

A Typology of the American Protestant Left

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I've excluded groups that are formally affiliated with specific denominations. Each group's year of founding is in parentheses beside its name. Groups are listed within categories from the oldest to the newest. If I was unsure of the year of the group's founding, I made my best guess.

Groups with Broad Agendas

Fellowship of Reconciliation (1915): <http://www.forusa.org>

This organization works to end violence, war, racism, and economic injustice.

Church Women United (1941): <http://www.churchwomen.org>

This group is led by and designed for an ecumenical coalition of women of faith. It works for peace and justice concerns.

National Council of Churches (1950): <http://nccusa.org>

This longstanding para-church organization unites many Protestant and Orthodox Christian traditions and (in part) works for social justice across a wide range of issues.

Sojourners/Call to Renewal (1971): <http://www.sojo.org>

Jim Wallis heads Sojourners and Call to Renewal, which work primarily around an antipoverty agenda.

Evangelicals for Social Action (1973): <http://www.esa-online.org>

Headed by Ron Sider, this evangelical group works for social justice but is also pro-life.

*Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education (1977):
<http://www.tonycampolo.org>*

This organization, headed by Tony Campolo, is a social justice organization that emphasizes education.

The Interfaith Alliance (1994): <http://www.interfaithalliance.org>

For the last decade, the Interfaith Alliance has presented itself as a clear alternative to the religious right.

Center for Progressive Christianity (1996): <http://www.tpc.org>

This organization emphasizes a non-dogmatic approach Christianity as its starting point and moves from that basis to a political agenda that focuses on justice, tolerance, and inclusiveness.

Center for American Progress (2003): <http://www.americanprogress.org/projects/faith>

The Center for American Progress is a think tank in Washington founded by John Podesta. One of its areas of focus is the Faith and Progressive Policy Initiative.

Faith Voices for the Common Good (2004): <http://www.faithvoices.org>

This group aims to network religious progressives across the U.S. and work for social justice, peace, tolerance, and environmental protection.

CrossLeft/Institute for Progressive Christianity (2005): <http://www.crossleft.org> and <http://www.instituteforprogressivechristianity.org>

This organization is largely an online networking initiative that hopes to bring together the various threads of the religious left and help them to find common mission.

CrossWalk America (2005): <http://www.crosswalkamerica.org>

During the summer of 2006, religious left activists walked from Phoenix to Washington, DC in an effort to promote a more tolerant, inclusive understanding of Christianity than they understand the religious right to offer. They continue to try to network religio-political progressives together.

Network of Spiritual Progressives (2005): <http://www.spiritualprogressives.org>

This is Rabbi Michael Lerner's organization. It has a broad peace-and-justice agenda, and it wishes to present a clear alternative to the religious right.

Faith in Public Life (2006): <http://www.faithinpubliclife.org>

This organization is interested in promoting religious diversity and offering a different, more tolerant and inclusive voice than that offered by the religious right.

Faithful America (2006): <http://www.faithfulamerica.org>

This is a program that was initially sponsored by the National Council of Churches, but is now run under the auspices of Faith in Public Life, and is entirely online. Its agenda revolves around peace-and-justice issue areas.

Faithful Democrats (2006): <http://www.faithfuldemocrats.com>

This online community is designed to offer a place for Democratic Christians to communicate with one another, primarily through blogs.

Street Prophets (2006): <http://streetprophets.com>

This is a division of the liberal Daily Kos website designed to network progressive people of faith.

Groups with Narrow Agendas

National Conference for Community and Justice (1927): <http://www.nccj.org>

Formerly known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, this group focuses specifically on reducing racism, hatred, and intolerance.

Bread for the World (1972): <http://www.bread.org>

This well-known organization works to end hunger in the U.S. and abroad.

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (1973): <http://www.rcrc.org>

Formerly the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, this group's tag line is "pro-faith, pro-family, pro-choice." Its agenda revolves around protecting reproductive freedom.

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (1974): <http://www.iccr.org>

This organization works for corporate responsibility from a faith-based perspective.

Christian Peacemaker Teams USA (1994): <http://cpt.org/usa/usa.php>

This peace organization has branches in other countries, including Iraq, but in the U.S. its primary activities revolve around working to prevent violence in cities and protesting the School of the Americas.

Evangelical Environmental Network (1995): <http://www.creationcare.org>

This organization is the evangelical initiative for environmental protection.

Interfaith Worker Justice (1996): <http://www.iwj.org>

This organization is primarily concerned with the workers' rights, collective bargaining, and supporting organized labor.

Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing (2001): <http://www.religiousinstitute.org>

This is an organization "dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society." This translates into a pro-choice position on abortion and support for same-sex marriage.

Beatitudes Society (2005): <http://www.beatitudessociety.org>

This organization is the religious left's answer to the conservative Federalist Society. It is working to create chapters at colleges and universities across the U.S. to encourage students to view Christianity as a force for social justice and change.

Let Justice Roll (2005): <http://www.letjusticeroll.org>

This is a national network of people of faith working to raise the minimum wage.

National Religious Campaign against Torture (2006): <http://www.nrnat.org>

This is a coalition of people and faith-based groups that oppose the use of torture.

Selected Regional Interfaith/Ecumenical Groups

California Church IMPACT (1995): <http://www.calchurches.org/2-2.html>

This is the political arm of the California Council of Churches. It emphasizes hunger, homelessness, healthcare, childcare, violence, civil rights, economic and environmental justice, and religious liberty.

Oregon Center for Christian Values (1995): <http://www.occv.org>

This organization is explicitly interested in advocating a faith-based progressive political agenda, with a special emphasis on economic justice.

Protestants for the Common Good (1995): <http://www.thecommongood.org>

This Chicago-based organization works on a social justice agenda and endeavors to empower citizens to participate in the political process.

Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (1996): <http://www.cluela.org>

This is a Los Angeles coalition dedicated to helping the working poor.

Progressive Christians Uniting (1996): <http://www.progressivechristiansuniting.org>

This is a Southern California group that works to further social justice, end violence, and increase tolerance.

We Believe Ohio (2005): <http://webelieveohio.org/>

This interfaith organization is especially concerned with social justice, poverty, and inclusiveness.

Plymouth Center for Progressive Christian Values (2007):

<http://www.plymouthcenter.org>

This is a Minneapolis-based progressive Christian organization.

Community-Organizing Groups

Industrial Areas Foundation (1940): <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org>

This is the original community-organizing group founded by Saul Alinsky.

Gamaliel Foundation (1968): <http://www.gamaliel.org>

This is a community-organizing group based in Chicago.

Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (1972): <http://www.piconetwork.org>

This is a community-organizing group based in California.

Direct Action Research and Training (1982): <http://www.thedartcenter.org>

This is a community-organizing group based in South Florida.