



# THE NO KINGS INTERFAITH TOOLKIT: THE PRE-PROTEST FAITH GATHERING TOOLKIT

At Interfaith Alliance, we believe that faith and democracy go hand in hand. For generations, people of faith have stood at the forefront of movements for justice as an expression of their beliefs, not in spite of them. Today, as Christian nationalism threatens our fundamental freedoms, our voices matter more than ever to resist the use of religion to justify attacks on democracy.

## **Purpose of a Pre-No Kings Interfaith Gathering**

Before joining the No Kings III demonstration, communities across the country are hosting local interfaith gatherings. These gatherings bring people together across faiths and beliefs to ground participation in shared values, build relationships, and enter the public square with clarity and unity. A pre-event gathering allows participants to reflect on the moral stakes of this moment, connect with one another, and prepare to show up together in a way that reflects the values of pluralism, nonviolence, and democratic freedom.

## **Why an Interfaith Presence Matters**

Authoritarian movements often rely on division to gain and maintain power. They scapegoat minorities, including religious minorities, deploy divide-and-conquer tactics, and attempt to fuse political authority with a narrow religious identity. These movements frequently undermine constitutional protections, attack critics and independent institutions, and spread mistrust between communities. In response, the interfaith community offers a different vision. When people of diverse faiths and beliefs stand together, we demonstrate that democracy and religious freedom are strengthened by pluralism, not threatened by it. Interfaith organizing helps expose attempts to exploit antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate for political gain while building bridges across communities and strengthening our shared commitment to freedom, dignity, and democratic values.

## **The Unique Role of Faith Communities**

Interfaith movements are powerful because they combine two essential approaches to social change: bridge-building and activism. Bridge-building cultivates trust across communities and creates spaces where people feel they belong, while activism recruits and organizes people to advocate for democratic values and change unjust systems. Faith communities also influence many of society's key institutions, sometimes called the "pillars of support," by shaping moral narratives, mobilizing communities, and providing trusted leadership during moments of democratic stress. Throughout history, faith communities have contributed to movements for justice and democratic freedom by bringing moral authority, community networks, and spiritual resilience to public life.

## The Role of the Interfaith Community in No Kings

Within the No Kings mobilization, the interfaith community helps set the moral tone for the movement. When people of different faiths and beliefs stand together in public, we model pluralistic democracy in practice. By invoking the traditions, symbols, and values that guide our communities, we demonstrate that the struggle for democracy is also a moral and spiritual commitment. Our presence reminds the public that the vast majority of people of faith reject authoritarianism and instead support freedom, dignity, and democratic participation for all.

## Consider a Speaking Role at No Kings

No Kings is interested in people from diverse faiths and beliefs fully participating in No Kings, including in speaking roles. They are currently matching voices from various communities and No Kings partners with local actions across the country. [Please complete this intake](#) form so our organizing team can review your proposed remarks, assess your travel flexibility, and connect you with regional event hosts! See messaging guide below.

## What a Pre-Event Gathering Can Do

Hosting an interfaith gathering before the demonstration strengthens both the community and the broader movement. These gatherings create space to build relationships, affirm a shared vision for democracy, and reclaim the public voice of faith in defense of freedom and pluralism. They also help participants prepare for the practical realities of participating in a large public demonstration. Organizers may coordinate carpools to the event, provide sign-making materials, share messaging guides, invite leaders organizing ongoing interfaith work, and follow up afterward with photos, gratitude, and next steps for continued engagement. By minimizing barriers and helping participants feel connected and prepared, these gatherings make it easier for more people to participate and ensure that the interfaith presence at No Kings reflects unity, courage, and democratic values.

A pre-protest faith gathering is an important act of witness to root our public action in shared values, sacred commitments, and a long moral arc that bends toward justice. When we gather before marching together, we remind ourselves and the world that this work has real purpose and meaning in our lives.

Whether your gathering is large or small, formal or informal, a pre-protest faithful gathering is an opportunity to root your participation in spiritual intention. From porches to parks, living rooms to sanctuaries, these moments of reflection and community give us courage, remind us that we are not alone, and help us reaffirm our commitment to building a democracy where all have the opportunity to thrive..

## Planning Your Gathering

A pre-rally gathering can be as simple as lighting a candle and reading a short reflection, or sharing a prayer and walking together.

- **When and Where**

Plan to gather on the morning of March 28 in any meaningful space—your front steps, a garden, a community center, a nearby bench, or a place of worship.

- **Who to Invite**

A few friends, fellow congregants, neighbors, or local partners—whoever may be moved to show up.

