

## COORDINATOR GUIDELINES

In partnership with



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## Part One: Responsibilities of J-Walking Coordinators

### **Spiritual Guidance**

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.*

*To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Welcome to the role of JusticeWalking coordinator! If you have already journeyed with young people in ministry, you know that this is a sacred trust and life-giving experience. As you accompany young people through J-Walking, you will invite and encourage a new generation of disciples to shoulder the yoke of the gospel dream of justice and peace.

Above all else, J-Walking is a spiritual journey. Every journey involves preparations, gathering resources, and focusing energies. In every aspect, God’s Spirit can be embodied through our words, movements, and intentions. Before reading this document, take a few moments now to prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to guide you.

If possible, share this ritual with the other adult who will be coordinating your J-Walking group with you, then read and discuss this document together.

*(You will need a candle and a Bible.)*

- Light a candle, enter into silence, and become aware of your breathing, attentive to the subtle presence of the Spirit that lives within you.
- Open the Bible at 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, and slowly read out verses 4 to 7.
- Enter again into silence. Allow the misgivings, concerns, or anxieties you might have about J-Walking (*the tasks ahead, your gifts and limitations, the young people you have invited into the process...*) to surface in your mind and heart.
- If you are praying alone, name each of your concerns silently, ending each concern with the ancient prayer, “*Veni Sancte Spiritus*” (“Come Holy Spirit”). If you are gathered with others, take turns naming your concerns aloud and praying the response together. Consciously hand over your concerns to God’s compassionate Spirit and, for the time being, let them go.
- End with this passage from the Gospel of John:

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

John 14:26–27

*“J-Walking made me reconsider what I believe, why I believe it, and how it calls me to live.  
J-Walking showed me the gap between our beliefs and our lives...  
and I’m challenged to set an example of faith that follows the Gospel more genuinely.”*

Robert Barnell

## ***A Word about Language***

- ***J-Walking*** — an abbreviation for JusticeWalking, a prophet-raising process.
- ***J-Walker*** — a participant (adult or youth) in the J-Walking process. J-Walking creates small faith communities with older teenagers (16–18 years) and adults.
- ***Coordinator*** — one of two or three adults responsible for overseeing a J-Walking group.
- ***Co-Facilitator*** — a young J-Walker who has signed up to facilitate a J-Walking session as part of a team (one coordinator and one co-facilitator).
- ***Social Service Agency*** — a local community agency (e.g., nursing home, soup kitchen, shelter, etc.) that has agreed to be in relationship with the J-Walking group for the duration of the process.

## ***Tasks of Coordinators***

J-Walking coordinators share responsibility for overseeing the entire J-Walking process and commit to *full* participation. Coordinators are also responsible for beginning a J-Walking group. Once the group is established and begins to meet, coordinators also:

- ...co-facilitate prayer, dialogue, and preparation with the younger J-Walkers;
- ...listen attentively and welcome insights from all J-Walkers, paying special attention to those who appear uncomfortable or less engaged;
- ...serve as spiritual mentors while being full participants in all aspects of J-Walking;
- ...encourage dialogue and participation throughout the process.

***Name the people involved!*** Make sure J-Walkers and those you encounter at the social service agency are introduced, welcomed, and called by name.

***Pay attention to the peripheries!*** Seek out those who seem to be on the outside of the process, those who are quiet, and gently invite everyone to participate.

***Respect the authority of everyone's experience!*** Affirm those who contribute, ask clarifying questions, and invite others to respond or participate.

***Be attentive to the signs of the times!*** Invite J-Walkers to respond to what they are experiencing in the world through the fruits of the process and the relationships at the social service agency.

***Always be inclusive!*** Include all voices, especially those that tend to be marginalized. Gently but firmly balance talkers and thinkers so that no one, older or younger, dominates the process.

***Be rooted in prayer!*** Be a model of attentiveness, reverently giving and receiving the wisdom and challenges offered by the members of your J-Walking group.

