

JOINING HANDS

STARTING A LOCAL JUBILEE GROUP

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET STARTED?

YOU! By following the steps below, you can begin to form a Jubilee group in your local community. Being part of a group provides support to build and maintain activism and concern. Plus, it's a great way to make new friends.

Start by building a core committee

You are looking for concerned people who are ready to act. The criteria is commitment, not expertise or experience. Think of friends, acquaintances, professors and others that might be interested in working with you. Invite them to join you in forming the local group.

Start by calling the national Jubilee USA office and checking the website to see if there is anyone in your area that is already interested or active in Jubilee. When you call, we can provide a list. In addition, several member organizations of Jubilee USA Network have local chapters or contacts. Working with them is an excellent idea, since they have valuable experience and contacts and are already committed to the principle of debt cancellation.

PLAN YOUR FIRST MEETING

Plan a face-to-face meeting of the people you gathered from your contacts, local organizations and lists from the Jubilee office. Your goal is to update them about the status of the debt campaign and to get a Jubilee group going locally. It is best to set an agenda for the meeting and outline it in your announcement. People are more likely to attend a meeting if it has a clear purpose. Send out email alerts and flyers to announce the meeting. Give people at least a month's notice. Make sure to call everyone on your list personally. Call again to remind everyone a few days before the meeting.

TIPS:

Holding a Successful Meeting

- Keep the presentation brief and focused. At the end include a brief motivational statement about the need for concerted action.
- Show some or all of the *Cancel the Debt, Now!* video as an introduction.
- Allow time to get to know one another, let people introduce themselves and state why they are interested in Jubilee. Begin building relationships.
- Agree on a common purpose for your local group.
- Discuss national monthly actions and consider ways in which the group could participate locally. Pick a concrete action and make a plan to achieve it.
- Ask each person to do at least one thing before the next meeting. Giving people jobs helps them feel responsible and invested. Ask each person to bring at least one person to the next meeting.
- Be sure you get everyone's name, phone number, addresses, and email before they leave.
- Plan a second organizational meeting, within the next month or so.
- End the meeting with writing letters. It is this first simple action that helps people feel like they are already making a difference and participating. This is really key, many don't leave time for this step, and people leave the meeting less invested. Make sure to leave ten minutes for this and have cards, pens and sample letters ready to go.
- Provide refreshments - this will draw people and keep them. Food provides energy for the conversation and assists in building relationships.

FORM YOUR JUBILEE GROUP

- Create a simple structure that will enable your group to function smoothly. Pick facilitators and liaisons to each national Jubilee working group: Grassroots, Policy and Global South. These working groups are where the real work of the Network happens. They are held by conference call each month and participants from all over the nation share their work, hear updates on the issues and plan and take tasks for the future work of Jubilee. These representatives can report back to your local group about what's going on with the national campaign.
- Agree on a mailing address and contact phone number so people will know how to reach you. Start a database of interested people. Enter people's contact information, how you met them/got them involved and code by Congressional district. This will help as you start to grow and take on more projects.
- Insofar as possible, set a regular meeting time and place.
- Give your group a name. You can call your group "Jubilee (name of your locality here)" provided you adhere to Jubilee USA Network's platform, enclosed in the Education and Action packet.

ONGOING EDUCATION

Many groups build into their regular meeting a program of self-education. A short presentation about current events, a slide show or a discussion about controversial issues can be built into the structure of regular meetings. You can get a sense of the current status of the debt campaign from the Education and Action packet and the Jubilee USA website www.jubileeusa.org. Take turns presenting pieces of the Education packet or updates from the website at your meetings.

STAY IN TOUCH!

Organizing is an interactive process. Be persistent, patient and flexible, building a strong local group can take months to a year. Let us know what you are doing, what is working and also what has not worked well. Sharing information helps us all become better organizers, and most importantly, it helps the Jubilee campaign grow. Stay in touch with the national office on a regular basis. Feel free to contact us at anytime.

TIPS: Organizing

- Speak using all your excitement and passion whenever you pick up the phone or hold a meeting.
- Remember that you are offering people the opportunity to be part of a national network that offers timely and effective advocacy that will benefit the lives of a billion people around the world.
- Make sure to really listen to their questions and concerns. Organizing is all about relationships, so value each person and conversation.
- Every email or mailing should be followed up with a phone call. Don't assume anyone has seen your information until you speak with him or her directly.
- Pick a centrally located place that is accessible by public transportation to hold meetings. It could be in a church or synagogue meeting room, in someone's home or a local coffeeshop. Usually it is best to hold the meeting on a weekday, evening or Sunday afternoon.
- Provide childcare at your meetings, if at all possible. Take turns having one person in the group be in charge of watching the kids.
- People are busy and may be working on many different volunteer and advocacy projects. If someone is too busy to come to a planning meeting, see if they would be interested in being on the mailing list or participating in strategic and timely actions in the future.
- Don't get discouraged; organizing takes time, patience and persistence. Stay in touch with the national office and other Jubilee campaigners around the country for support.

