



## Circle Guide

### What is a GreenFaith Circle and how do you start one?

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### Context:

There are many different ways to start a GreenFaith Circle. This document is meant to help guide organizers and community members who are interested in starting a circle in their community. It is meant to be modified to fit your own regional or cultural context.

### What is a GreenFaith Circle?

GreenFaith Circles are groups of people in the GreenFaith community that are working towards the mission, vision, and campaigns of GreenFaith. Circles can be an interfaith campaign group in a certain place; a green team in a temple, mosque, church, synagogue or place of prayer and meditation. They can be community groups that include members of multiple spiritual communities within a town, city or neighborhood. They can also be connected by identity, interest or skills (for example: Muslim women in the US, religious scholars in India, social media makers in Indonesia). They can have affiliations with their congregation, denomination or lineage, and with other groups. They can be single-faith, multi-faith, spiritual-but-not-religious, or a mix. It's important that they are open to and excited about working with faith backgrounds different from their own.

A Circle is a group of at least 5-10 people (but in some contexts, can be more) – local, web-connected or both – that’s

- Passionate about faith-based action on climate justice and the environment
- Eager to be part of a global, multi-faith grassroots activist community of Circles for climate justice
- Hungry for spiritual reflection, education, training, bold public campaigning and creative mobilization
- Ready to take action on GreenFaith campaigns

Each Circle member takes on a role that allows them to provide leadership or specific skills to that Circle. GreenFaith Circles of all different kinds are connected at the Local, National, and Global level. Representatives from all the Circles in a given country meet periodically with each other and the GreenFaith staff organizer in their country. Circle members are periodically invited to global training and calls to hear updates from the ground, and celebrate the accomplishments of Circles at all levels.

GreenFaith Circles are committed to building moral power, taking public action, and building a multi-faith climate justice and environmental movement around the world.

## Case Study: GreenFaith Jakarta in Indonesia

GreenFaith Jakarta is an interfaith Circle made up of Muslims and Christians who are living in Jakarta. In Indonesia, there are also skills and interest based Circles operating at the national level. For example: GreenFaith Indonesia Social Media Circle which focuses on creating videos, posting memes, amplifying stories from the frontlines, and engaging young people on the Indonesia campaign. In Indonesia, there is also a Muslim Women’s Circle, which is exploring how to outreach to more Muslim women in Indonesia. Some of the people who are in the national social media Circle also are in the Jakarta circle, so Circles can have overlap. There are also people in the Muslim Women’s Circle in the Jakarta circle and the social media Circle. This gives people multiple ways to contribute to the network in the ways they are passionate about.

# What do GreenFaith Circles Do?

Circle members build relationships, get trained on leadership development and campaigning, and organize, advocate, and campaign in support of climate and environmental justice.

The role of a GreenFaith Circle is to:

- **Base-build:** Grow the grassroots multi-faith climate and environmental justice movement by bringing more people into our actions, campaigns and spiritual reflection, and deepening the skills of those who are already with us. We do this by building and deepening relationships with people in our communities and congregations.
- **Educate, Learn, and Grow:** We seek to learn from each other and to get trained up to be the most effective change agents we can be. This includes getting in touch with our own reasons and motivations for doing this work, and our own faith's teachings that guide or command us to be actively involved change agents. It also means learning to be effective and strategic campaigners and action takers.
- **Campaign:** We bring a multifaith contingent and communities into local, national, and global coalitions for climate justice, with GreenFaith playing the faith convener role in secular coalitions. We also lead specifically faith-based actions and events in support of campaigns. We bring a strong moral voice, and use the respect and power that people of faith wield in society to shine a light on the governments, financiers, and faith institutions that are enabling suffering through environmental destruction. We write letters, make phone calls, spread the word, and publicly demonstrate in a prayerful way. We are inspired by faith leaders who have come before us to speak truth to power, and bravely say and do what's right- even if it's not popular.

GreenFaith Circles do outreach and education in faith communities, and work to stop the construction and finance of fossil fuel projects, which are the single largest contributor to climate change and pollution and health impacts in local communities. They put pressure on governments, financiers, and religious institutions to stop the flow of support for destructive fossil fuels, and advocate and campaign for a just transition to renewable energy funded by the countries and companies who have been the biggest contributors to the problem.

By working locally and connecting nationally and globally across religions, races, and cultures, GreenFaith Circles are growing people of faith to lead in defense of our common home and in support of a sustainable future.

## Steps to Starting a Circle

### Step 1: Identify Your People and Gather Them

There are a few different ways to gather your people together. If you already know who the people in your community are who you think would be interested in being involved in a GreenFaith circle, go ahead and gather them together in person (or online if you are unable to meet in person). They can be friends, neighbors, people from your kid's school, or people in your faith community.

