

Sheltering at Home is a Time for Advocacy

Engaging Young People in Advocacy and Action

Because our youth are stuck at home for a while, it's a great time to inspire them to think about the situations and circumstances of others. With a little guidance and encouragement from their adult leaders, young people can use their extra time and their access to the internet to learn about the obstacles and injustices that other people face in their town, across the country, and around the world. Here are some ideas for getting your youth to take a more avid interest in advocacy.

Thinking Local

How familiar are your youth with the non-profit agencies in your area? Are they aware of which ones are remaining open during these weeks while people are sheltering at home? How is this time of COVID-19 outbreak and community-wide shutdowns particularly effecting the clients of local agencies? These are all questions that youth can be investigating while they are at home. From newspaper articles to agency e-newsletters, website searches, emails and phone calls, youth can be learning and then reporting their findings to their church. With some guidance, young people can lead the way in their congregation's response to supporting the most vulnerable in the community during this crisis.

Movie Night with a Mission

Lots of youth are having "virtual movie nights" with their friends. With Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO, Hulu and other platforms, there are many options for our young people to stay entertained. What if we used this time as an opportunity to teach and discuss important issues facing our country and world? Barnhart Films, which is funded by [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#), has created a series of informative and excellently produced documentaries on a variety of timely and important topics. From the ongoing water crisis in Flint, Michigan to the effects of gun violence, these weeks at home are opportunities to educate our young people and have conversations with them that will guide their thinking and actions well beyond our current time of social distancing.

Barnhart Films: <http://barnhartfilms.org/films.html>

Visit their website linked above for more info and to watch the film trailers. Full-length films are all available for free on [Vimeo](#).

- Locked In a Box: Immigration Detention
- Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence
- To Breathe Free (Following the story of a Syrian refugee family)
- Kepulihan: When the Waters Recede (The aftermath of the tsunami in Indonesia)
- Flint: The Poisoning of an American City

Other Documentaries:

"I AM"

The story of filmmaker Tom Shadyac as he travels the world, this film asks two central questions: what's wrong with the world? and what can we do about it? Available on Amazon Prime.

“13th”

An exploration of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and its connection to the current state of prisons, particularly the disproportional rate of people of color in our prisons. Available on Netflix

“Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap”

A short but informative discussion of how slavery, housing discrimination, and centuries of inequity have compounded to create a racial wealth gap. Available on Netflix

Letters to Local Leaders

Once young people are educated on issues of importance, it’s time to do something with their knowledge. Whether it is the plight of those without homes in their own community or the effects that changes in federal programs have on the most vulnerable across the country, youth can have a positive impact on the future of those around them. Talk to youth and find out what issues they are passionate about. It could be a local issue, such as the treatment of unhoused people by authorities in your city. Maybe it’s a state issue, such as the ecological impacts of fossil fuel exploration, or a national issue, like the human rights of immigrants. Do your youth know who their elected officials are? Empower them with contact information for their city council, county commission, state legislators, and federal representatives.

The Office of Public Witness for the Presbyterian Church USA can help you contact your federal elected officials through their website: <https://www.votervoice.net/PCUSA/home>
They also have listings of upcoming federal legislation and they provide drafts of messages to send on the various items currently up for vote.

Podcasts and Playlists with a Purpose

If one were to draw the stereotypical picture of today’s young people, it would have to include air pods in their ears. But in the midst of grooving to all of those tunes, youth also have the opportunity to learn a lot about the world around them. There are a plethora of podcasts available to educate them about issues of justice and inspire them to live in ways that support others.

[Scene On Radio](#)

Hosted by podcaster and documentarian John Biwen, along with regular guests like Dr. Chenjerai Kumanyika. Biwen takes on subjects like race, patriarchy, and the history of our democracy, breaking them down into digestible and well researched segments.

Season 2: Whiteness

Season 3: Men

Season 4: Democracy

[Code Switch](#)

A weekly podcast by NPR that discusses how race effects every aspect of our lives. Topics include music, food, education, as well as racism and xenophobia

[The Way of Love](#): with Bishop Michael Curry

Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Michael Curry discusses a variety of topics and interviews various community leaders and colleagues.

When your youth are ready to get back to their music, point them towards songs that are addressing important and timely topics. Here are a few songs to help get you started:

“You Need To Calm Down” by Taylor Swift (discussing homophobia)

“1-800-273-8255” by Logic (discussing depression)

“Earth” by Lil Dickie (discussing protection of the environment)

“Land of the Free” by The Killers (discussing gun violence, racism, immigration, racism)

Do you have a virtual youth group meeting coming up? Invite your youth to share a song they found that addresses a social issue, then talk about it as a group.

Planting Seeds and Discerning Calls

Do you have a particular young person that is really getting turned on to these acts of advocacy? Get them connected with our denomination's Office of Public Witness in Washington DC!

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/washington/>

Engaging young people in advocacy will empower them to be well informed and involved so that they can make a long-term impact on their world well beyond the current pandemic. Their time of staying home this spring could lead to launching them out into a world of supporting others.

Writer: Bill Buchanan, Youth Mission Co

Office of Christian Formation: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/formation/>

Presbyterian Youth Workers Association: <https://pywa.org/>



Office of Christian
Formation