- **How to Frame It**

Keep it heartfelt, simple, and invitational. Let people know this is a short time to pause, reflect, and commit before the public action begins.

## Sample Gathering Flow

- 1. Welcome**

One person opens the gathering and briefly shares its purpose.

- 2. Shared Reflection or Silence**

A short reading, prayer, or moment of quiet.

*Find sample text from Interfaith Center of New York's pre-No Kings II gathering below:*

**Hindu:** "The true kings and queens are not the rulers of nations, but the people of conscience – defenders of democracy, bearers of light in dark times. Let us answer their power with our fierce, loving solidarity." Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu – May all people in the world be happy. Om Shanti. – Sunita Viswanath, Hindus for Human Rights

**Muslim:** "The Qur'an reminds us not to walk arrogantly on the earth. Our strength is in humility and solidarity. Today, let us wield justice as a sword, wisdom as a shield, and stamp the earth with righteousness." – Hussein Rashid, Muslim Community Preacher

**Christian:** "When we say 'No Kings,' we say yes – yes to life over profit, yes to people over power, yes to justice that sets the captive free. May each step you take today be a prayer." – Rev. Mira Sawlani-Joyner, The Riverside Church

**Jewish:** "Do not trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no salvation... Happy are those whose hope is in the Source of Life, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry." – Rabbi Marc Margolius, The Beacon (Psalms 2 & 82)

- 3. Brief Testimony or Statement**

One voice offers a few words connecting faith to action.

- 4. Lean Into Tradition**

Light a candle, join in song, link arms, or read a shared line aloud.

- 5. Transition to Rally**

Close with intention, then walk or travel together to your local event.

## Logistics and Tools

- **Messaging Help**

For sample language, talking points, and signage ideas, see our Messaging Guide for Faith and Democracy below.

- **Coordinate with Your Local Rally**

Let local organizers know your gathering is happening and invite them to join.

- **Make It Visible**

Share photos or quotes and tag @intrfthalliance to help lift up your witness and inspire others. Interfaith Messaging Guide: Faith and Democracy in the Face of Authoritarianism

## Messaging Guide

### Introduction

At Interfaith Alliance, we believe democracy is more than a system of government—it is a reflection of our deepest spiritual values. Across faith traditions and ethical worldviews, we are called to affirm human dignity, challenge injustice, and protect the freedom of conscience. In this resource, we offer guidance for faith leaders, advocates, and communities who seek to resist authoritarianism and defend democracy. Whether used for sermons, public statements, rallies, or teaching, these messages speak to the moral clarity that our moment demands.

### Core Messages and Themes

These messages are intended for sermons, public remarks, op-eds, and social media.

#### 1. **Politicians Should Not Be Worshipped or Deified**

Diverse religious teachings warn against elevating any person to a place of unquestioned power or blind loyalty. Whether we worship God, follow ancestral wisdom, or ground ourselves in ethical humanism, we share a belief that no political figure is beyond questioning, criticism and accountability. Reverence belongs to the sacred, not the self-appointed.

#### 2. **Democracy Is a Moral Imperative**

Democracy honors the sacred worth of every person. It demands equity, compassion, and accountability—values deeply rooted in our religious and ethical teachings.

#### 3. **Authoritarianism Is a Spiritual Crisis**

Christian nationalism and political authoritarianism distort religion into a tool for control and obedience. This isn't faith—it's a betrayal of the divine call to love, justice, and humility.

#### 4. **No Leader Is Above the Law**

In a healthy democracy, no person holds unrestricted power—not even a president. The rule of law, transparency, and accountability are spiritual and civic obligations.

#### 5. **Our Diversity Is Sacred**

Democracy thrives on difference, and so does faith. Any attempt to impose one religious viewpoint over others is an attack on both pluralism and religious freedom.

## Social Media and Sign Graphics

Interfaith Alliance has created some [social media graphics](#) and [signs you can print out](#) that you are free to download and use. Encourage attendees and congregants to amplify faith-rooted

messages at actions, vigils, or gatherings: Here are some more suggestions:

- "People of Faith Against Authoritarianism"
  - "My Religion Doesn't Bow to Presidents"
  - "We Worship Justice, Not Power"
  - "No Kings, No Theocracy, No Fear"
- "Faith Demands Freedom"
  - "Interfaith and Interfree"
  - "Love Thy Neighbor, Not Just Thy Voter Base"
  - "Sacred Worth > Political Power"

## Faith-Rooted Talking Points

These concise messages, grounded in various traditions, are ready for use in public statements, sermons, or interfaith gatherings.

