



## **2026 Election Engagement Toolkit**

Developed by the United Church of Christ  
Office of Public Policy & Advocacy

## ABOUT OUR FAITH OUR VOTE

The United Church of Christ’s Our Faith Our Vote Campaign is designed to engage the faith community in elections. We engage participants in voter registration drives and candidate forums that get to the heart of the issues we care about.

Discerning the role of the church in politics has been a historically strong part of the UCC and our predecessor bodies. UCC General Synod resolutions and policy statements have spoken to the qualifications for the Office of the President of the U.S. (1960); ethics in public life and conflicts of interest among public office holders (1967) lobbyist disclosure (1977), and of course, a myriad of public issues that are decided on by elected officials at the local, state and national levels. Our Faith Our Vote work is being done across the U.S., as churches seek to faithfully respond to the call of a God who is still speaking.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Theological Reflection by Rev. Michael Neuroth.....	3
Guidelines for Congregations on Political Action.....	4
Voter Education.....	6
Issue Based One Pagers	
Affordable Housing.....	8
Democracy and Voting Rights.....	9
Disability & Mental Health Justice.....	10
Economic Justice.....	11
Environmental Justice.....	12
Healthcare.....	13
Immigration Justice.....	14
International Affairs.....	15
LGBTQ+ Justice.....	16
Racial Justice.....	17
Reproductive Justice and Abortion.....	18
Guidelines for Faithful and Respectful Discussion on the Issues.....	19
Voter Registration and Empowerment Drive.....	20
Organize a Candidate Forum.....	24
Get Out The Vote.....	26
Being a Civil Voice for Uncivil Times.....	30
College Resources.....	31
Youth and Young Adults in Action.....	36



## THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION & OPENING LETTER

*“Let us not love with words or speech, but in action and in truth”– 1 John 3:18*

Our faith is grounded in love. Jesus names the love of God and love of neighbor as the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) at the heart of our faith as Christians. 1 John 3:18 reminds us further that love can't only be spoken in words but must be lived out in action. Voting is a sacred act through which our love for our neighbor is lived out in public. Our votes help elect leaders and shape policies that impacts not only our nation, but the world around us.

We live in a moment when many of our neighbors – immigrants, LGBTQIA+ siblings, Black and brown communities, people living with disabilities, and so many others – are all under threat of losing their rights. Love calls us to stand with them, not just in our words but in our actions: in how we organize, how we show up for one another, in how we vote.

This November 3rd, every seat in the U.S. House and roughly a third of the U.S. Senate are on the ballot, along with many governors' races, state legislatures, and local ballot initiatives that will shape our common life and policies ranging from reproductive justice to LGBTQIA+ rights to the budget decisions that impact the most vulnerable in our communities. There is so much at stake. We are called to ensure that every vote matters, that every voice is heard on the future direction of our nation.

This is especially critical the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, which has made it significantly harder for voters of color to challenge voting maps as racially discriminatory under the Voting Rights Act. This ruling is just the latest in a series of decisions that have steadily weakened the Voting Rights Act's protections and has opened the gate even wider for states to redraw congressional maps to dilute the voice of communities of color. It is shameful, but it is also not the end of the story. As Christians, we are called to ensure all God's children, all our neighbors, are given equal rights and voice. We are called to vote with love.

In the coming weeks, we hope you will use this toolkit and the resources offered on the “Our Faith Our Vote” page to make plans for yourself and congregation to engage this election in nonpartisan ways. In his toolkit, you'll find encouragement to make plans to vote- and get out the vote- in our community. You'll learn of ways to sign up to be a poll chaplain, or poll worker, and background on issues that could be useful for a town hall or public issue forum. There are so many ways to get active! How will you work to strengthen the sacred right to vote this year? Let us take one new step this year as an act of love – love grounded not only in words, but in action and truth.

May we go forward together and Vote with Love!



Rev. Michael Neuroth  
Director, UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy

## GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONS ON POLITICAL ACTION

How can UCC congregations participate constructively in the political process during this election year? What are the opportunities and legal limits to faith inspired political activity? This guide will help you understand what kind of activities UCC churches can undertake to lift up our concerns and our witness in the elections.

### *Political Activities of Churches are Limited Due to IRS Tax Exempt Status*

Almost all churches are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code on the basis that they are “operated exclusively for religious, charitable or educational purposes.” As a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, a church:

- is exempt from paying corporate income taxes, and donations to it are tax deductible on federal tax returns;
- may expend funds for religious, charitable and educational purposes, and an insubstantial amount on lobbying and to promote legislation;
- A 501 (c)(3) exempt organization may not “participate in, or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.”

**Your church is restricted from engaging in some political activities because it is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.** For example, your church is prohibited from expressing its support for or opposition to any candidate. Your church is also prohibited from making political contributions to candidates.

However, there are no restrictions on educating church members about election year issues and promoting discussion of public policy.

Other kinds of unrestricted political activity include holding nonpartisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, preparing and distributing nonpartisan voter guides and voting records, prayer vigils, public witness, and advocacy for a safe and accessible election, and sponsoring candidate forums and debates.

**Clergy and church leaders have the same rights as every American citizen and may fully participate in political campaigns as individuals.** “However, they must not participate in political campaigns by endorsing or opposing any candidate in a church publication or at a church function. When clergy do engage in a political campaign or political discussions as individuals, they should announce they are acting on their own and not on behalf of the church.” [from Internal Revenue Service 2007 ruling: Rev. Rul. 2007-41]

*You can learn more about how to engage in nonpartisan political activities from our webinar:*

*“Be Prophetic, Not Partisan! Navigating Election Do’s & Don’ts for Churches”*  
[bit.ly/be-prophetic-not-partisan](http://bit.ly/be-prophetic-not-partisan)

## GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONS ON POLITICAL ACTION

Activity	Permitted
Discuss the position of candidates on public issues*	Yes
Endorsement of political candidates	No
Contributions to political candidates	No
In-kind expenditures in favor of or against political candidates	No
Independent expenditures in favor of or against political candidates	No
Contribution to PACs	No
Appearance of political candidate at church meeting or service**	Yes
Payment of expenses for candidate to appear	No
Distribute at church - 1) Nonpartisan candidate surveys or guides***	Yes
Distribute at church - 2) Voting Records	Yes
Distribute at church - 3) Candidate Political Statements	No
Rent church space at market value if offered at same rate for all candidates	Yes
Publish in church newsletter, bulletin, or magazine**** - 1) Political ads sold at market rate	Yes
Publish in church newsletter, bulletin, or magazine**** - 2) Political ads sold at less than market rate	No
Publish in church newsletter, bulletin, or magazine**** - 3) News stories	Yes
Publish in church newsletter, bulletin, or magazine**** - 4) Editorials endorsing or opposing a political candidate	No
Nonpartisan voter education	Yes
Nonpartisan voter registration	Yes
Nonpartisan get-out-the-vote drives	Yes

