

Faithful Agenda Messaging Guide



INTRODUCTION

We believe in the divinely given equality and dignity of every person. We are required to do justice, liberate people who are oppressed, and love all of our neighbors. Democracy is the means by which we ensure that our public policies reflect these values. **Together, we're moving our nation forward on the journey to justice.**

April 1st marks the last month of President Joe Biden's first 100 days in office. Already, we have seen great progress in the passage of the Equality Act and Dream and Promise Act in the House of Representatives, and the roll out of the American Rescue Plan. We have also seen uneven policies, great loss and acts of violence as the pandemic continues and hate crimes rise. In the countdown to this administration's 100th day, people of faith must continue to work together to bring our vision of a more just nation into reality. **We must demand that our elected officials pass policies that honor the dignity of all.** We must mobilize our neighbors and communities to do the same. We must organize bold actions while protecting each other from the pandemic. In 2021, we face a test of who we are as a nation, and who we will become.

Our Faithful Agenda Values:

- Compassionate, effective pandemic relief for all.
- Justice for Black Communities and ending systemic racism.
- Justice and dignity for LGBTQ people.
- Dignity, family unity and citizenship for all immigrants.
- Building an inclusive democracy for all people.

Use this resource to inspire people to take action that helps pass policies that promote justice for all. You know your community best – please feel free to adapt what's here to resonate with your faith and audience.

WHAT'S HERE

1. [Tips for constructing your messages](#)
2. Messaging Guides
 - [Justice for Black Communities](#)
 - [Immigration Reform](#)
 - [LGBTQ+ Equality](#)
 - [Protecting Democracy](#)

CONSTRUCTING YOUR MESSAGE

Whether you're writing an op-ed, speaking at a public event, offering testimony at a hearing, or addressing your congregation, carefully structuring your message is essential to inspiring your audience. When planning out messages, use this proven effective format to organize your thoughts.

- 1. First, always begin your message with a statement of broadly shared values.** The values of dignity, freedom, justice and family guide our Faithful Agenda.
- 2. Describe and explain the problem you are seeking to solve.** Talk about how it impacts real people in your community. Avoid dwelling on the problem too long or making the situation seem hopeless.
- 3. Offer a vision of a better future in which the problem is solved.** Make it a vision of a better world, not just the absence of the problem. Remember: policy change is the means, not the ends.
- 4. Close with a call to action.** Urge your audience to take a specific, concrete step to bring our vision into reality. Make sure to link the action to the policy you seek.

ISSUE MESSAGING GUIDES



JUSTICE FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES

Building on centuries of work for abolition, liberation and equal rights, in 2020 Black organizers led the largest protests ever for racial justice and drove record voter turnout to remove white supremacists from power. This work of liberation enters a new phase in the new political moment of 2021. Now, we must pass policies that deliver justice for Black communities and end white supremacy so all people can thrive. Black lives matter to God, and they must matter to our government. [Click here for full memo.](#)

An overview of our key policy priorities

- Ensuring that every voter can cast a ballot freely, easily, with full confidence that their vote will be counted. White supremacist voter suppression intentionally targets Black communities and must be stopped.
- Moving public resources and funding away from mass incarceration and violent policing that criminalizes Black communities, and into priorities that help Black people thrive, such as health, education, housing and jobs.
- Ending poverty in Black communities through living wages, health care, and an end to economic discrimination against Black people.
- Stopping the deportation of Black immigrants.

Core message: You can use these directly, or to help spark your own messaging.

