AMPLIFY

LEADER GUIDE

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The purpose of this document is to provide a general overview of **Amplify**.

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Foster a sense of the need for congregational advocacy.
- Equip your congregation to begin a ministry of advocacy.
- Offer opportunities for transformation, both in your congregation and in your community.

HOW WILL THIS HELP MY CHURCH?

Congregational advocacy is truly part of a rich, fruitful ministry. While congregational advocacy is typically thought to stand alone, a congregational advocacy ministry can make other ministries within your congregation more effective. You are tangibly demonstrating the love of Christ by moving from addressing symptoms of problems to addressing systemic causes. Your congregation will invite others into ministry, equip others to advocate, and work to transform unjust, broken systems.

HOW CAN YOUR CONGREGATION USE THIS PROGRAM?

We have designed this program to be for those who are both new to congregational advocacy and for those who have already begun this work. For that reason, each session is designed to stand alone. Moreover, the study does not need to be completed in four sessions. You can take them at your own pace as your context requires. Each session is designed to equip your participants to be effective, faithful advocates. Sunday school classes, small groups, and deacon councils are just a few of the groups in your congregation who can participate in this program.

HOW DOES AMPLIFY WORK?

Amplify is video-driven. Each video, beginning with the introduction and ending with session 4, offers the necessary instructions for you to follow. In each video, there are 10-second pauses to consider discussion questions. Feel free to pause the video for the appropriate amount of time for discussion in your group. There is a Leader Guide and a Viewer Guide for each session. Feel free to make copies of the Viewer Guide for your participants as needed. The Leader and Viewer Guides offer further resources and Scripture references for you to utilize.

Session 4 involves a guided exercise for your group. There is an auxiliary handout with session 4.

LEADER GUIDE—SESSION 1
THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The work of advocacy is fundamentally the work of the Gospel, as seen through the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Advocacy is an outgrowth of theological commitments and reflects historic traditional Baptist principles.
- Advocacy offers hope to communities and helps us connect to our neighbors in unique ways.

The video guides all of the discussion. Be sure to stop and start the video at the appropriate times. For the discussion questions, the video will stop for 10 seconds. Feel free to pause the video to allow for the appropriate amount of discussion for your group.

Session 1 highlights Luke 4:16-20. This text is the grounding for the rest of the session and how you will want to proceed. One of the frequent questions that we receive is what does Jesus have to say about issues of justice and how to respond. This passage from Luke 4 essentially mirrors our approach to why we think advocacy matters.

We also seek to emphasize the overwhelming evidence found throughout Scripture that highlights the significance of justice in the biblical narrative. In fact, a survey of Scripture indicates an arc of justice throughout the Bible. The significance of God's love and justice as a major theme of Scripture even further supports the work of advocacy. This session seeks to emphasize the importance of this evidence.

We move from the biblical evidence to calls to advocacy that are outside of the scope of Scripture. Shurden's book, *Four Fragile Freedoms*, should be front and center for this kind of discussion. CBF has faith partners that do this work and our work is only amplified by our joint efforts. Fundamentally, we are not at the cutting edge of some new work. We are late to the party.

David Gushee has written an effective framework for advocacy for CBF. That framework provides a theological overview of the significance of advocacy and is worthwhile for folks to review if they have more questions. This framework is not necessarily the only approach to advocacy. However, it provides a good and simple place for us to start and offers the chance to begin with some basic agreement about how many Chrisitans find a call to advocacy.

We want to acknowledge that there are real challenges to this work. It would be disingenuous to suggest otherwise. The significance of addressing these challenges early allows for a place to discuss the most significant of them. Intentionality matters, which is why these challenges must be addressed early.

This session concludes with the hope of advocacy. This is not an area that we frequently discuss. The Gospel offers good news to a world who needs it. Advocacy, while addressing broken systems needing repair, also offers hope to communities who are affected by broken policies. We are offering real hope for justice.