*\*Discussion of the position of political candidates is appropriate so long as the discussion does not involve an endorsement of, or opposition to, any particular candidate's position.*

*\*\*A political candidate may appear at a church service. The appearance of candidate before a church service, however, is limited as follows:*

*Any other candidate for the same office that requests to appear must be given the same opportunity; and*

*No solicitation for funds may be made by any representative of the church. In addition, a church may allow political candidates to use the facilities of the church for events or meetings on the same basis that civic groups and other organizations are allowed. If civic groups and other organizations are required to pay rent for using the church property, the political candidate should be charged the same amount.*

*\*\*\* A church may publish or distribute the results of surveys of candidates on public issues. Such surveys, however, must be non-partisan. As a result, 501 (c)(3) church groups should observe the following conditions in publishing or distributing the survey:*

*Publish the response of all the candidates for the particular office by use of 'yes' and 'no.' The survey should not specify what is the desired response.*

*Do not include any words indicating either endorsement of or support for any of the candidates or their positions on issues.*

*\*\*\*\*Church publications:*

*Political Ads: A church newsletter or magazine may publish an ad for a political candidate, as long as the ad is purchased at the regular rate for ads in that publication, and as long as the church does not refuse to publish an ad by an opposing candidate*

*News Stories: A church newsletter, bulletin or magazine may publish, without limitation, news stories on political candidates and political campaigns.*

*Editorials: A church may not publish an editorial supporting or endorsing a candidate for political office or political party.*

## VOTER EDUCATION

As 501(c)(3) organizations, churches cannot endorse or oppose candidates for political office – but that is only a small part of the picture. Congregations have both the freedom and the calling to engage deeply with the issues shaping our common life: global security, economic justice, environmental stewardship, public education, civil and human rights, and health care.

**Helping one another become thoughtful, well-informed voters is not just civic duty, it is faithful discipleship.**

There are many ways that congregations can create forums and spaces for dialogue, discussion, and faithful reflection on the issues at stake in the elections. Use the issue-based one-pagers that follow this section to learn more about UCC positions on election issues. Consider how members of your church may raise these issues in town halls, public forums, or other contexts.

### *In Worship and In Church Education*

- Weave issue concerns into the worship life of your congregation through prayers, sermons, and scripture.
- Invite members with relevant expertise to speak from their experience – teachers on education policy, health care workers on health care issues, and so on.
- Explore the issues through the lens of scripture and [UCC General Synod resolutions](#).
- Help congregants develop media literacy skills including how to evaluate sources and distinguish reliable reporting from misinformation.

### *Congregational Education Activities*

- Hold a candidate forum at your church.
- Visit nonpartisan websites that provide issue background. Sharing the task of finding and gathering issue information makes it easier!
- Gather a group of people willing to be researchers, then have each person take an issue and follow that



issue's discussion in newspapers, magazines, and on radio and television. Share your findings with each other.

- Invite Sunday School children and youth to share their hopes and concerns on the issues.
- Organize a group from your congregation to attend candidate events and town hall meetings – share your reflections with each other after the event. (You can bring a question or two with you in written form that you have prepared ahead of time.)
- Post issue education material on church bulletin boards and include information in your church's newsletter.
- Talk about the issues with family members and friends.
- Hold deep listening sessions and dialogue across differences in your congregation and interfaith settings.

### *Be Aware of Misinformation and Disinformation*

Not everything we read, hear, or share is accurate, and in today's fast-moving media environment, that matters more than ever. Misinformation refers to inaccurate content spread without harmful intent, while disinformation is deliberately false information designed to mislead. Both can quietly shape public opinion and influence how people vote.

As people of faith, we are called to seek truth. That means reading news with a critical eye, consulting multiple sources, and factchecking before passing information along. Slowing down before we share and asking who is saying something, why, and what evidence supports it are simple but powerful habits that help keep our civic conversations grounded in reality.





# Affordable Housing

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where does the UCC Stand on Affordable Housing?

The United Church of Christ has long taught that housing is not just a personal concern, but a matter of faith, justice, and public responsibility. The UCC General Synod has repeatedly affirmed that every person deserves safe, stable, and affordable housing as part of God's vision for human dignity—a vision that calls us to center those who are most often pushed to the margins and denied full access to stable housing and opportunity, including people who are undocumented, formerly incarcerated, LGBTQ+, living with disabilities, or experiencing substance use disorders.

As far back as 1973, the General Synod declared that access to decent housing is a basic human right, and in 1983 it called UCC congregations to respond faithfully to the growing crisis of homelessness. Today, that call is lived out through ministries across the country, including through the UCC's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM), which support a national network providing more than 21,000 affordable housing units within over 34,000 residential units nationwide. Together, these ministries demonstrate that faith-based action is not only compassionate, but essential to meeting the scale of today's housing crisis.

Yet the need far exceeds what nonprofit and faith-based providers can meet alone. Rising housing costs, persistent homelessness, and widening racial and economic disparities reveal systemic challenges that demand bold public policy solutions. The UCC has made clear that faithful service must be paired with faithful advocacy. A 2013 General Synod resolution urged UCC members to support policies that expand affordable housing and address the root causes of housing instability. CHHSM and its member ministries embody this commitment, not only by building and preserving housing, but by advocating for the resources, protections, and structural changes necessary to ensure that these efforts can grow. Across more than 400 programs and communities nationwide, this ministry reaches hundreds of thousands of people each year, underscoring both its impact and urgent need for increased, sustained public investment.

For policymakers, the question is no longer whether the need exists, but how you will respond. People of faith across the United Church of Christ are asking elected leaders to take concrete, measurable steps to expand access to affordable housing, confront inequities, and ensure that safe, stable housing is within reach for all. We believe that housing policy is moral policy—and that the decisions made today will shape the well-being, dignity, and opportunity of our communities for generations to come.