## **Co-Facilitating**

The J-Walking process is divided into three stages. J-Walking materials are comprehensive and include session outlines, directions for co-facilitation, prayers, journal readings, supply lists, resource pages, and reminders...everything you need! Program materials are provided electronically to coordinators upon registration.

J-Walking is structured so that older and younger participants share session facilitation. Ideally, each session is co-facilitated by a team of two people – one adult and one younger J-Walker. Participants sign up for co-facilitation during the opening retreat.

Each session comes as a separate document. JW coordinators must forward these outlines to the appropriate adult-youth teams assigned to co-facilitate each session. *JW coordinators should read the materials thoroughly* with special attention to the directions, supplies, and preparations for each session.

## **Creating an Advisory Group**

Developing a support network will deepen the impact of J-Walking. If you are unfamiliar with the challenges of ministry with young people, advisors who are parish and diocesan youth ministers or teachers can provide the necessary expertise. It is easier to create and maintain a relatively small group of advisors (four or five individuals). When approaching potential advisors, share these points:

- This group is consultative only.
- Advisors commit to a maximum of three (one-hour) meetings: an initial meeting before the process begins, one meeting mid-way through the process, and a concluding meeting when J-Walking is over.
- Meetings are informative, prayerful, and led by the JW coordinators.
- Advisors share in the J-Walking process by contributing their experience and insights.

A simple and consistent format for your meetings will reduce the need for additional planning:

1. Opening Prayer (use a prayer, ritual, or symbol from the J-Walking materials).
2. Sharing the Good News (share insights or stories from the process).
3. Issues and Challenges (identify challenges or problems and invite input).
4. Upcoming Activities (discuss the calendar of events).
5. Shared Prayer (invite advisors to share reflections, name, and pray for J-Walkers).
6. Closing (use a journal reading or reflection from the materials as a blessing).

## **Promoting a Safe Environment**

A healthy and trusting environment for younger and older J-Walkers is crucial. JW coordinators must become familiar with the liability policies implemented in their own dioceses. Those new to ministry with young people can contact their diocesan youth office about policy guidelines. **It is imperative that all JW coordinators undergo background screenings before they begin meeting with the younger participants.**

J-Walkers who are younger than eighteen years old are minors under the law, so parental permission is required before they can participate in J-Walking activities. Templates for permission and medical release forms are attached to the *Getting Started* document, as are retreat and pilgrimage documents. Though it is impossible to eliminate all risks in ministry, it is possible to minimize them. These common-sense tips can reduce needless risks:

- ***Foster an open relationship with the parents of J-Walkers.*** Inform parents when problems arise. Keep family contact numbers available. Be sure parents have a contact number for the J-Walking group.
- ***Keep a file copy of all permission slips.*** During activities away from the school or parish property, travel with signed permission slips.
- ***Never plan to be alone in a private or secluded place with a young person.*** Ask families to assist with transportation. Avoid being alone in the car with a young person.
- ***Maintain clear boundaries concerning language and behavior.*** Mentor friendship is different from peer friendship.
- ***Pray for the young J-Walkers in your care.*** As God's children, they have much to teach adults who know how to listen and walk with them.

## ***Planning Retreats***

J-Walking exposes young people to an *engaged* spiritual life. Prayer and reflection are integral elements throughout the process. J-Walking incorporates three retreat experiences:

### ***Opening Retreat: Doers and Dreamers (overnight)***

This first event is designed to *deepen trust* and *build community* within the group. Faithfulness to the J-Walking commitment depends directly on the quality of the community that is built among participants. This initial retreat explores our baptismal call to live prophetic lives and confirms J-Walkers' commitment to the community.

### ***JusticeWalking Pilgrimage (two-day weekend immersion)***

This mobile experience takes place midway through the process. Participants are challenged to take their faith into their local streets, and to encounter social realities as pilgrims in search of compassionate justice. J-Walkers develop an itinerary of local sites to visit. The reflection process invites them to internalize and localize the quest for gospel justice.