Opportunities for discussion in this session should seek to emulate good discussion practices. This should be a safe space that allows for open discussion of beliefs. It is likely that some will have an emotional response. Personal experience can be hard to navigate. If people do not feel safe in sharing their thoughts, advocacy efforts will be hard to start, to say the least. Be intentional about creating safe and brave space, open to new and perhaps challenging ideas. Feel free to use some time at the beginning to set shared group norms for these sessions and how to deal with disagreement.

Also, feel free to use our suggested Scripture references for this session. We highly emphasize Luke 4:16-20, but there are other passages that can adequately center our attention. Here are just a few:

- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount
- Matthew 16:24-26

Encourage folks to ponder their discussions until the next session. End every session in prayer. While there is value in a scripted prayer, the Spirit could be moving in your room in ways that we cannot anticipate. Allow space for those who feel so led to voice their own prayer in your closing moments.

LEADER GUIDE—SESSION 2
DEFINITIONAL WORK

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Christian advocacy is the faithful act of speaking out on behalf of and alongside those who are often not heard by showing love and care for neighbors in our communities and throughout the world.
- Understanding and articulating principles for effective, faithful Christian advocacy allow us to better offer a renewing sense of hope to the communities in which we reside and work.
- Our commitment to advocacy as a mission field leads us to practicing better forms of Christian advocacy.

The video guides all of the discussion. Make sure to stop and start the video at the appropriate times. For the discussion questions, the video will pause for 10 seconds. Feel free to pause the video further to allow for the appropriate amount of discussion for your group.

The purpose of doing definitional work in Session 2 is to be clear about what we are doing and how we are doing it. Far too often, preconceived notions of what advocacy is or is not come from places that improperly influence our perceptions. Many in your room might already bring some of those notions to this session. We want to provide adequate definitions and concepts that empower people within our churches to do the work of advocacy.

We spend a fair amount of time discussing the difference between political and partisan pulls. We strive to be clear that being political is not synonymous with being partisan. It is entirely possible that many folks might disagree with this statement early on. You might need to spend extra time in this section for discussion. However, don't get bogged down in the details. Naming this tension early is key to pushing back against the negative connotation of politics in our congregations.

The specificity with which we discuss what Christian advocacy both is and is not is important. Let participants sit with this if they need to. These characteristics are important and need to permeate our overall advocacy efforts.

This session concludes with an examination of advocacy as a mission field. In fact, the bulk of this session discusses this paradigm shift and why it should matter to your congregation. We have found that this discussion almost always bears fruit that lasts for some time. Pause the video as you see fit to discuss anything that might be more important for your context and your congregation. Your church is probably really good at mission efforts. So, capitalize on these mission efforts to emphasize the need for advocacy. Be willing to tell stories that humanize the need for advocacy and why your church should engage.

This session should be less personally challenging than Session 1. That does not change the need for creating and maintaining a safe space for discussion. Modeling safe space allows us to also model an inclusive, safe public witness.

Again, feel free to use our suggested Scripture passages to supplement this session. While this session is not necessarily guided by an overarching scriptural theme, there are passages of Scripture that can guide us effectively Here are some of them:

- Proverbs 31:8-9
- Psalm 51:10
- Isaiah 40:31
- Matthew 28:18-20

Conclude this session with prayer. Ask folks to name places in your community that have been afflicted by systemic issues. Then, pray that your congregation can begin to offer hope and renewal in the midst of broken systems that are fostering oppression and marginalization. Name the tension between being political and being partisan while reminding your group that God calls us to offer hope to a broken world.

LEADER GUIDE—SESSION 3
ADDRESSING CONCERNS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The work of advocacy fundamentally addresses the work of Jesus Christ.
- The work of advocacy is the work of the Gospel.
- The work of advocacy is the work of the body of Christ.

The video guides all of the discussion. Be sure to stop and start the video at the appropriate times. For the discussion questions, the video will pause for 10 seconds. Feel free to pause further the video to allow for the appropriate amount of discussion for your group.