## Want to learn more?

Contact Jamar Doyle, CEO, Council on Health and Human Service Ministries at [doylej@chhsm.org](mailto:doylej@chhsm.org)

## Questions for Candidates:

- What specific policies will you support to increase the availability of safe, affordable housing in our community, especially for low-income families and those experiencing homelessness?
- How will you address the racial and economic disparities in housing access, including the lasting impacts of discrimination and disinvestment?
- Do you support increased public investment in affordable housing and tenant protections, and how will you work to ensure that everyone, regardless of income, has access to stable housing?

## Prayer

*Gracious and loving God, you are our shelter in every storm and the firm foundation of our faith. We lift before you all who are without safe and stable housing: those who are unhoused, those at risk of losing their homes, and those living in uncertainty or fear. Stir in us, as your people in the United Church of Christ, a deeper compassion and a holy restlessness that refuses to accept a world where any of your children are without a place to call home. In the name of Jesus Christ our sibling. Amen.*

## Take Additional Action

- Connect with the [Council for Health and Human Service Ministries](#)
- Engage with [Leading Age's Advocacy Center: 2026 Policy Platform](#)
- Engage with [Housing Not Handcuffs](#)



# Democracy and Voting Rights

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Democracy and Voting Rights?

The United Church of Christ believes that access to the ballot box is an essential element of faithful citizenship. In the face of growing attacks on the Voting Rights Act, the UCC General Synod has called on the church to loudly defend voting rights through advocacy, education, and public witness. The UCC strongly opposes voter suppression measures such as restrictive voter ID laws and reductions in early voting, especially where they disproportionately affect communities of color.

Democratic participation is vital for a just society and the protection of the most vulnerable. The UCC views democratic participation as an expression of Christian responsibility and covenantal community. General Synod resolutions frequently connect democracy to civil rights, racial justice, economic equity, and opposition to authoritarianism and political violence. The church encourages members not only to vote, but also to participate actively in civic life, advocate for transparent and accountable government, and defend the rights of all people to fully participate in the democratic process. This commitment reflects the UCC's historic identity as a denomination deeply engaged in advancing social justice and dignity for all people.

## Prayer

*God of justice and compassion, we give thanks for the gift of community and the responsibilities of citizenship. Guide us to build a society where every voice is heard, every person is valued, and every voter can participate freely and safely in the democratic process. Strengthen us to resist fear, division, and hatred, and help us pursue truth, dignity, and common good. We pray in the name of Christ, who calls us to love our neighbors and seek justice. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rushad Thomas, *Domestic Policy Advocacy, UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy* at [thomasr@ucc.org](mailto:thomasr@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- What actions will you take to protect and expand voting access in our state and community, particularly for marginalized communities, while also maintaining public confidence in our elections?
- In recent years, concerns about political violence, disinformation, and threats against election workers have grown. What role should elected officials play in strengthening democratic norms and ensuring peaceful, trustworthy elections?
- Many Americans feel disconnected from government and doubtful that their voices matter. What policies or reforms would you champion to increase civic participation, transparency, and trust in democratic institutions?

## Take Additional Action

- Connect with [Faiths United to Save Democracy](#)
- Explore Poll Chaplain and Poll Worker opportunities in your county
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on voting rights opportunities





# Disability Justice and Mental Health

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Disability Justice and Mental Health Justice?

The United Church of Christ affirms that God calls us to create a just world for all people living with disabilities and mental health challenges. God calls us to the work of justice for people experiencing stigma, invisibility, and marginalization by church and society. We are called to ensure that church reduces the stigma faced by those living with disabilities and mental health challenges and makes room at the table through education, advocacy and partnerships.

The General Synod of the UCC has passed many resolutions over the decades calling for both congregational inclusion and systemic advocacy: urging churches to welcome people with disabilities and mental illness into full leadership and life of the church, while also advocating for equitable access to services and policy reform. Key milestones include the 2005 “Called to Wholeness in Christ” resolution on accessibility, the 2015 WISE Congregation resolution encouraging churches to become welcoming and stigma-free spaces for people with mental health challenges, and the 2017 “Toward Disability Justice” resolution which reframed accessibility as a broader justice issue.

The United Church of Christ calls on our elected officials and members of the judiciary to ensure that all people in the US, regardless of immigration status, are treated with respect and dignity; that everyone, including immigrants in detention, be screened for and have access to effective, culturally responsive medical care, including care for mental health needs; that arrest and detention are used as a last resort only when public safety is at risk; and that we stop the detention of children based on immigration status.

## Prayer

*God of Love, we pray today in the Spirit of inclusion, accessibility, and belonging. We celebrate the divinity present in the diversity of Creation, including disabled people. Thank you for making our bodies and minds unique, different, and good. Help our community prioritize the needs of people with disabilities and mental health realities. Guide our policy and advocacy efforts to center the access to accommodations making it possible for equal rights for all. Empower and bless us as we advocate for disability and mental health justice as God given rights. Amen.*

## Questions for Candidates

- What are you doing to ensure equal rights and political participation, including ensuring voters with disabilities and mental health challenges are accommodated?
- What are your priorities for addressing disabilities and mental health justice?
- How will you work to ensure that people with disabilities have quality, comprehensive, and affordable healthcare?

## Take Additional Action

Educate yourself on the intersections between disability rights and voting rights through this [UCC resource](#) authored by Rev. Sarah Lund.

Learn more through [UCC Disabilities Ministries](#), including exploring how to become an [Accessible2All](#) congregation

Learn more through [UCC Mental Health Network](#) including exploring how to become a [WISE](#) (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) congregation.

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rev. Sarah Lund, Minister for Disability and Mental Health Justice, [lunds@ucc.org](mailto:lunds@ucc.org)



# Economic Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Economic Justice?

The United Church of Christ is deeply invested in the pursuit of economic justice because our living God is passionate about ensuring debts are canceled, abundance is made possible for all, and reparations are furnished for those robbed and wronged. This is the JAR (Jubilee, Abundance, Reparations) that we are called to fill! Over the years, UCC churches and conferences have passed numerous resolutions establishing our shared commitment to ensuring economic justice is made real, from our congregations to Congress. Budgets are our moral documents, and the federal budget is funded by our taxes.

As people of faith, those elected to steward our money are expected to fill the jars of economic justice: health care, sustainable food supplies, clean water, living wages, housing, relief of debts, transportation, worker protections, and much more. Let's make sure they do!