- **Values: Black lives matter to God and must matter to our government.** As people of faith who believe in justice, equality and dignity, we are coming together across race, place, faith and class to defeat white supremacy and ensure that every person can thrive. That’s how we become a nation of justice for all.
- **Problem: White supremacy has stained this nation since the beginning, and it’s still alive in public policies.** When police and the legal system take Black lives and devastate Black communities with impunity, we are not a nation of justice for all. When Black people face racist discrimination at the bank, at school, at work, in healthcare, and so many other areas, we are not a land of equality. When politicians score points by demeaning Black people, human dignity is denied.
- **Solution: When diverse people of faith follow the lead of Black organizers in movements for equal rights, equal dignity and equal justice for Black people, our nation marches toward fulfilling its ideals.** Freedom and equality have never been reality in the United States, but the movements for abolition, civil rights and Black lives breathe life into these values.

✔ Do	⊘ Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✔ Lead your message with shared values. Always begin by appealing to broadly shared values like justice, dignity and equality.✔ Center the work of Black organizers and credit Black organizers' essential leadership in protests and the 2020 election.✔ Emphasize coming together across race, place, faith and class to defeat white supremacy.✔ Use your unique voice. Use simple moral language and speak from your faith.✔ Put human beings at the center of your message.✔ Be solution-oriented. Focus on what we're for, rather than what we are against.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Lead your message with problems, or dwell more on problems than solutions. Doing so risks de-motivating our audiences.✘ Center white supremacists. We must name the wrongdoing and obstacles we face, but without making white supremacists the main character of our story.✘ Portray racism as a historical matter. White supremacy is very much alive today. Portraying it primarily as a "legacy" downplays current discrimination.✘ Talk like a professor (unless you are one). Avoid intellectualizing white supremacy.✘ Put statistics and concepts at the heart of your message.✘ Repeat the other side's message. Negating only reinforces their message.

IMMIGRATION REFORM


After years of cruel and dehumanizing immigration policy, we have an opportunity to take a huge step toward making this a nation where every person’s dignity is respected and every family can thrive. By working together across race, religion, ethnicity and background, we can win the long campaign to make our immigration system one that provides a life of opportunity, dignity and citizenship for every immigrant family who calls this country home. [Click here for full memo.](#)

An overview of our key policy priorities

- A path to citizenship for 11 million undocumented immigrants.
- No additional enforcement funds.
- Enacting a full deportation moratorium.
- Reuniting families separated by our inhumane system.
- Ensuring that the U.S. welcomes people seeking safety from persecution.
- Addressing the root causes of migration.

Core Message: You can use these directly, or to help spark your own messaging.

- **Values:** No matter what we look like, how we pray, where we were born, or what we do for a living, people of faith believe human dignity, family and loving our neighbor are sacred values. Our teachings and traditions are clear that these values apply to people who immigrate. Our laws should honor these principles.
- **Problem:** For far too long, cynical politicians and white nationalists have used cruel policies and hateful words to demean and exploit our immigrant neighbors, and violently traumatize immigrant families. Making matters worse, the entire immigration and refugee systems are decades out of date. Our fellow children of God are trapped in endless delays and suffer unjust punishment.
- **Solution and action:** People of faith deeply support the moral movement for immigrant justice. It brings us together. We have worked for decades in solidarity with people seeking a better life in this nation, and we must see the movement for immigration reform through to the finish. It’s time to speak out. It’s time to turn up the moral pressure on Congress to pass just and humane immigration laws.

 Do	 Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use your unique voice. Use moral language, and speak from your faith.✓ Put a human face on the issue. Use terms like “neighbors,” and talk about the real difference the legislative change will make in people’s lives.✓ Center the work of immigrant organizers and credit immigrant organizers’ essential leadership in the push for change.✓ Be solution-oriented. Lead with what we’re for, rather than what we are against.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Go deep into the policy weeds. Avoid policy jargon and extensive policy detail.✗ Commodify immigrants. Focusing on things like immigrants’ positive impact on the economy, while true, distracts from our moral message and frames✗ Repeat the other side’s message. Negating only reinforces their message.