### ***Commissioning Retreat: Living Under the Influence of Justice (one-day)***

This concluding event highlights the growth that has occurred over the whole process. The ritual elements of this retreat identify J-Walking as a rite of passage into Gospel-adjusted living. Advisors, mentors, and family members participate in the commissioning ritual. In the company of this supportive community J-Walkers are sent out, with hearts set on God's restoration, and lives oriented to Christ's compassionate example.

Combined, these three retreats offer a multidimensional experience that includes invitation, integration, and commissioning into gospel living. Retreats are vital to the experience and each fulfills a unique purpose. *Any attempt to bypass or shorten these retreats will seriously impact the quality of the J-Walking experience.*

## **Implementing J-Walking Sessions**

### **The Three-Step Pattern**

The J-Walking process is divided into three steps, with four sessions in each step. Individual sessions can be scheduled at weekly or every-other-week intervals. All sessions are two hours long and the process follows this pattern:

First Meeting	A theme is presented followed by reflection and dialogue
Second Meeting	( <i>at the margins*</i> ) A shorter thematic presentation and dialogue
Third Meeting	A theme is presented followed by reflection and dialogue
Fourth Meeting	( <i>at the margins*</i> ) A shorter thematic presentation and dialogue

*\*Every-other session takes place at the social service agency. Directions for these sessions at the social service agency are outlined in a separate document entitled "Meeting at the Margins."*

Each JW session has four distinct movements (*gathering, listening, sharing, and sending*) and includes the following components:

- Opening Rite
- Praying the News
- Presentation of the Theme
- Contemplative Dialogue
- Challenges and Applications
- Announcements and Reminders
- Closing Ritual

### **Preparing for Each Session**

JW coordinators should take time to review materials for every session to be familiar with the flow of the process. Everything needed to co-facilitate each session is clearly outlined in the materials. Since J-Walking gatherings are co-facilitated by youth and adults, co-facilitation teams need to meet before the session to review the materials and delegate tasks. *To avoid adding meetings between sessions, designated co-facilitators can meet before or after the preceding week's J-Walking session.*

### **Making Space for Community**

God's Reign breaks out where connections are revered, community is deepened, and relationships blossom into faithful friendship. J-Walkers are invited grow from an "interest group" into a faith community, and eventually to become a community of friends. It is crucial to add informal gatherings between scheduled sessions. Encourage young people to suggest venues and organize events in which they celebrate and connect with one another on a regular basis. At these times, J-Walkers can relax, express their creativity, and be spontaneous together. Gospel transformation only happens in community. In our over-full lives, finding and forming a dedicated community of faithful friends is a daunting but rewarding challenge.

### **Incorporating Spiritual Practices**

J-Walking operates from a paradigm of conversion—recognizing that the Gospel asks us to "turn our lives around." All J-Walkers are urged to examine the way they live their lives in order to embrace "the abundant life" in response to the gospel message, and in the light of the needs of

God's people. During the first and third sessions of each step, co-facilitators introduce a *spiritual practice* to the group. Some practices might be making space for silence; eating simple meals; fasting; restoring relationships; and maintaining few possessions. These are outward signs of an inner desire for a reorientation of our lives. Allowing God's compassionate justice to act on us, the practices remind J-Walkers that gospel justice begins in our hearts and is expressed in the everyday choices of life.

### **Journal Reflection**

Maintaining a prayer journal is an important J-Walking discipline. Participants are expected to bring their J-Walker Journal to every session to share their journal reflections. The J-Walker Journal includes spiritual readings, social teachings, directions, and questions. Between sessions, J-Walkers are expected to spend ten minutes a day in prayer with their journals. Co-facilitators remind participants of their commitment to journal-keeping.

