ROOM OF HOPE** *LIBBIE D STODDARD*

We have come into this room of hope  
where our hearts and minds are opened to the future.

We have come into this room of justice  
where we set aside our fear to name freely every oppression.

We have come into this room of love  
where we know that no lives are insignificant.

We have come into this room of song  
where we unite our voices  
in the somber and the beautiful melodies of life.

# PRACTICAL RESOURCES

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This section includes information about and links to organizations that work with nonviolent direct action and protestors' arrests, 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

[organizingforpower.org/action-resource/](http://organizingforpower.org/action-resource/)

On their Action Resources 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

Peace Keeper Training Agenda

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

Instructions to Legal Observers

Speaking to the Media

The Activist's Guide to First Aid

Responding to Trauma in Protests and Mass Mobilizations

Direct Action Manuals

...and more!

## BOOKS

*Ferguson and Faith: Sparking 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

# NOTES

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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 ones within your religious tradition? Is there a rendez-vous point after the action finishes?

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

Team/March Leader

Police Liaisons

Marshall/Peacekeepers

Security/Traffic

Media Person

Organizational Spokesperson

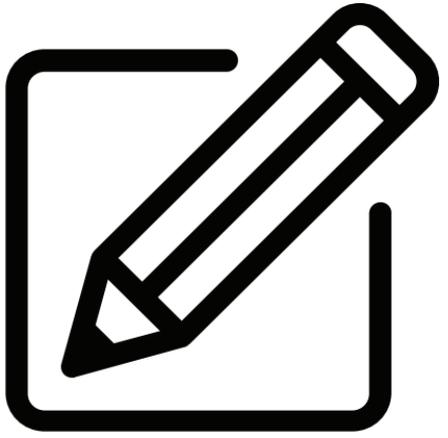
Drivers

Medical Team

Legal Team

Lawyers on Call

“Get Out of Jail” People and Drivers



# ABOUT

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This handbook is a project by Abigail Clauhs, a Interfaith Chaplaincy M.Div. student at Claremont School of Theology, for her Justice in Spiritual Care class. Clauhs is a Unitarian Universalist seminarian and a member of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, through which she will be distributing this handbook to Unitarian Universalist congregations and others interested in the intersection of spiritual care and social justice work.

To access the PDF version of this handbook online or find out about ordering additional print copies, visit: [abigailclauhs.com/projects/the-protest-chaplains-handbook](http://abigailclauhs.com/projects/the-protest-chaplains-handbook)

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Crass, Chris. *Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013.

Crass, Chris. *Towards the "Other America": Anti-Racist Resources for White People Taking Action for Black Lives Matter*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015.

Francis, Leah Gunning. *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015.

Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl, ed. *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

Interviews with people who have served as protest chaplains.

Organizing for Power. "Action Resources." Accessed May 7, 2016.

<http://organizingforpower.org/action-resource/>.

Including:

"Action Check List"

"Action Organizing"

"Coming Out of Jail Stronger"

"How to do Group Legal Support for People Who May Risk Arrest"

"Instructions for Legal Observers"

"Peace Keeper Quick Reference"

"Sample Peacekeeper Training Agenda"

Unitarian Universalist Association. "Worship Web." Accessed May 7, 2016.

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