- **Judaism:**  
"We are commanded to pursue justice, not kingship. The prophets stood with the people, not the palace."  
'Justice, justice shall you pursue...!' (Deuteronomy 16:20)
- **Christianity:**  
"Jesus overturned the tables of empire. He called us not to rule, but to serve."  
'The last will be first, and the first will be last.' (Matthew 20:16)  
'You cannot serve both God and mammon.' (Matthew 6:24)
- **Islam:**  
"The Qur'an teaches that power is a trust, not a right. Justice is the path of God."  
'God commands justice, the doing of good...!' (Qur'an 16:90)  
'O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice.' (Qur'an 4:135)
- **Hinduism:**  
"True leadership aligns with dharma—selfless action, not domination."  
'Whenever there is a decline in righteousness... I manifest Myself.' (Bhagavad Gita 4:7)
- **Buddhism:**  
"Right action and right intention reject domination. Attachment to power breeds suffering."  
'Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love.' (Dhammapada 1:5)
- **Unitarian Universalism:**  
"We affirm the worth and dignity of every person and the right of conscience."  
Principles 1 & 5: 'The inherent worth and dignity of every person' and 'The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process.'
- **Humanist and Ethical Voices:**  
"A free society depends on moral responsibility, not coercive power."  
Humanist Manifesto III: 'Knowledge derived from experience must be tested by critical reason and shared in a democratic society.'

**ICE OUT SING-IN**

## Resistance Songbook

The ICE OUT Sing-In Resistance Songbook, compiled by Resistance Revival Chorus, is part of Interfaith Alliance's broader effort to train Americans to respond courageously to rising authoritarianism. Developed as a resource for organizers and communities, the songbook has already been put into use at gatherings and actions in Los Angeles, New York City, and beyond, and it is freely available for anyone who wishes to bring music into public witness and collective action. In some of the toughest times in our country's history, this project is a celebration of people coming together, finding their voices, and sustaining one another. We are continuing to document how communities are using the songbook, including at a [recent sing-in](#) by the Resistance Revival Chorus at Middle Church, and we welcome others to be in touch with questions, stories, or clips, especially as we uplift new videos highlighting these powerful moments of collective celebration and song.

For more on the history of protest music, watch [this video](#) from the Resistance Revival Chorus.

### About these songs:

**Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round** is a freedom song based on the spiritual "Don't You Let Nobody Turn You Round." It became an American civil rights era anthem after Ralph Abernathy introduced it in 1962 at a meeting at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, during a time of mass arrests and demonstrations. It was sung during civil rights demonstrations in the United States including during the Memphis sanitation strike in 1967. The song's lyrics are adaptable to situations and locations.

**It's Okay to Change Your Mind** by Minneapolis-based community song circle leader, Annie Schlaefer in response to escalating ICE raids and authoritarian violence in the Twin Cities. It is inspired by Otpor!, the Serbian civil resistance movement who overthrew dictator Slobodan Milošević in 2000. Otpor! members were regularly arrested and beaten by police. Afterward, they would show up to police stations and officers' houses chanting "You may not join us today, but you can join us tomorrow." In the final hours of their revolution, hundreds of thousands of people from across Serbia marched on Belgrade. Milosevic ordered the police and military to fire on massive crowds of protestors, and they refused. They were done being on the wrong side of history.

**Hold On** by Heidi Wilson of Plainfield, Vermont – "This song is for getting through the long nights of winter, and the long nights of healing, and the long dark spells of doubt," she writes. Wilson wrote it in 2018 after a teen in her community was lost to suicide. A friend organized an outdoor winter gathering around a fire in front of the local high school the weekend after his death to pull people together and surround them with love and connection, and this is the song they sang.

**This Joy** comes to us through the Black Church. Composed by Shirley Caesar, a pastor and 12-time Grammy winner, known as the "First Lady of Gospel Music." Caesar was born in 1938 in Durham, North Carolina and later founded Mount Calvary Word of Faith Church, in nearby Raleigh, which she still leads today.

**We Want Justice** is written in the spirit of a traditional civil rights chant by Abena Koomson-Davis, the Resistance Revival Chorus's musical director from 2017-2024. It is a call-and-response song that can be customized to the needs of the moment.

**Ella's Song** The lineage of this song follows the great tradition of civil rights music in honoring heritage, embracing new voices, and responding to truth as a collective. Ella's Song descends directly from the words and speeches of civil rights leader Ella Baker, who mentored Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, one of the original members of the SNCC Freedom Singers who later composed this song for internationally lauded a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock. The Resistance Revival Chorus's arrangement originates from the recording created by Toshi Reagon & Big Lovely in celebration of the historic 2017 Women's March, with added vocal harmonies arranged and taught by RRC member Sound Brown.