### **The Prayer Cloth**

Each J-Walking group creates a prayer cloth using a piece of light-colored cotton fabric (roughly 4 feet by 4 feet). This cloth is incorporated into every session; spread out in the center of the circle, it opens a sacred space for contemplation and dialogue. At the Opening Retreat, J-Walkers seal their commitment to the process by signing the cloth. J-Walkers decorate the cloth with prayers, insights, and the names the people they encounter throughout the journey. The cloth serves as a visible reminder of their journey into Gospel-based living.

### **The Public Dialogue**

The third and final step in the J-Walking process begins with a Public Dialogue. Family, friends, and supporters are invited to this two-hour session. J-Walkers craft brief presentations that express their personal joys and struggles throughout the process, and testify to their experiences of transformation. Groups are invited to incorporate music, visual arts, ritual, and storytelling as vehicles for communicating their message. Since JW coordinators are full participants in the process, they are expected to testify along with their younger companions. JW coordinators will need to plan ahead for this public session, with attention to the following details:

- Make sure the group is aware of the scheduled date for the public presentation.
- Offer direction to group members as they craft their presentations.
- Identify a space if the regular J-Walking room cannot accommodate a larger group.
- Help J-Walkers promote the Public Dialogue event.
- Facilitate setup, snacks, and clean-up.

The Public Dialogue offers J-Walkers an opportunity to creatively share their experience with a wider audience. They facilitate short dialogues that engage their families and community in their struggle with realities of injustice and Gospel-based responses. This session provides an opportunity to celebrate the creativity and prophetic voice of J-Walkers.

## Summary

*Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;  
and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.*  
Matthew 11:28–30

As a JW coordinator, you will play a pivotal role in the J-Walking process. Coordination is easier when you enter into the process wholeheartedly, trust and follow directions, and make careful preparations.

Recall the lesson of the yoke. A yoke implies *shared* burden; we do not carry out the challenges of gospel faithfulness alone—there is another load-bearer who walks with us. Prayerfulness is the most valuable form of preparation, and God’s Spirit works on us and through us, even when we appear ill-prepared or disorganized. Fostering openness to the guidance of this Holy Spirit cannot be underestimated; it is this Spirit (already present in the lives of the J-Walkers) that moves us through the J-Walking process. In the end, it is the Spirit that affects transformation and enables us to embrace gospel justice as a way of walking in the Reign together.

Being a JW coordinator is demanding, yet it is ultimately joy-filled and life-giving. There are surprises in store for those who dare to walk in the company of young people. Be ready to be changed and to celebrate life with a lighter heart as you taste God’s readjusting love expressed in the energy and passion of young disciples. Know, too, that by walking into the margins you will be sharing the heritage of Catholic social teaching, will be challenged and changed. In the end, we at JustFaith Ministries hope you will come to experience that JusticeWalking is about falling in love with life by freely entering into life-changing and life-affirming relationships.

*“J-Walking inspired me to do my part in building God’s kingdom.  
To start, I can live more simply and be more aware of the connections  
between me and the rest of God’s children around the world.  
It can seem impossible to save our world from injustice and save ourselves, the Church,  
from losing sight of the Gospel, but J-Walking gave me faith  
that with every conversion to just living we are a step closer to heaven on earth.”*

Robert Barnell



## Part Two: Guidelines for Group Process and Dialogue

*And it happened that as they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, 'What are you discussing as you walk along?'*

Luke 24:15–17

### ***Move from Head to Heart***

J-Walking sessions lead participants from sharing to reflection, from reflection to dialogue, and from dialogue to prayer. The sessions begin with symbols and questions that encourage listening and sharing ideas; gradually, they move J-Walkers into deeper places where participants can listen and share from the heart. It takes time and effort to build trust and create an environment conducive to the deeper listening and heart-sharing we call dialogue. When co-facilitation teams follow the guidelines, the process should flow naturally. Co-facilitating the sessions will involve initiating the process, keeping everyone focused, being attentive to time, and making sure that all are included. JW coordinators will find a variety of dynamics for sharing, as well as questions, prayers, and other tools for dialogue. There may be times, however, when more direct assistance or even intervention is needed.