## Prayer

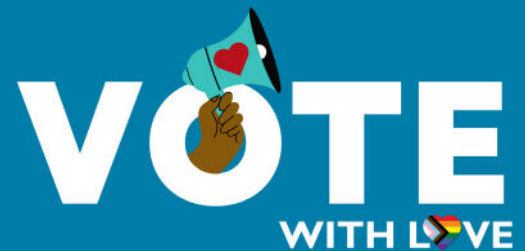
*God of justice and love. We come to you broken. We have not followed your guidance. We have left others naked, hungry, and hurt. Renew in us the strength and discipleship to follow your words. May we redistribute wealth, ensure people are fed, and remove the human-made debts preventing justice and peace. Amen.*

## Take Additional Action

- This November, vote for candidates who will make economic decisions that benefits the whole, not just the wealthiest among us.
- To take action in the name of equality for all, call your member of Congress and urge them to pass federal legislation to begin the process of federal restitution and nationwide reparations.
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on economic justice opportunities.
- Explore the [UCC's Fill the JAR](#) Campaign.

## Questions for Candidates

- If elected, how will you lead in passing legislation that raises wages to a living standard that ensures everyone can afford their own housing, food, and more?
- What would you do to help remove the burdens of student and medical debt?
- Where do you stand on Congressional and community needs to study and enact a program of reparations?
- Do you support raising the state and/or federal minimum wage, and if so, to what level and on what timeline?
- Will you commit to publishing a fully transparent budget that clearly shows how taxpayer dollars are being spent and who is accountable for them?



## Want to learn more?

Contact Rev. Seth Wispelwey, Minister for Economic Justice of the United Church of Christ, [wispelweys@ucc.org](mailto:wispelweys@ucc.org)  
[ucc.org/fillthejar](http://ucc.org/fillthejar)



# Environmental Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Environmental Justice?

With UCC leaders playing a central role in the launch of the environmental justice movement in the 1980s and 90s, our denomination has long had a strong commitment to addressing interconnected crises pertaining to the environment and societal injustice. In 2026, UCC members have been deeply involved in protecting the Environmental Protection Agency from being defunded and dismantled by the current administration. Environmental justice work at the EPA has been particularly devastated and that has been a central focus for advocates.

Last year, the EPA workforce was reduced by more than 4,000 to 12,849. This reduction of 24% was more than double the job reduction rate across the entire federal government. At the EPA, the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights was dismantled with hundreds of staff laid off or reassigned. This aligned with executive orders that rescinded environmental justice directives and ended the use of environmental justice considerations in agency work.

Despite all that has transpired, advocates helped secure a victory in January when Congress rejected the Trump administration's attempt to severely cut funding for the EPA for Fiscal Year 2026 by 55%. Our struggle continues, however. For Fiscal Year 2027, the White House is seeking to cut EPA funding by 52% or \$4.6 billion. By contrast, it wants to increase the defense budget to \$1.5 trillion, a boost of 44 percent.

## Prayer

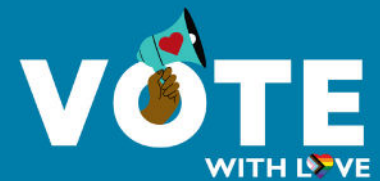
*Creator God, thank you for entrusting in us your most precious creations. We come to you with a spirit of lament. We have let you down. We have harmed your creation and placed ourselves above all. Allow us to move forward carrying your spirit of love for all. May we work together to fulfill our call in Genesis, working for and caring for your people and planet. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rev. Brooks Berndt, Minister for Environmental Justice, [berndtb@ucc.org](mailto:berndtb@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- If elected, how would you seek to not only provide robust funding for the EPA but also hold the EPA accountable to its mission of protecting the environment and public health?
- Some communities are disproportionately impacted by pollution and environmental harm such as communities of color and low-income communities. What would you do to ensure environmental justice and equity if elected?



## Take Additional Action

- Join the advocacy of Climate Hope Affiliates throughout the country by checking out their monthly action sheet detailing what you can do. Then, work to help start a chapter in your community. <https://www.ucc.org/climatehopecards/>
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on environmental justice opportunities.



# Healthcare

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Healthcare?

The United Church of Christ believes that health care access is a basic human right and a matter of justice. Through multiple General Synod resolutions, the UCC has advocated for universal access to affordable, quality health care, especially for low-income and marginalized communities. The UCC has endorsed policies aimed at expanding coverage, reducing inequities in care, and protecting vulnerable populations from being denied treatment because of income, race, disability, age, immigration status, or inability to pay. General Synod has also repeatedly affirmed the importance of public investment in health systems and access to preventive, mental, and reproductive health services.

More broadly, the UCC approaches health care through a holistic lens that connects physical, mental, spiritual, and community well-being. Recent General Synod actions and denominational ministries have emphasized mental health justice, accessibility, compassionate language around illness and disability, and the church's responsibility to care for the whole person. The UCC's advocacy reflects its wider commitment to economic justice, human dignity, and the belief that society should organize its institutions around care for the common good rather than exclusion or profit alone.

## Prayer

*God of healing and restoration, we give you thanks for all who care for the sick, comfort the suffering, and work to bring healing and hope into our world. We pray for those who are ill, uninsured, burdened by medical debt, struggling with mental health challenges, or unable to access the care they need. Grant strength to patients, wisdom to caregivers and medical professionals, and courage to leaders entrusted with shaping policies that affect the well-being of our communities.*

*Help us to build a society where every person is treated with dignity and where health care is guided by compassion, justice, and concern for the common good. In the name of Jesus Christ, who healed the sick and restored sight to the blind. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Jamar Doyle, CEO, Council on Health and Human Service Ministries at [doylej@chhsm.org](mailto:doylej@chhsm.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- Do you believe health care is a basic human right, and what specific policies would you support to ensure that every person in our community can access affordable, quality care regardless of income or employment status?
- Mental health challenges, addiction, and disparities in care continue to affect many families. What steps would you take to expand access to mental health and substance use treatment services, particularly in underserved communities?
- Medical debt and rising prescription drug costs place enormous burdens on working families and seniors. What reforms would you prioritize to lower health care costs while protecting access to care and patient outcomes?

## Take Additional Action

- Connect with the [Council for Health and Human Service Ministries](#)
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on opportunities to advocate for affordable healthcare.