If you know that you want to start a circle to work on a specific campaign that is relevant in your region, but you don't yet know who in your community might be interested, organize a public event to get people interested and invested in the issue. For example, if you want to organize a circle that works on stopping the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline, organize an educational event that ends in an ask to join a Circle to resist the pipeline.

If you know you want to organize in a specific community, but you're not exactly sure what you want to work on yet, organize a movie screening or a presentation with a guest speaker from the GreenFaith staff.

Here are some resources we have to help you organize your first gathering. This document provides a sample agenda for completing Steps 2-4.

 [GreenFaith Circle or Team Launch Agenda](#)

### Step 2: Get to Know Each Other and come together united in purpose.

Our Circles are stronger when we are grounded in connection with one another. Start by getting to know each other a little bit. Do a series of rounds where everyone shares:

- Why did you get involved? Or why do you care about this?
- What part of your faith implores you to be involved in social and environmental justice issues?

- What have you done so far? Was it successful? What was your biggest challenge? What do you think you can do better this time? Or who do you think you could bring on board this time?
- What special skills or experience do you bring to this work?
- Build a consensus that you want to do this together.
- What role might you want to play in the circle moving forward?

This allows you to begin to get to know the other people in the circle and helps to build deeper relationships amongst the different members of the team so they can work together in the long term. As your circle continues to work together, remember to continue doing go-arounds and checking in with each other so your relationships continue to deepen and you can support each other in staying in the work for a long time.

Check in with each other on the purpose of the Circle. [Here is a sample agenda for a first and Circle meeting to help you figure out the Purpose of your Circle.](#) The document also includes the pre-work that will help you have a successful 1st meeting where you get to know each other, and come to alignment about the purpose of the group.

### Step 3: Choose a name for your Circle and define the roles within your Circle

Our Circles are stronger when we have lots of different leaders taking on many different roles within the work and we also have a common identity. Spreading out the leadership and building as many leaders as possible makes it possible for us to recruit more people, bring more people in for the long haul, and be more effective. Below is a list of some of the leadership roles that can be taken on within a single circle. And remember, as the circle coordinators, we are looking to build more leaders so we can share the burden of the work and be even more effective.

We also want to have a common name and a group that we represent and can speak to when we go out into the community. Decide on the name that you want to have for your Circle. If you're a circle that's based in a specific locality, you can name your circle after that locality. (Examples: GreenFaith Dodoma, GreenFaith First Presbyterian Church Atlanta, GreenFaith Circle South Kalimantan). If you're a circle that has a certain theme, you should pick a creative name that illustrates the theme of your circle. (Examples: GreenFaith Kenya Social Media Circle, GreenFaith California Youth Circle, GreenFaith English Songwriters Circle, GreenFaith Muslims in the US Circle, etc)

Roles for Successful Circles

The idea is to find people who will take the lead on aspects of the work. The roles are fluid and there are ways team members are supporting the work of different roles at the same time. For example, we can all support the work of outreach and recruitment.

- Circle Coordinator: Schedules the meetings, finds a place to hold the meetings, and figures out all the logistics for the meetings. Make sure that everyone knows where and when the meetings are and has any other information they need to have.
- Circle Facilitator: creates agenda, facilitates meeting; provides overall support for team processes
- Circle Ambassador/Liaison: Conveys the information and decisions from the Circle to GreenFaith coordination spaces like regional calls or 1 on 1s with GreenFaith staff organizers. This person can also be a liaison to other GreenFaith Circles.
- Welcome/Outreach/Recruitment Coordinator: welcomes new people, manages outreach recruitment and supports record keeping of new volunteers. This person makes sure that everyone who joins is on the GreenFaith email list.
- Social Media Coordinator: creates content, and if relevant, manages content for the Circle's social media accounts. This person makes sure that the actions of the Circle are being seen by the rest of the world and the GreenFaith World social media accounts. This person stays apprised of relevant hashtags for the campaigns and tries to get other people in the Circle involved in sharing relevant updates on social media.
- Chaplain/Process Observer: facilitates spiritual grounding for the team, provides feedback to the team about how meetings are going; supports the circle facilitator in team meetings.
- Recorder/Documentarian: manages meeting notes; files photos, videos, works with outreach and social media coordinator.
- Issues Educator(s) (researches issues and brings ideas to the group; plans educational opportunities)
- Actions Coordinator (plans actions on behalf of the Circle, develops Circle action checklist when actions are being organized; supports Circle facilitator when actions are the team focus)

This is a sampling of the roles that could be helpful in building your circle, but there are plenty of other roles that could be useful in starting your circle.