### ***Establish Ground Rules***

A set of pre-established rules gives co-facilitators a benchmark when misunderstandings need to be resolved. Inviting everyone to contribute to the guidelines builds ownership and trust within the group. Use the following axioms to create your own ground rules:

*Listening to others is a form of prayer.*

*Share your truth with kindness.*

*Silence speaks volumes—respect it!*

*Speak to build up rather than to tear down.*

*Leave room for other voices.*

*Try to understand rather than be understood.*

*Only God is allowed to judge.*

*Dialogue is an end in itself.*

### ***Listen from the Heart***

As a JW coordinator, your presence of heart and mind will set the tone for open and heartfelt dialogue. Keep in mind that a listening attitude, which generates a deeper and broader understanding, is always more fruitful than debating points. Your greatest asset is your ability to listen openly. A gentle, listening presence that encourages participants to freely express their own experience demonstrates how J-Walkers reverence everyone in the circle. By openly listening, you validate the experience of J-Walkers, recognizing that we are all always on the road to conversion.

### ***Promote Dialogue***

J-Walking is not a format for theoretical discussion or debate. It is a contemplative process in which participants share personal insights and struggles in order to understand more clearly God's presence in the world and God's call in their lives. While J-Walkers will be accustomed to

discussion, they may have limited experience with dialogue. Help the group learn the art of dialogue by becoming familiar with the following distinctions between discussion and dialogue.\*

<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>
<i>The individual's goal is often to bring others to his or her way of thinking.</i>	<i>The group's goal is to explore and expand understanding of a topic and incorporate varied perspectives.</i>
<i>Individuals present and defend different views.</i>	<i>The focus is on listening to one another, putting aside one's own views in order to fully listen to others.</i>
<i>There is a search for the best view to support a decision or action.</i>	<i>There is a free-flowing exploration of the complexities of an issue.</i>
<i>There is a back-and-forth discussion of differing and often opposing views.</i>	<i>People are not primarily in opposition, but looking for deeper insight and clarity.</i>
<i>Controversial topics often become sources of tension.</i>	<i>Controversial topics become discussible because participants are seeking to increase their understanding and because they care about each other.</i>
<i>There is a constant flow of conversation with someone always speaking.</i>	<i>The pace of the conversation varies with times of silence for thinking and absorbing what has been said.</i>

\*Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 239–43.

### **Stay in the Circle**

Body language is an important indicator of the trust and comfort level in a group. The overall dynamic for J-Walking sessions is that of a circle in which all participants are in clear view of one another and at the same eye level. If necessary, remind everyone to maintain the integrity of the circle, with no one seated outside, behind, or above the rest. Whether they are sharing, facilitating, presenting, or listening, J-Walkers should respect the subtleties of this circular, inclusive dynamic. The public dialogue session represents an exception to this rule since it involves a presentation to a larger group.

### **Be Inclusive**

Keeping everyone involved and making space for talkers and thinkers to listen and share will be a constant challenge. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- End dialogues with questions like: “Is there anyone who has not spoken yet who would like to share?”
- Instruct J-Walkers to take turns when responding to a question or giving feedback.
- Offer this comment: “Our time is limited, and we need to hear from everyone who wants to share.”

- Gently invite the quieter voices to share.
- Observe body language and notice when someone is ready to contribute.
- Invite J-Walkers to pause and patiently make space for those who need to think through their thoughts before speaking.

### ***Intervene When Someone Dominates***

The following are helpful responses when one person is dominating the conversation:

- “Thank you. Now we need to hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.”
- If someone is talking nonstop, gently interrupt with a comment like, “Let’s remember our ground rule about making space for everyone to talk.”
- Acknowledge people as they indicate they would like to share, so that the speaker knows others are waiting to enter the dialogue.

