

The Ministry of Peace and Justice

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Session 4, Handout 1

What Should We Call Ourselves?

What's in a name? When it comes to your parish's peace and justice coordinating committee, a whole lot's in it! Choosing a name carefully will give your group some direction and lay the foundation for crafting a mission statement, which you'll also work on today. Also, a solid name will help the parish learn about you and what you hope to do.

The shorthand used in these sessions to this point when talking about your group has been "peace and justice coordinating committee" (PJCC). Why?

- **Peace and Justice:** This phrase simply states the area of this ministry, and uses very similar language to the Vatican's unit that works on these issues (which is called the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace).
- **Coordinating:** This word is a reminder that this group will not do peace and justice ministry on behalf of the parish, but will organize experiences for others to participate in.
- **Committee:** Here's the standard name for a group that gathers for a purpose. In an age of so many committees, however, it might be more of a loaded word than it seems!

Here are some things to think about when discussing possibilities for your group's name:

- There are some commonly used words and phrases that parishes use to title these types of committees, including:
 - **Peace and Justice:** This is mentioned above.
 - **Social Justice:** This clarifies the type of justice you're addressing, but it's a phrase that is often misunderstood or connected with particular political movements. Not a deal-breaker, but that's something to be aware of.
 - **Life and Justice:** If your committee will also address respect-life concerns, which is a natural connection, then emphasizing both areas of concern could be smart.
 - **Human or Social Concerns:** "Human concerns" is a title best suited for a ministry that has a primary goal of alleviating individuals' or families' immediate needs, whereas "social concerns" emphasizes that the committee will invite parishioners to address long-term issues that affect the common good. You'd miss the punch of "justice," but clarity is a selling point here.
 - **Social Action:** This title could work if your group's main areas of activities will be legislative advocacy and community organizing.
 - **Social Ministry:** The term used by the US bishops in Communities of Salt and Light. The word "ministry" works well in your faith-based setting.
 - **Solidarity:** Particularly good if global solidarity will be one of your bedrock areas. This word also works in more local settings, and it is rich in meaning. Most Catholics won't be familiar with the term in a faith context, though.
 - **Outside the box:** Maybe a particular Scripture passage inspires your group (e.g., Matthew 25, where Jesus tells us, "I was hungry and you gave me food"). Or a

particular saint (Archbishop Oscar Romero?) or quote (Pope Francis's oft-emphasized "culture of encounter," for instance) jumps out at you all. You'd sacrifice clarity for creativity if you went this route, but it's something to consider.

- Do you want to use a word like "coordinating" or "organizing" in your name? Does it make your name too much of a mouthful, or is it helpful?
- Is "committee" a word your parish uses to describe groups like this one? Is another word better, like ministry or team?

As each parish is unique, close consideration of your faith community's culture and values will point you in the right direction. Now, patiently and gently, it's time to discuss your options together.