



Congregation-Based Community Organizing (CBCO)

A Call to Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly



photo courtesy of We Make Indiana



Presbyterian Hunger Program



pcusa.org/cbco

What is CBCO?

Congregation-Based Community

Organizing (CBCO) is a grassroots, faith-rooted approach to social transformation. It brings together diverse religious congregations — churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities — to build collective power and address systemic injustices in their local contexts. CBCO is grounded in the belief that, through deep relationships and faithful witness, faith communities are uniquely equipped to walk alongside frontline communities in the shared pursuit of justice and the common good. Pastors and organizers like the Revs. Trey Hammond and Phil Tom remind us that congregations and clergy, through community organizing, can be powerful agents in shaping positive change and engaging systems of power. Through CBCO, congregations experience renewal of spirit, purpose, and vitality — reconnecting faith with action, inspiring members to embody love of neighbor, and building bridges across interfaith coalitions and communities for the common good.

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photo by David Choy

Why Should Congregations Join?

1

Live Out Core Faith Values

CBCO offers congregations a pathway from direct services to justice ministries and renews congregational vitality. By engaging clergy, lay leaders, and members, it empowers communities of faith to identify and commit to community partnerships that embody their commitments to justice, mercy, and love. As the prophet Micah reminds us: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

2

Engage in Deep Listening

Through structured listening campaigns, CBCO members hear directly from those most affected by injustice. This process fosters empathy, uncovers shared concerns, and ensures that solutions are informed by lived experiences.

3

Build Interfaith and Ecumenical Solidarity

CBCO goes beyond denominational boundaries, connecting diverse faith traditions in a common cause. This unity increases the moral voice of the faith community and expresses a collective commitment to justice.

4

Develop Grassroots Leadership

Congregations receive training in organizing, advocacy, and public leadership. This empowerment equips congregants to take active roles in shaping policies and systems that affect their communities.

5

Achieve Tangible Community Improvements

CBCO efforts have led to significant wins in areas such as affordable housing, education reform, criminal and environmental justice, health-care access, and more. These victories improve lives and confirm the power of organized faith communities.

Stories of Impact



JUST Pensacola
Justice United Seeking Transformation

JUST Pensacola (Justice United Seeking Transformation) – Pensacola, Florida justpensacola.org

Established in 2018, JUST Pensacola is an interfaith coalition of 17 congregations from 12 different faith traditions. Their organizing efforts have led to notable achievements:

- [Affordable Housing Trust Fund](#): Building on the 2024 push for an affordable housing trust fund in Pensacola, rallied over 700 people in 2025 and secured public commitments from two county commissioners to allocate land by Sept. 15, 2025, to the Northwest Florida Community Land Trust – advancing a partnership with Habitat for Humanity to create affordable housing.
- Criminal Justice Reform: Successfully pushed for the expansion of juvenile civil citations, allowing youth to avoid arrest for certain misdemeanors, and they are working to increase the use of adult civil citations to reduce incarceration rates.

Stories of Impact



Missoula Interfaith Collaborative (MIC) — Missoula, Montana

micmt.org

MIC brings together over 40 congregations, nonprofits, and community organizations to address the root causes of poverty and housing insecurity in Missoula. Their congregation-based model nurtures grassroots leadership, deep listening, and collaboration across sectors to pursue justice.

- **Affordable Housing Advocacy:**

Through its [Housing Advocate Network](#), MIC trains volunteer advocates to walk alongside individuals and families navigating housing crises — offering support, building relationships with landlords, and increasing housing stability. This wholistic approach has helped over 400 households secure or maintain housing and provided insights for community-wide solutions.

- **Leadership Development through Listening and Action:**

MIC regularly conducts listening campaigns to surface community concerns and equip members for public leadership. This approach not only leads to responsive action but also deepens relationships across lines of faith, class, and race — strengthening the moral voice of the community.

Taking the First Step

If your congregation is inspired to join the movement for justice through CBCO, consider the following steps:

- 1 Educate**
Learn more about CBCO principles and practices through workshops, reading materials, and conversations with experienced organizers.
- 2 Connect**
Reach out to existing CBCO networks or local faith-based organizing groups to explore partnership opportunities.
- 3 Listen**
Conduct listening sessions within your congregation and community to identify pressing issues and shared concerns.
- 4 Equip**
Participate in training sessions to build skills in organizing, advocacy, and leadership.
- 5 Act**
Collaborate with other congregations and organizations to develop and implement strategic campaigns for justice.

By engaging in CBCO, congregations can transform their faith commitments into powerful actions that bring about meaningful change in their communities.

Major CBCO Networks

Four national networks support and connect local CBCO efforts:

- Faith in Action (formerly PICO National Network)
faithinaction.org
- Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART)
thedartcenter.org
- Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)
industrialareasfoundation.org
- Gamaliel Foundation
gamaliel.org
- Find a CBCO near you:
uua.org/files/documents/aw/cbco_near_you.pdf

References

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