### ***Mediate Adult Contributions***

Older J-Walkers play an important role in the process; their contribution is invaluable, and should be respected and included. However, young people can easily be silenced by a dominant adult voice and often become submissive when adults take up too much of the dialogue. Empowering young voices to speak their truth will necessarily involve challenging adults to monitor their contributions.

### ***Group Conflict***

Conflict is not necessarily negative. Differences in perspective can provide J-Walkers with opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of reality. The tension of opposing viewpoints can be “holy ground.” This sacred space involves some risk; therefore, we must know how engage this risk appropriately so that conversation remains centered on positive disagreement rather than negative confrontation. Here are some suggestions:

- Remind everyone that the goal of dialogue is neither to create consensus, nor to win people over. We welcome each other’s diverse experiences and insights.
- Remind participants to be respectful of one another and mindful of each other’s well-being. We consider *what* we say and *how* we say it. Revisit your group’s ground rules.
- Remind yourself that it is important for participants to learn how to cope with difference of thought and opinion. Doing so prepares their minds for openness and conversion.

***If persistent issues arise, please contact JustFaith Ministries for support.***

### ***Respond to Personal Crises***

At any time throughout the process, one or more of the J-Walkers may be dealing with personal problems. It is natural and appropriate that such situations are raised during sessions. It is also important for the other group members to respond with concern and support. However, when a personal crisis takes precedence over the group, it can threaten the process itself. In such cases, coordinators should intervene directly and, taking the individual aside, help that person to deal with the situation.

## **Embrace the Gospel Challenges to Social Realities**

*“A church that does not provoke any crises, a Gospel that doesn’t unsettle,  
a word of God that doesn’t get under anyone’s skin, a word of God that doesn’t touch the real sin of the society in  
which it is being proclaimed—what Gospel is that?”*

*The Gospel is courageous; it is the good news of him who came to take away the world’s sins.*

*Neither the church nor the Gospel can be monopolized by any political or social movement.”*

*Oscar Romero*

On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples struggled to make sense of the political realities and consequences of Jesus’ execution. In a similar way, J-Walkers wrestle with the challenges of adopting gospel attitudes and perspectives in the face of current realities and the needs of the poor and marginalized. There may be times when J-Walkers, or their families, express concerns that the process proposes a direct challenge to some current political perspectives. This is not surprising, since J-Walking deals directly with the message of justice and peace found within the Scriptures, the tradition of Catholic social teaching, and the practical implications of our Church’s social mission. These reflect the content of our faith and our response to the invitation of Jesus Christ. All of these are linked immediately to the life of the Church as it relates to the poor and marginalized, and what our faith tells us about their reality.

J-Walking materials are specifically crafted to illuminate and expand upon Catholic social teaching and the Church’s social mission. The books, prayers, and dialogue questions draw from, or speak to, these related traditions. Some of the material may be critical of certain policies, structures, or practices, but this criticism is based on the impact these have on those who are poor and marginalized in our world, not on partisan views. If participants are uncomfortable with an author’s perspective, the dialogue questions, or the realities they encounter at the social service agency, it is helpful to ask:

- What is being said about the realities of the poor and marginalized and the implications of the Gospel message?
- How does this perspective, prayer, or reading relate to Catholic social teaching?
- How do the questions and activities connect with Scripture, Church tradition, or Catholic social teaching?
- What other just and compassionate responses might be justified based upon the gospel message and the values of Catholic social teaching?

## **Get to the Heart of the Matter**

Throughout the process, encourage everyone to personalize their experience and focus on the people they are encountering rather than discussing objective realities. Naming the people they encounter and using “I” statements when sharing insights will keep J-Walkers grounded in their shared experience. Through the spiritual practices, the relational encounters, and the Public Dialogue, J-Walkers are challenged to take the gospel message to heart and learn to see their lives and the world from another perspective. Encourage J-Walkers to ask friends, family, and members of their parish and school communities to hold them in prayer, that they might get to the heart of the Gospel and allow the experience to reform their own hearts.