

Just FAITH

Ecumenical Version

General Overview 2008-09

This document is intended as a quick overview for those planning or considering JustFaith; it provides only a very concise description of the ecumenical version of the JustFaith program.

If you would like more information on how to promote, plan and prepare for JustFaith, email the JustFaith Ministries office (info@justfaith.org) or call (502) 429-0865 and request the Ecumenical version of the “JustFaith Getting Started (Ecumenical) 2008-09” electronic document, provided at no charge.

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**JustFaith Ministries
P.O. Box 221348
Louisville, KY 40252
(502) 429-0865**

www.justfaith.org . info@justfaith.org

JustFaith Ministries works in partnership with:



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Introduction

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind . . .
Luke 4:18*

Thank you for your interest in the JustFaith® program. Our Christian faith and biblical tradition extend an extraordinary invitation to each of us and our faith communities to become agents of God's compassion and healing in a wounded world. The Good News of Jesus Christ is both a comfort and a promise for the poor and, at the same time, a call to those of us who are not poor to be linked with God's vision of justice and reconciliation. The Church's history shines with examples of courage and commitment of those who addressed themselves to the needs of our most desperate sisters and brothers.

JustFaith, a thirty-week adult educational and formational process, offers an opportunity for people of faith to embark upon a spiritual journey into compassion. Most of us long to be a generous and compassionate people. However, occasions to explore this tradition in a deliberate and engaging way have largely not been available. JustFaith provides a lively and challenging format to read, view, discuss, pray, experience and be formed by the justice tradition that changes lives, inspires faithful witness, and transforms the world through love and service. Across the country, JustFaith has proven to be a potent and successful strategy for expanding and energizing Christian commitment to address human suffering. Indeed, many participating churches choose to repeat the JustFaith process year after year. The JustFaith program has been offered in over nine hundred churches from a variety of denominations in thirty-seven states throughout the country.

JustFaith was first conceived and distributed within the context of Roman Catholic parishes. However, broader interest within the Christian community has prompted this ecumenical version, offered in partnership with Bread for the World, a nationwide Christian movement that seeks justice for the world's hungry people by organizing churches to lobby our nation's decision-makers.

Overview

JustFaith® is an extensive, conversion-based process that provides a context in which participants can grow in their commitment to care for the vulnerable and to become advocates for justice. This program serves to strengthen the growing commitment of churches to be agents of social transformation, mercy and compassion.

JustFaith consists of thirty weekly sessions and takes advantage of the best forms of adult learning including books, videos, guest speakers, discussion, prayer, two weekend retreats and four immersion experiences. The intent is to provide a tapestry of learning opportunities that emphasize and enliven the remarkable justice tradition of the Church. Participants are not only exposed to a substantive and demanding course of study but are also afforded the privilege of becoming community with other participants and sharing a journey of faith and compassion that is both life-giving and challenging.



Engaging in the Church's social mission is, without argument, one of the most challenging aspects of our Gospel tradition. JustFaith is a process that recognizes the difficulty of the call to compassion and provides a wide range of compelling resources to communicate this tradition. The mandate of our faith to bring justice to a broken world deserves a preparation that honors the complexity of this task.

Starting the Program

*Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the creation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food . . .*
Matt 25:34-35

Planning Group

One of the first things to do to begin JustFaith at your church is to create a group of 4-5 people who will serve as a short-term planning taskforce. This team does not need to commit to facilitating the actual program, but will focus on preparing and recruiting for the program. This group will find the "JustFaith Getting Started (Ecumenical) 2008-09" document to be an effective guide for their planning efforts.

Group Size

The optimum size for a JustFaith group is between ten to fifteen people; however, some groups are smaller and some are a bit larger.

Recruitment

Recruitment often involves the use of personal invitations, small group information sessions, bulletin announcements, and promotion in the church newsletter. Sample bulletin announcements, full-page inserts and specific guidelines on recruitment are offered in the "JustFaith Getting Started (Ecumenical) 2008-09" document.

Timing

When possible, it is ideal to start promoting JustFaith in the spring, presuming that the program is to start in the fall. One way to approach this is to begin planning in April, recruitment in May and June, and ordering of materials in July.

Program Components

Weekly Meetings

JustFaith consists of thirty weekly sessions. Transformation and conversion of hearts and minds don't happen in just a few weeks' time. The commitment to thirty weeks has been proven to be most effective by hundreds of participating churches. It is highly recommended that JustFaith groups meet every week, except for special holidays. The length of each session is 2½ hours.



Retreats

Opening and closing retreats are part of the planned syllabus. Retreats are very important and require everyone's participation. Retreats can take place on campus at the local church, a retreat center, or a participant's home. Both retreats are typically scheduled from Friday evening to Sunday noon.

Immersion Experiences

Four immersion experiences are included in the JustFaith syllabus. Each of these typically involves a Saturday commitment. The main purpose of these experiences is to have face-to-face contact with people in at-risk situations and to provide an "out of classroom" experience. These days also include social analysis and spiritual reflection.

Co-Facilitation

JustFaith does not require professional staff to facilitate the process and presumes that, in most cases, facilitation will be done by two or more church members. While JustFaith is an intensive and rigorous program, the materials are designed so they can be readily used by the average church member. No special skills are needed to co-facilitate a JustFaith group, just an interest in social ministry and some experience working with groups. Facilitation is most successfully done by a team of two or three people.

Registration

Registering for JustFaith is a simple process. Registration forms can be downloaded at www.justfaith.org or by calling the JustFaith Ministries office. The fee for registration in 2008-09 is \$300 per church, regardless of the number of people or the number of groups involved within the church. If a single group is composed of members from different churches, there is only one registration fee. Also, the fee is waived or reduced for low-income churches that are encumbered by the cost of registration.

Other Program Costs

Cost of Books

The *approximate* cost of the 11-13 books used each year is \$140 per person. These books are ordered for the entire group by one of the co-facilitators. Book and video costs can be paid in installments because the materials are ordered intermittently throughout the program year. Some funds may be available to participants who have low incomes. Contact the JustFaith Ministries office for more information.



Cost of Videos

The program also employs approximately 12-14 videos. The cost of purchasing all of the videos the first year is approximately \$200-\$250. Since the majority of these videos will be used again in subsequent years, this cost is greatly reduced in the second and third years of doing JustFaith. Also, it should be noted that these videos may be used in other contexts within the church: adult education classes, youth ministry gatherings, confirmation programs, etc.

Guest Speaker Fees/Stipends

The JustFaith syllabus does suggest an occasional guest speaker as local resources allow. Sometimes it is appropriate to provide a stipend for these speakers. Many churches have funds in their annual budget earmarked for speaker compensation. In many cases, speakers from social service agencies or peace and justice organizations will gladly visit JustFaith groups without the expectation of compensation.

Closing Note

This program has been spiritually enriching and life changing for people of faith across the country. The opportunity to learn, discuss, reflect on and experience how to put faith into action on behalf of the poor and vulnerable has transformed many people. Participants frequently say that participation in the JustFaith program has been the most significant spiritual experience they have had as an adult. Thank you for your interest in this life-changing work of faith. We look forward to working with you.

*With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

*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?
Micah 6:6-8*

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