Exercise: What leadership roles would you like to fill in your circle? Think about who in your community may be able to fill those roles.

| Role name | Role Description | Who in your community may be able to fill that role? |
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### Step 4: Complete the Welcome Process for GreenFaith Circles

Once you have aligned on a purpose for your team, gotten to know each other, and talked through the name of your Circle and the roles within your Circle, it's time to complete the welcome process. It is fundamental that you read over and agree to the Mission, Vision, Values, Theory of Change and Priorities of the organization. Make sure that everyone in your group agrees that you are aligned with what GreenFaith is doing. [Here is a process that you can follow to make sure that everyone is aligned with the fundamentals of GreenFaith.](#) If your group is not aligned, you may want to affiliate with another group instead of GreenFaith.

### Step 5: Figure out Your Strategy

It's very important for your group to figure out what the campaign is that you want to work on and what your role in that campaign will be. In many regions, Circles will know from their inception what campaign they are working on. In others, it will be a process to figure that out.

GreenFaith's global campaigns are focused on stopping fossil fuel infrastructure and it's financing, and winning a just transition that prioritizes communities that have been most impacted by environmental degradation and climate change. The first thing you should do is check in with the organizer in your region to get information about the priority campaigns. From them, you can better understand the GreenFaith project that's prioritized in your region and get support for engaging locally. You can find the contact information

for your regional organizer on the GreenFaith website. Someone will also follow up with you once you've submitted the form.

If you do not have a regional GreenFaith organizer in your country, you can answer these questions together:

- What are the campaigns in my region that could use support from our faith based circle?
- Who is the target of the campaign- who are we trying to get to make or change a decision?
- What leverage might we have on that decision maker to get them to do the right thing?
- What tactics or actions can we take to align more people with our cause and put pressure on the decision maker to make the decision we want them to make.
- What can we do to bring more and more people into the campaign and circle so that we can increase the effectiveness and safety of our group.

Almost every environmental and climate justice campaign could benefit from having faith communities and faith leaders involved. Faith leaders hold enormous sway in many communities- both with decision makers, and with their congregations or denominations. People of faith speak with a moral voice that is highly respected in many places. And when we are a group of people from multiple faiths, we are even stronger. [Use this strategy worksheet to figure out your strategy with your circle.](#) And if there is already a GreenFaith organizer or campaigner in your region, reach out to them to make sure your strategy is in line with the existing work that's happening.

## Step 6: Figure out how to bring more people into your circle:

Once you've decided what you want to work on, and what your strategy is, it's time to go out and recruit others to be a part of your circle. In order to win the campaign goals that we set for ourselves, we need lots of people with different skills and interests to help us educate others, take actions in the community, plan events, reach out to press, tell our stories on social media, create song and culture around our campaign, and so much more!

Here are some ideas of ways to continue to bring more people into the circle work you're doing:

- Talk to people in your faith congregation and invite them to join your circle. Many people who are in our faith communities care about climate change and are looking for ways to get involved. Tell them what you're doing and invite them to join you.



- Plan community events where you bring people together to talk about the campaign. These events can feature guest speakers, or be movie screenings where the issue is highlighted.
- Give a presentation in your faith community. Ask your congregational leadership if you can present on your campaign and highlight religious resources that make the case for why people of faith should care about the campaign you've chosen to work on.

## Step 7: Create an online presence

**\*If you are working in an area that does not have reliable internet access, you may want to skip this step.\***

Once you've submitted the form to recognize your Circle (Step 4), our digital team will help you set up an online presence either on Facebook, WhatsApp, or a platform called Control Shift. You will also be given a GreenFaith logo that you can use that is specific to your GreenFaith circle. In addition, anybody who looks at the GreenFaith website will be able to see what Circles already exist in their area.

Once you've gone through that process, you will also be invited to attend events, convergences, conversations, and trainings with other GreenFaith circle members from all around the world. In addition, your group will be celebrated in our quarterly Global GreenFaith celebration calls.

If you haven't yet, please go through the [Welcome process](#) with your Circle and [fill out this form](#).

## Step 8: Meet regularly with your circle and your GreenFaith Organizer: plan, take action, debrief, repeat

Once your group has been registered, you should have regular meetings to orient new people, take action together, and debrief past actions and events so you can continue to learn together and grow. Remember to continue to relate to each other on a personal level and continue to get to know each other. And don't forget to have fun! We love when singing and dancing and games are integrated into all the meetings and events we do. We are taking on serious issues but we are having fun and building deep relationships while doing the work.

And remember, after each action or event you plan, debrief and figure out what worked, and what you want to do differently next time. Share those learnings with each other so you can continue to get better and better.

And don't forget to check in regularly with the GreenFaith staff organizer who is there to support your region. These meetings may happen 1 on 1, or there may be regional meetings that support you along the way.