### **Ella's Song Full Lyrics**

*by Bernice Johnson Reagon, Based on the words of Ella Baker*

*As sung by the Resistance Revival Chorus, based on the arrangement by Toshi Reagon*

We who believe in freedom cannot rest  
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes!

Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons  
Is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons  
We who believe in freedom cannot rest  
We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes!

Not needing to clutch for power  
Not needing the light just to shine on me  
I need to be just one in the number  
as we stand against tyranny.

To me young people come first!  
They have the courage where we fail  
If I can just, shine a light on as they carry us through the gale

#### *CHORUS*

I'm a woman who speaks in a voice—  
And I must be heard!  
At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word

#### *CHORUS*

We who believe in freedom cannot rest  
[We who believe in freedom cannot rest]  
We who believe in freedom cannot rest .... until it comes!  
[We who believe in freedom cannot rest]

Find more chants and songs focused on resistance to ICE in the [Singing Resistance Songbook](#)

# SONG LYRICS

## **Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round**

*Traditional Freedom Song, as performed by the Resistance Revival Chorus*

(Ain't gonna let nobody)  
turn me 'round  
turn me 'round  
turn me 'round.  
Ain't gonna let nobody  
turn me 'round  
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'  
keep on a talkin'  
marching up to freedom land.

### **Options for additional verses**

Replace the word "nobody" with:

- racism
  - sexism
  - injustice
  - no hatred
  - no jail cell
  - segregation
- 

## **It's Okay to Change Your Mind**

*by Annie Schlaefter*

Ohh, it's okay to change your mind.  
Show us your courage,  
leave this behind.  
Ohh it's okay to change your mind,  
and you can join us,  
join us here anytime.

---

## **Hold On**

*by Heidi Wilson*

Hold on, hold on  
My dear ones, here comes the dawn

## **This Joy**

*By Shirley Caesar, as performed by Resistance Revival Chorus*

This joy that I have,  
The world didn't give it to me.  
This joy that I have,  
The world didn't give it to me.  
This joy that I have.  
The world didn't give it to me.  
The world didn't give it and the world can't take it away.

### **Options for additional verses**

Replace the word "joy" with:

- Love
  - Peace
  - Strength
  - Song
  - Etc...
- 

## **We Want Justice**

*By Abena Koomson-Davis*

**Lead:** Everybody sing about Justice!

### **Verse 1: Group 1 (Group 2)**

We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want it NOW! (We want it NOW!)

*(Repeat x2)*

**Lead:** Everybody sing about Freedom!

### **Verse 2: Group 1 (Group 2)**

We want Freedom! (We want Freedom!)  
We want Freedom! (We want Freedom!)  
We want Freedom! (We want Freedom!)  
We want it NOW! (We want it NOW!)

*(Repeat x2)*

**Lead:** Everybody sing about Honor!

### **Verse 3: Group 1 (Group 2)**

We want Honor! (We want Honor!)  
We want Honor! (We want Honor!)

We want Honor! (We want Honor!)  
We want it NOW! (We want it NOW!)

*(Repeat x2)*

**Lead:** Everybody sing about Justice!

**Verse 4: Group 1 (Group 2)**

We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want Justice! (We want Justice!)  
We want it NOW! (We want it NOW!)

*(1x only)*

**Lead:** Ad lib while chorus repeats:

**Chorus:** We want it NOW! (We want it NOW!)

---

*Songbook compiled by the Resistance Revival Chorus, February 2026*

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Do I need to be a clergy person or faith leader to host a gathering?**

No. Anyone can host a pre-protest faith gathering. These moments are meant to be accessible, grassroots expressions of shared values. Whether you are a clergy member, a lay leader, or simply someone who wants to gather a few friends in reflection before the rally, your leadership matters.

### **What if participants come from different faith traditions—or none at all?**

Interfaith and inclusive gatherings are encouraged. You can incorporate readings from multiple traditions, invite participants to share reflections from their own backgrounds, or focus on shared values like justice, dignity, and democracy. A moment of silence can also provide space for everyone to connect in their own way.

### **What if it rains or the weather is bad?**

Have a simple backup plan. If possible, move your gathering to a covered space like a porch, community center, house of worship, or nearby café. You can also keep the gathering very short and proceed to the rally together. Rain or shine, the most important thing is showing up with intention and solidarity.

## **Additional Resources:**

- [Know Your Rights](#)
- [De-Escalation Resources](#)