



New Year's Resolutions to Address Poverty January 19, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

In 2021, our bi-monthly resources will typically appear in your inbox on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith.org website account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via videoconferencing. If you are new to videoconferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page. [Click here to access.](#)

This week's resource discusses a four-page article, which you can find [here](#). Please forward to your group in advance so that everyone can read it in advance and be ready to discuss.

While we hope that this twice-monthly resource will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our [regular programs](#). Today's resource speaks to the theme of poverty, which is highlighted in our JustFaith and JustFaith Catholic programs. The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever! We offer tips and tools for facilitating all our current programs virtually.

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone is present on the call or in-person, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we will begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reading before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.

Good and gracious God,
We embrace the world you have given,
A world of vultures and butterflies,
A world of both death and beauty,
A world of virtue and vice,
A world of darkness and light.

In this season of so much that is unknown and cloaked,
We acknowledge the despair of a pandemic that has done so much devastation
And we hold to the hope of vaccines and restoration.
We grieve the deep divide between those who have enough to sustain them
And those who don't, during this painful time.

Give us the strength and cause to smile.
And give us the grace and heart to weep.
May our sleep be troubled by the jobless and homeless
And may we still see the sun and stars and be grateful.

Let us pray resurrection from this sickness, this death-filled chapter
And hold fast to the prospect of life in full, life with hugs and smiles.

We know darkness always passes, in time.
We pray to be a people whose lives bring light
Even before the darkness has lifted.
In the hope of life in abundance. Amen



Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be important, when videoconferencing, to pay particular attention to making sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **How have the political events of the past two weeks impacted you?**
- **How do you sustain a sense of hope and joy during these times?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this past 10 months? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (15 minutes or so)

Introduce the reflection by reminding participants that they will be discussing an edited excerpt from the book, *A New Way to Be Church*, by JustFaith Ministries Founder, Jack Jezreel. Here's the [link](#) to the article.

Draw from the following questions:

1. The author outlines six intertwined, faith-based responses to the reality of poverty. Was there one or two that you found yourself most drawn to?
2. What experiences have you had that reinforce any of the author's points?
3. This article addresses the reality of poverty. How would you adapt the article for the purpose of, say, addressing environmental concerns or racism?
4. What gifts do you have that incline you in the direction of one or another of the six recommendations?



5. How has your church embodied any of the six recommendations?
6. What personal wisdom would you add to the author's insights?

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into the matter of how to address poverty, they should consider the eight-week program, JustFaith (or JustFaith Catholic).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries hosts a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice," in which an expert offers insights on a justice-related topic and offers tips for taking action. This month, Dr. Lewis Brogdon will be addressing the topic, "The Unknown King: Why You Need a Course on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." on Thursday, January 21, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. You can register [here](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds

Let's pray.

When our minds race with fear,
when televisions blare bad news,
when information and misinformation
whirl around us,



Speak to us, O God,
in the sound that is thin and quiet.

Pause for silence.

Then say:

May we who are merely inconvenienced,
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors,
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home,
remember those who must choose between preserving their health or
making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close,
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips,
remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market,
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home,
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

AMEN.

“Prayer for Pandemic”
By Cameron Belim, Seattle, WA



Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.