

Getting Started with a Local Group

Do you recognize Christian nationalism as a threat to both the Christian faith and our democracy? Are you ready to do something and act? This guide will help you get started in forming a local group that takes collective action to build a community resisting the policies that emerge from this ideology.



Step One: Form a core team

1. **Make a list** of people who could be good partners for you in building a group. These people could include:
 - **Contacts** shared by the Christians Against Christian Nationalism team. We want to help you! We have a list of people in communities across the country who told us they want to get involved with a group. Please contact Devin Withrow at dwithrow@BJCOnline.org for contacts in your area.
 - **Ministers, denominational leaders, or other community members** in your church or community.
2. **Reach out** to everyone on your list.
 1. **Email** everyone with a specific invitation to be part of an emerging group. Share your reason for organizing and why you think a local group is important.
 2. **Host one-on-one meetings (1:1s)** and make a personal invitation to each person to be part of this work.
 - Have a clear purpose or goal for your 1:1 meeting. For example: “I’d like to form a core group of people to help us organize Christians in our city to fight back against the school voucher bill, and I wanted to know if you’d want to be a part of this.”
 - Ask exploratory questions that come from your values, interests, and resources.
 - Make specific invitations for next steps. For example:
 - i. Will you join our core team?
 - ii. Will you join us at our next gathering?
 - iii. Would you like to be included in group emails?

Step Two: Gather people and develop a plan

1. Set a date and time for an initial meeting. This meeting should include people on your list who are interested in being part of a local group, and it also could include one or two allies who might want to support your local group. Invite people to join you, and make sure you send clear information about how to participate (meeting address, virtual zoom link, parking information, time, etc.).
2. Create a plan for your initial meeting, outlining what you will cover and how long it will take.

SAMPLE MEETING PLAN

*****To get your own editable copy of this sample meeting plan, click here.*****

Answer the following questions in advance to help you shape your meeting plan and agenda:

1. What is the purpose for this meeting?

Example:

- To invite clergy, Christians, and/or faith leaders to be part of a coalition of Christians resisting Christian nationalism in our community*
- To build an interfaith coalition to fight against policies stemming from a Christian nationalistic agenda*

2. What is your desired outcome for the meeting?

Examples:

- Five people sign up to join a core team*
- We create a list of additional people to invite to our coalition*
- We identify 1-2 issues we will address*

3. How will you structure your meeting to achieve the purpose and desired outcomes? The following agenda is an example, but feel free to adapt it as needed.

Time (60 min meeting)	Activity	Notes
X:00	Introductions	Invite everyone to introduce themselves. Consider asking everyone to share why they came to the meeting today.

<p>X:10</p>	<p>Share the Purpose</p> <p><i>(This part of the agenda is important to help everyone present understand the purpose of a local group.)</i></p>	<p>Sample Talking Points (edit as desired):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our mission is to bring together Christians and community members who are committed to resisting Christian nationalism and advocating for a more just, inclusive, and democratic society. • We aim to educate, equip, and mobilize people of faith to challenge the misuse of Christianity for political power and exclusion. • We commit to standing with those most impacted by the policies and rhetoric of Christian nationalism. • We affirm the separation of church and state as essential to protecting religious freedom, ensuring no one religion is privileged over others and ensuring that religion is not privileged over the choice not to follow religion. • Local action is powerful: When we build relationships, educate our congregations, and show up in solidarity with broader justice movements, we can push back against Christian nationalism’s influence. • We are not alone – Christians across the country are organizing, reclaiming our faith as a force for justice and inclusion.
<p>X:15</p>	<p>Group Discussion</p> <p><i>(Make space for everyone to share and build on the purpose for a local group.)</i></p>	<p>Ask the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concerns you about how Christian nationalism is showing up in our city/state? • What policies are reflective of Christian nationalism, and how are they impacting our community? • What can Christians/people of faith/we uniquely bring to the fight against this ideology?
<p>X:30</p>	<p>Strategizing on Actions</p> <p><i>(Move the group</i></p>	<p>Identify 1-2 policy issues that your group would want to address first. Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public schools and the separation of church and State

	<i>towards advocacy strategies.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass deportations and caring for immigrants and refugees
X:50	Next Steps	<p>Make a plan for next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there additional people you think should join this core team? Add their names and contact information to your growing list. • Decide when you will have your next meeting. Consider proposing a few times to meet next before the meeting ends. • Invite each participant to think of 2-4 people that they will invite to the next meeting.

Step Three: Plan your next steps

Now that you've hosted your first meeting, it's time to think about what's next.

It's hard to build a coalition on your own, so continue to build your core team of invested community members to help facilitate this work. Additionally, explore opportunities and action steps around the 1-2 issues that your group identified. Who are subject experts on those issues? What existing community organizations are already working on those issues?

Here are a few possibilities for next steps:

- **Send a follow up email** to everyone who attended your meeting. Include a summary of your meeting as well as information on the next meeting. Invite people to share the meeting invite to others as well.
- **Register your group with our Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign.** Information on how to register your group will be available shortly. By registering your group, you will receive updated information on trainings and resources. You will also be invited to attend a webinar to learn more about organizing a local group. After you attend a webinar, we will list your group on our public website so others in your area will be able to find you!
- **Plan your next meeting.** Now that you've had your first meeting, prepare for your next one. What do you need to build momentum for your group or local coalition?

Consider attending our next webinar to learn more about how to build a coalition strategy, including building relationships and mapping your network.

Let us know how your work is going and if there's anything you need! You can contact our Community Engagement Associate, Devin Withrow, at dwithrow@BJCOnline.org.