# Immigration Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Immigration Justice?

The United Church of Christ has a long history of solidarity in the struggle for dignity and human rights for immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. We do this through a network of grassroots leaders in the UCC National Collaborative on Immigration working to share a prophetic stance and lift up the voices of impacted leaders. Over 25 General Synod Resolutions on migrant justice since 1975 demonstrate our continued support for immigration justice:

- [A Resolution on Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Church](#) (General Synod 31, 2017)
- [Resolution Supporting Compassionate Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Protection of the Human Rights of Immigrants](#) (General Synod 29, 2013)
- [A Resolution Responding to the Federal Government's Attack on Immigrants, Migrants, and Refugees](#) (General Synod 35, 2025)

UCC congregations work closely with impacted communities, immigrants' rights organizations, and service agencies to accompany asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants to advocate for just immigration reforms that include a pathway to citizenship. Global HOPE's Refugee and Migration Services resources this work of advocacy and accompaniment through MIRA (Migration, Immigration, Refugee, Asylee) grants to UCC congregations, associations, and conferences.

## Prayer

*God of mercy, whose son Jesus was a refugee, a migrant, and immigrant, you are our constant amidst turmoil, suffering, and heartache. We ask for your protection over and peace and safety for all migrants, near and far. We center those forced to leave their homes, those without food, water, and shelter, and those being detained and deported. Bring us a fresh wind where all may see and recognize the face of Jesus in the face of the migrant. In your holy, gracious name, we pray. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Noel Andersen, Minister for Immigration Justice, [andersenn@ucc.org](mailto:andersenn@ucc.org) or Megan Bergert, Minister for Refugee and Migrant Services, [bergertm@ucc.org](mailto:bergertm@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- How will you help keep families together and welcome migrants who come to this country for a better life?
- The historic importance of the right to claim asylum and seek safety from harm is embedded in international law and has long held bipartisan support in the U.S. through the refugee admissions program. How will you work to restore the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and protect the rights of asylum seekers?

## Take Additional Action

- Connect with the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#), a group that advocates for just and compassionate immigration reform, as well as the human rights of migrants.
- Become an [Immigrant Welcoming Congregation](#) and join the Sanctuary Movement.
- Subscribe to [Church World Service's daily State of Play newsletter](#) to stay updated on news related to immigration and refugee justice.
- Call on Congress to pass the [Protecting Sensitive Locations Act](#), pass the [NO Ban Act](#), and refuse to add funding to the over \$100 billion [ICE and CBP](#) have already received this year.



# International Affairs

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on International Affairs?

The United Church of Christ has a long history of working towards Just Peace. Upon our Just Peace Pronouncement in 1985, we became the first Just Peace denomination in the United States. This resolution and others pertaining to Just Peace can be found on the UCC Resolutions webpage.

Additionally, the United Church of Christ recognizes the intersectional nature of Just Peace in relation to international/ global justice advocacy opportunities. The United Church of Christ has passed many resolutions over the years that pertain to international Human Rights, immigration push factors, human trafficking, U.S. militarism and weapons sales, economic justice and other issues that are both broad and that which speak to specific countries and contexts. Through Global Ministries, our partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we have around 250 partners in 90 countries. These partnerships are deep and some span decades or even centuries and are rooted in values of mutuality and accompaniment. You can learn more about specific partners, countries, and advocacy opportunities, like the Third Thursday Alerts for Israel/Palestine, on [the Global Ministries website](#).

## Prayer

*God of All, Creator of the Universe. We come to you with heavy hearts. Please fill us with love and hope. Guide us in the actions you would have us take to ensure equity and care for all your children around the world. Touch the hearts of our policy makers that they be called to care for your children, their neighbors, as themselves. Sustain us as we work to follow your example and care for your people justly. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Helen Nwabara, International Policy Advocate, [nwabarah@ucc.org](mailto:nwabarah@ucc.org) or Rebekah Choate, Minister for Global Advocacy and Education, [choater@ucc.org](mailto:choater@ucc.org).

## Questions for Candidates

- Do you support using taxpayer dollars to fund U.S. military endeavors against God's children in other nations?
- How do you see the U.S.' role in the global community?
- What international partnerships would you prioritize if elected?
- How would you work to lessen U.S. military conflicts abroad?

## Take Additional Action

- Write to your elected officials today on any number of international issues found on the DC office's [Justice and Peace Action Network](#).
- Learn more about our international partners and support their work on the [Global Ministries website](#).



# LGBTQ+ Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on LGBTQ+ Justice?

At a time when LGBTQ+ communities, especially transgender and nonbinary people, face increasing political attacks on bodily autonomy, healthcare access, education, and public belonging, the church is called not merely to affirm identity in theory, but to actively protect the dignity and flourishing of all people.

The UCC believes that the fluidity of God's design is wondrous and vast. No matter who you are, your sexuality or gender, God makes no mistakes. Every person bears sacred worth and dignity, and no law or system should deny people the ability to live fully as themselves. You are beloved and wonderfully made. The UCC seeks transformative justice for our faith communities and congregations by just action and love for all.

The UCC stands with those facing systemic oppression at the intersection of gender & sexuality by offering care, sex positive education & curriculum, gender & bodily autonomy education & programming, policy & advocacy, and partnership and outreach opportunities.

## Prayer

*God of infinite, unconditional love, let every queer and trans child of yours know they are beautiful just as they are and are made in your holy image. Let them feel your pride and pride in themselves for who they are and who you made them to be. Open up the hearts of those who cause them harm to understand that we are all siblings, united in love. May all churches be a safe space for queer and trans children and may the love that is preached be for all of creation. In your sacred, holy name, we pray. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rushad Thomas, Domestic Policy Advocate, UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy, [thomasr@ucc.org](mailto:thomasr@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- How will you, as a candidate, help empower our LGBTQ+ siblings?
- Many states have passed legislation restricting gender-affirming care for transgender youth, while others have enacted protections. What is your position on these laws, and how would you approach expanding access to affirming healthcare for transgender people of all ages?
- How should school curricula reflect LGBTQ+ history and contributions, and what policy mechanisms would you use to ensure inclusive education while navigating pushback from parents or legislators?
- There is ongoing legal tension between religious liberty claims and LGBTQ+ non-discrimination protections. Where do you draw the line, and how would you approach legislating in this contested space?

## Take Additional Action

- Connect to the [Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ](#), to better equip your local UCC congregations to fully embody Christ's extravagant affirmation.
- Call on Congress to pass [the Equality Act](#) and [Do No Harm Act](#).
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on opportunities to advocate on LGBTQ+ justice issues.



# Racial Justice

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Racial Justice?