LGBTQ+ EQUALITY









The movement for LGBTQ equality and dignity is poised to make strides in 2021, even amid a rise in discriminatory state legislation targeting trans people. We must work together to advance policies that uphold dignity and defeat measures that discriminate. Our government needs to ensure that nobody can be discriminated against in hiring or housing, turned away from an emergency shelter, denied a meal at a food bank, or refused disaster relief services simply because of who they are. [Click here for full memo.](#)

An overview of our key policy priorities

- Comprehensive protections from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, health care, education and many other areas.
- Protections against discrimination to include places such as retail stores and shopping malls based on race, ethnicity, religion and national origin.
- Protections from discrimination in government services and federally funded programs based on sex, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity.

Core Message

- **Values message:** When we ensure that every person and every family in this country, including LGBTQ Americans, are free from discrimination and able to live with dignity and without fear, **we are truly loving our neighbors as ourselves.**
- **Problem:** 29 states do not currently have laws that explicitly protect LGBTQ from discrimination. Without new policies in place, our LGBTQ neighbors remain vulnerable to being evicted from their homes, kicked out of a business that's open to the public, denied health care, or denied government services because of who they are. That's not how any of us would wish to be treated.
- **Policy solution:** New policies must provide **clear and consistent federal non-discrimination protections** for LGBTQ people in crucial areas of life, including housing, health care, credit, access to public businesses, education, federally funded programs and jury service.
- **Response to the common attack stating that LGBTQ+ equality is an attack on religious freedom:** Freedom of religion is one of our nation's fundamental values. That's why it's already protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution. **And this freedom doesn't give any of us the right to impose our beliefs on others, or to discriminate.**

 Do	 Don't
 Use your unique voice. Use moral language, and speak from your faith.	 Talk like a lawyer. Be sure to avoid policy jargon and political lingo.
 Put a human face on the issue. Use terms like "neighbors," talk about the real difference these protections will make in people's lives.	 Use polarizing, name-calling language. Focusing on bigotry or conflict overshadows our message, polarizes and makes us sound angry.
 Be solution-oriented. Lead with what we're for, rather than what we are against.	 Repeat the other side's message. Negating only reinforces their message.

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY



Protecting every eligible American’s freedom to vote is a matter of justice and dignity. When we work together across race and religion to tear down barriers to voting that target voters of color, we move our nation toward becoming a true democracy where everyone thrives. As a wave of anti-voting bills crop up nationwide, federal laws protecting every American’s ability to cast a ballot without interference is crucial. [Click here for full memo.](#)

An overview of our key policy priorities

- Protection and expansion of voting rights, countering new state-level attacks on voting
- Protection and expansion of election security
- Automatic voter registration and early voting systems
- Transparency and accountability to our campaign finance system
- Ethical government accountable to the people

Core Message

- **Values:** As people of faith, we hold the right to vote sacred. We all have God-given dignity and inalienable rights. Our vote is an expression of our dignity. It is our power to demand that our government represent our values.
- **Vision:** We must make sure that every eligible voter can cast a ballot freely and without barriers, so we can elect leaders who serve all of our communities, not just a chosen few who divide us intentionally. That’s how we make justice and democracy real for us all. Congress must do their part.
- **Policy:** We need policies that defend our democracy and honor our dignity by stopping voter suppression laws and ending partisan gerrymandering. We must ensure that the Senate passes legislation that accomplishes these goals as well.

 Do	 Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Lead with values. Our messages should always begin with a statement appealing to broadly shared values like dignity, family and justice.✓ Use your unique voice. Use simple moral language and speak from your faith.✓ Be solution-oriented. Focus on what we’re for, rather than what we are against.✓ Say “Freedom to vote”✓ Say “Barriers to voting, meant to silence us.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Lead with problems, or dwell on them. Leading our messages with descriptions of problems, enemies, or threats risks de-motivating our audience.✗ Talk like a pundit. Avoid policy jargon and go too deep into policy detail.✗ Repeat the other side’s message. Negating only reinforces their message.✗ Say “There is no voter fraud.”✗ Share security-based messages.