Our learning objectives for this session fundamentally place the work of advocacy as a Jesus-centric, Gospel-based endeavor. The statement at the beginning of the session, "We don't want to be political, we just want to talk about Jesus," is a common statement from people of faith. This session addresses that statement by fundamentally grounding all of our advocacy efforts as efforts that arise directly from the person and work of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. We believe that faithful Christian advocacy is a tangible representation of the love of Christ.

Again, we address the pitfall of partisanship in this session. Simply put, it can destroy any Christian advocacy efforts that an individual or congregation might undertake. We must avoid the trap of partisanship and seek to find a better, more holy way, if you will.

A frequent concern that arises is the issue of the separation of church and state. We need to be clear what this means for our congregations. Embracing the separation of church and state does not mean that congregations are forbidden from engaging the political world or that our religious beliefs should have no bearing on our common civic life. Rather, faith should rightly inform our political paradigm. Share the supplemental handout "Advocacy and the Church: IRS Rules" so that participants can familiarize themselves with what is acceptable and what is not.

Start with the Gospel, proclaim the Gospel, embody the Gospel. This proclamation is central to understanding how the life of Jesus should drive our advocacy work. We are not working on behalf of a political party or lobbying group. We are working towards building the kingdom of God. As daunting as this might seem, grounding ourselves in this work is vital to being successful. Thus, we seek to emphasize it frequently and heavily.

There is always the chance that conflict will arise. Working to build consensus is an important part of the

political world and it is also an important part of Christian advocacy. While our beliefs about specific issues might diverge, we must seek to find ways that model effective public discourse. However, we must maintain our commitment to the way of Jesus Christ. We cannot compromise on that.

Suggested Scriptural References:

- Luke 4:16-21
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
- Matthew 25:31-46
- John 15:1-10
- Micah 6:6-8
- Acts 13:44-52

You will notice that Eugene Cho's *Thou Shalt Not Be a Jerk* is listed as a further resource for this session in the viewer's guide. Cho's book is a great examination of the necessary balance of remaining prophetic while engaging in a positive, inclusive fashion. To be clear, we should never sacrifice the Christian principles that are revealed in Jesus Christ.

Conclude this session with prayer. You might already have a good feel as to how your group is responding and how prayer can help conclude this session. Our hope is that prayer will become a practice that assists in guiding your congregation through engaging in advocacy efforts.

LEADER GUIDE—SESSION 4
IDEAS FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- In order for advocacy to become a real part of your congregation's ministry, you must find ways to engage your congregation in community settings (i.e. small groups).
- Be willing to integrate advocacy into the context of your worship.

The stories of congregations like 2nd Baptist Church in Little Rock, AR, and Greystone Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC, can be both instructive and inspiring for your congregation. In the video, you will hear from ministers at both congregations as they discuss the significance of advocacy and why their congregations decided it mattered.

You will also hear about ways your congregation can engage outside of this four session series. Utilize these strategies as valuable methods that can lead to greater faithfulness in Jesus.

Finally, we discuss integration of principles of advocacy into worship. Some of the deepest connection to advocacy can happen when sermons and other worship activities lead congregations to understanding the impact of advocacy. Be sure to integrate this into the worship life of your congregation.

The main portion of this session is an exercise that is designed to engage your congregation in how they can begin doing advocacy work. Ideally, you can divide your group into a few smaller groups to better facilitate the exercise. Allow participants to have time to complete this. This exercise can be a really significant guide for the next steps your congregation takes.

While this session is shorter than the previous three, there are Scripture references for your use:

Scripture References

- Luke 19:37-44
- John 10:1-18
- Joshua 6:15-21
- Ezekiel 37:1-14

Close with prayer. Ask participants to highlight how they feel God is calling them to this work. They might also name their concerns and how they can support one another going forward. Commit to more prayer and to figuring out what your church can do.