In 2003, General Synod 24 adopted a resolution calling for the UCC to be an anti-racist church stating that “Racism is rooted in a belief of the superiority of whiteness and bestows benefits, unearned rights, rewards, opportunities, advantages, access, and privilege on people of European descent.”

This bold declaration came from faithful UCC followers of a radical Jesus who preached and taught justice for all. And because God loves the world, we who believe in freedom can envision the reality that racism will be dismantled.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law on August 6, 1965, to outlaw discriminatory voting practices, literacy tests, collection of poll taxes, bureaucratic restrictions, and other obstacles denying African Americans the right to vote as citizens of the United States of America. The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was significant legislation especially during the Civil Rights Movement. The passage signaled a challenge to discriminatory practices of overt racism and racial injustice across the country.

On April 29, 2026, Supreme Court Justices in a 6-3 decision ruled to limit the Voting Rights Act, which disenfranchises congressional districts with majority representation of African American votes. According to news sources, The White House celebrated the Supreme Court decision as a “complete and total victory for American voters.”

The UCC believes the right to vote is sacred, and opposes policies and legislation aimed at restricting voting access, including making mail voting more difficult, implementing stricter photo ID laws, curtailing registration drives, intimidating eligible voters, or creating obstacles to voting, all of which create racial inequities in the exercise of democracy.

## Prayer

*“For too long we have known complacency and subjugation masquerading as love. Move us towards communities who are capable of the real thing. Our government, our justice system, our institutions, have been infiltrated and poisoned by empires whose only goal is the steady, desperate grasping for more power. Root this out.”*

*-Cole Arthur Riley, Black Liturgies*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rev. Dr. Velda Love, Minister for Racial Justice, [Lovev@ucc.org](mailto:Lovev@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- If elected, how will you lead in passing legislation on racial equality in a time when voting rights are being stripped from Black and Latino communities?
- What would you do to help protect civil rights on a federal level?
- Where do you stand on Congressional and community needs to study and enact a program of reparations?
- What specific policies have you supported or authored that were aimed at addressing racial disparities in education, housing, policing, healthcare, or elsewhere?

## Take Additional Action

- Educate and inform voters of their rights
- Mobilize and engage communities to organize, strategize, and register people
- Know your state’s laws and advocate to protect voting rights
- Contact federal and state legislators to hold Congress accountable to the Voting Rights Act
- Support underrepresented communities
- Host community education gatherings in your local church



# Reproductive Justice and Abortion

Our Faith Our Vote: Issue Education Resource

## Where Does the UCC Stand on Reproductive Justice and Abortion?

Reproductive justice includes not only the right to abortion and contraception, but also the right to have children, to not have children, and to raise families in safe and sustainable communities.

Restrictions on reproductive health disproportionately harm poor communities, Black and Indigenous women, disabled people, immigrants, rural communities, and LGBTQ+ people.

The United Church of Christ supports bodily autonomy for all people and supports the rights of each person to access health care that upholds their dignity and humanity. A 2023 General Synod resolution proclaimed abortion as healthcare, forced birth an act of violence, and called for systemic measures to increase access to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare.

Additionally, the resolution calls upon local churches and their members to engage with the Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Our Faith curriculum to promote holistic sexuality education, including information and education about contraception, and to support and offer access to contraceptives.

## Prayer

*God of infinite, unconditional love, let every queer and trans child of yours know they are beautiful just as they are and are made in your holy image. Let them feel your pride and pride in themselves for who they are and who you made them to be. Open up the hearts of those who cause them harm to understand that we are all siblings, united in love. May all churches be a safe space for queer and trans children and may the love that is preached be for all of creation. In your sacred, holy name, we pray. Amen.*

## Want to learn more?

Contact Rushad Thomas, Domestic Policy Advocate, UCC Office of Public Policy and Advocacy, [thomasr@ucc.org](mailto:thomasr@ucc.org)

## Questions for Candidates

- Reproductive justice as a framework goes beyond abortion to include the right to have children, raise them safely, and access full healthcare. How would you address maternal mortality, especially the large racial disparities in maternal deaths?
- How will you promote bodily autonomy and support every person's right to access healthcare that upholds their dignity and humanity?
- Do you support codifying abortion rights into state or federal statute?
- How will you expand access to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare?

## Take Additional Action

- This November, vote for candidates that will protect bodily autonomy and support the rights of each person to access healthcare that upholds their dignity and humanity.
- Sign up to join the [Justice & Peace Action Network](#) to stay informed on opportunities to advocate for reproductive justice issues.

## GUIDELINES FOR A FAITHFUL AND RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION ON THE ISSUES

- Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a part of the truth you are seeking to discern.
- Follow the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” - even when you disagree with them.
- Listen respectfully and carefully to others.
- State what you think you heard someone say and ask for clarification before responding, in an effort to understand each other.
- Speak honestly about your thoughts and feelings. Share personal experiences which help others more fully understand your concerns and perspectives on the issues. Conversation can be passionate and still be respectful, civil and constructive.
- Speak for yourself, rather than as a member of a group. Use “I”-statements rather than “You”-statements.
- Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people’s motives, intelligence or integrity.
- Lift up points of agreement as well as disagreement.
- Create space for everyone’s concerns to be spoken, even when they disagree.
- Seek to stay in community with each other even though the discussion may be vigorous and perhaps tense.
- Keep an open mind and heart. You may not hear if you judge too quickly.
- Pray for God’s grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

*Adapted from “Ground Rules for Conversation” (Evangelical Lutheran Church Department for Communication) and “Seeking to be Faithful Together” (adopted by the 204th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA)*



## VOTER REGISTRATION AND EMPOWERMENT DRIVE

We encourage all UCC congregations to consider launching a voter registration and voter empowerment drive at your church. Our goal is to have every eligible voter in your UCC congregation registered and voting.

The publicity that your voter registration and empowerment effort receives in your congregation will hopefully spark a conversation about the importance of expressing our faith through civic participation and getting church members out to vote.

### *Congregational Education Activities*

To begin, form a committee to implement the *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign at your church. Appoint a Team Leader(s) who can stay in touch with the congregation, local election officials, clergy, lay leadership, and the national UCC to get updates and support, and amplify trusted election information throughout the campaign.

A good committee will consist of members of your church social action committee and/or people who you recruit to volunteer who are willing and able to help congregants register, make a plan to vote, and navigate any challenges at the polls. One person for every 50 people in your church is a good guideline. The more people involved, the more effective your campaign will be.

Seek the support of your clergy and church social action committee for the *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign. People will want to hear from the committee responsible for social issues, as well as your clergy. Pastoral leadership is crucial to a successful campaign. And you may need to call on the moral leadership of your pastor to share credible information and directly respond to any issues that arise during or after the election.

### *Getting Started: First Steps*

At the first meeting of your *Our Faith Our Vote* committee, set a timeline for your voter registration and empowerment drive. You can register and inform voters in the pews and/or set up tables before and after services. We strongly encourage you to hold these drives on more than one Sunday at your church.

Before setting up your drive, contact your local Election Office to learn about how to check voter registration and registration deadlines, check polling locations and hours, learn about early voting or voting by mail options and timelines, and get briefed on local and state voter registration laws, keeping an eye out for ID requirements. You might even set up a meeting between local election officials and your *Our Faith Our Vote* committee members.

You can also reach out to your municipal elected officials (mayors, city council members, county elected officials, etc.) to explain that your committee will be helping ensure things go smoothly for your congregation on election day and offer to amplify credible information from your local government. Explain your congregation's size and your committee's ability to communicate

and directly respond to any issues that come up on or after election day. You should also use this as an opportunity to reach out to other faith communities and democracy nonprofits in the area to ensure you have partners you can work with if any issues arise during or after the election.

If your church has a time when social services are delivered (i.e. a food pantry, homeless shelter or soup kitchen), talk to the coordinator of that program and offer to register and inform participants in those programs. They should be given the same opportunities to learn about voting as everyone else in your congregation.

## *Launching the Our Faith Our Vote Campaign*

Ask your minister to help you launch the *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign in your congregation. On the first Sunday you plan to begin registering and informing voters, encourage your minister to give a sermon on the importance of civic participation.

Announce the committee by writing an article for your church newsletter or worship bulletin. Ensure congregants know that the people in this committee will help congregants register and make a plan to vote and will act as the point people for all election-related issues voters face. You can also ask any members who are Poll Chaplains or Poll Workers to reach out so that you can use them as a source of trusted information on election day and support them as front-line workers during the election. Place announcements in the church bulletin and arrange to give an announcement during your congregation's time for sharing concerns (e.g., Moment for Mission). **Remember to keep the announcements nonpartisan.**

Put up posters or signs around the church to announce the *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign and indicate when voter registration tables will be available to church members.

## *Methods for Voter Registration in Your Church*

### **Registering Voters During Worship Service**

Registering church members in the pews during the worship service is the most effective way to promote basic voter registration and participation. We encourage every church to promote an *Our Faith Our Vote* Sunday where voter registration is included during the worship service. Speak with your pastor and necessary church leadership about registering voters in the pews.

On the designated Sunday, prepare ushers with a sufficient quantity of voter registration forms and the QR code/link to online voter registration. At the appropriate time in the service, your minister should address the importance of civic participation and ask the ushers to distribute the voter registration information. Give people time to fill out the forms either online or by hand. Gather back any physical registration forms in a collection plate or ask church attendees to place the forms in baskets at the church exit. Once the registration forms are collected, turn them into the *Our Faith Our Vote* committee members at the voter registration table.

## Voter Registration and Empowerment Tables Before or After Worship

Set up a table or booth in the main foyer of the church where people can stop by before and after the service. Ask the minister to give special attention to the importance of stopping by the table to register and make a plan to vote.

### Collect Voter Registration Cards at Your Registration Table

Make sure people complete the registration forms by hand or online when they are at church. This will ensure that people actually fill out their voter registration form. If they leave without filling it out, they are less likely to complete it.

### How to Turn in Voter Registration Forms

Most states require that voter registration forms be turned in within 10-15 days from the date of the signature. After you collect all the completed forms, either mail them into your local Elections Office or deliver them in person immediately so that the people you have registered can get their official confirmation.

### Keep Your Efforts Nonpartisan

As a church and a 501(c)(3), your voter registration efforts must be nonpartisan in nature: Never mention a candidate's or a party's name. Do not wear buttons or stickers from any political party or campaign during the voter drive. If asked how you plan to vote, do not answer the question. If you are asked what party you prefer, do not answer the question. Explain that your purpose is to promote civic participation

Do not ask the persons you are working with how they plan to vote or what is their party preference. It is permissible to mention critical issues involved in elections as long as you do not present issues in support of or opposition to candidates. This is an example of an appropriate appeal: "The next election will set the country's course on civil rights, foreign policy, jobs, taxes, and the environment. Your vote counts. Register now!"

### 100% Voter Registration in Your Church: It's Possible!

The most important component of the *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign is to contact every member of your church to get them registered and voting. Your committee can do this through a phone banking effort in conjunction with the voter registration table. Phone calling is an essential element of the campaign because it offers an opportunity to have one-on-one conversations about the importance of expressing our faith through civic participation, and ensuring every congregant knows where, when, and how to vote. It is also the only way to guarantee that you have registered every eligible church member.



## Sample Phone Script:

“Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ from [name of your church]. We are calling every member of [name of your church] as part of the UCC’s *Our Faith Our Vote* campaign to make sure that you are registered and prepared to vote in this fall’s election. Are you registered to vote?”

*If they say YES: Ask them if their registration is up to date. If they have moved or want to change party affiliation, they can do so by filling out a new voter registration form. Also ask them if they have made their voting plan. Are they going to vote early and do they know when early voting opens? Are they going to vote-by-mail and do they know when they need to request their ballot and when it must be submitted? If they plan to vote in person, how will they get to their polling location? Make sure they are aware of any ID requirements and the hours of their polling location.*

*If they say NO: Tell them about the voter registration and empowerment drive at your church and encourage them to fill out a voter registration form. If they can’t make it to church when you have the registration table set up, offer to email them a link to the voter registration form. Thank them for their time and let them know that you will be back in touch to remind them to get out and vote.*

## Staying Organized

Divide up the church directory for your committee. We suggest that each committee member take 25 names to “adopt” for the campaign. Each committee member or volunteer should be in touch with these members to get them registered, make sure they get out and vote, and help them navigate any barriers that come up.

Make photocopies of your church directory or make and share a spreadsheet via email so that committee members can easily mark who they reached, whether they are registered and make notes for follow-up.

You can hold a phone banking party and make calls together from the church or send committee members home with their lists to call. After every phone call, mark on your list if you spoke with the person and if they said they were registered or not. Send out voter registration forms or email registration links to those who requested them in a timely manner. Each volunteer is responsible for the church members they agree to call -- so keep following up until every eligible voter on your list is registered.

## Celebrate Your Progress!

Keep track of the number of new voters you register or help make a plan to vote and mark your progress in the church newsletter or with a poster displayed at church!

## Bulletin or Newsletter Sample Announcement:

*[Your church’s name] is joining the UCC’s Our Faith Our Vote campaign to register voters, educate ourselves on important issues at stake in the election, and encourage voter participation. The Our Faith Our Vote committee will hold a voter registration table at church on [insert dates]. Please come by the table to register yourself and learn more about the importance of voting. If you would like to volunteer to be a member of the Our Faith Our Vote committee, contact [insert your contact info] or come to our next meeting on [insert date].*

Learn more at [www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote](http://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote).

## ORGANIZE A CANDIDATE FORUM

Many people do not vote because they don't feel connected to the candidates or issues at stake in an election. Holding candidate forums helps open up communication between candidates and their constituents and gets people interested in the election. What better place than your church to hold an open dialogue?

Candidates for public office may be invited to speak at your church in their capacity as a candidate or as an individual. Candidate forums and debates held by UCC churches can help improve and redirect the public, political dialogue that has become increasingly shallow and mean-spirited. We have the ability to set the tone of the debate and demand a higher standard of discourse.

### *Planning Your Candidate Forum or Debate*

Have your *Our Faith Our Vote* committee pick a time and date to invite candidates to a forum or debate. You might want to find out if other churches in your community are interested in working together to set up and publicize the event. You will be more likely to get candidates to attend a forum if it is sponsored by multiple churches and/or groups in your community.

#### Invite the Candidates

Send an invitation letter to the candidates well before the planned event and follow up with a phone call. Be sure to invite candidates from all parties to remain [nonpartisan and 501c3 compliant](#). It may take some time to find a date that will work for the schedules of the candidates in a race. Be flexible.

#### Plan the Format

There are many ways to set up a candidate forum. Here are some of the common formats you can choose from:

- Allow the candidates to give prepared remarks and have people ask follow-up questions;
- Have prepared questions to ask the candidates on themes important to your church and community;
- Pass out index cards to the audience to write questions on and pass them in to be read on the day of the event or solicit questions from members via email or question box after services prior to the event. Leave enough time at the beginning for the candidates to give opening statements. Give candidates the same amount of time to make their closing remarks.

Make sure to have your moderator thank the candidates for their attendance and to remind people of voting day and encourage them to get out and vote.

#### Publicize the Event

Post on your church's social media. Include brief notices in the newsletters of churches, campus groups, community-based organizations, and other groups related to the ministry of your church. Ask radio stations to run public service announcements. Ask to be listed in calendars of events in the local newspapers. Display posters in places frequented by your target audience. Ask your minister to announce the event during church service. Ask the mission, social action or interest groups at your church to help get the word out. Make sure to invite the youth group and get them involved in planning the forum or debate.

## Inform the Press

Invite the local newspaper and TV stations to cover your candidate forum or debate. This is a great way to get coverage of the issues out to a broader audience. It also helps demonstrate that UCC churches are engaged in the political process and secures press connections to use during and after the election.

## Keep Your Event Nonpartisan

Please remember the following when organizing your candidate debate or forum:

- Questions for the candidates should be prepared and presented by an independent nonpartisan committee or individuals;
- Topics discussed by the candidates should cover a broad range of issues that the candidate would address if elected;
- Each candidate must be given an equal opportunity to present his or her views on the issues discussed;
- Do not ask candidates to agree or disagree with positions, agendas, platforms, or statements of your church or organization; and
- Make sure the moderator does not imply approval or disapproval of the candidates.

## Further Guidelines for Candidate Appearances at Your Church

### *Appearing at Separate Events*

You are not required to have all candidates speak on the same Sunday, or at the same event. However, you must provide equal access to other candidates in the same race. It is permissible to invite them to speak on successive Sundays as part of the regular worship service or organize evening forums. Inviting one candidate to speak at a traditionally well-attended event while inviting another to speak at a normally sparsely attended event is not providing an equal opportunity. No campaigning or fundraising should take place.

### *Limiting the Number of Candidates*

If the number of candidates for a particular office is too large to be practical during a forum or debate, your church may limit the number of invitees provided that you adopt and consistently apply reasonable and objective criteria for deciding between candidates. For example, you may invite the candidates from the two major political parties and a number of other candidates who have attained a predetermined proportion of popular support based on a credible, independent poll.

### *Speaking as a Non-Candidate*

Sometimes candidates who are public figures or are experts in a particular field outside of their candidacy are invited to appear at church-sponsored worship and functions (as they may be a member of your church).

They are welcome to come and may be acknowledged just as any visiting dignitary might be if they are not invited to use the occasion as a platform for their candidacy and do not mention the election or the candidacy. **If you invite political candidates to speak in a non-candidate capacity, you are not required to provide equal access to all political candidates.**

## GET OUT THE VOTE

Voting is something we do as individuals. Elections are something we do as a community.

A ballot cast in a curtained booth or on a kitchen table looks like a private act, and in a real sense it is. But the work of getting a ballot cast (registering, reminding, planning, driving, watching kids, asking the question one more time) belongs to everyone. Inviting your friends, family, and neighbors into an election is inviting them into deeper belonging and shared responsibility for the place you live. Our Faith Our Vote calls this voting with love: love for the neighbor standing in line beside you, the one who couldn't get a ride, the one who didn't think their vote mattered, and the one who hasn't been asked.

Decades of political science research point to the same finding: the single strongest predictor of whether a person votes is whether someone they know and trust personally asked them to—a friend, a neighbor, a fellow congregant. You.

### Show Up

Even in presidential years, roughly 40% of eligible Americans don't cast a ballot. In midterm years, that number is closer to 60%. In local and off-cycle elections (the ones that decide your school board, your sheriff, your city council, your judges), turnout often falls below 20%.

The reasons are real and rarely about apathy. People work shifts that overlap with poll hours. They moved recently and didn't update their registration. They don't have a ride. They were never asked. They tried once, hit a problem, and gave up. They are disillusioned by national politics and don't realize how much local elections shape their daily lives. New voting restrictions and polling place closures in many states are likely to make the next election harder, not easier.

The good news is that nearly every one of those barriers has a neighbor-shaped solution.

### Tell Your People

Start with a list. Pull out your phone. Open your church directory. Think through your family, your closest friends, the people in your small group, the parents on your kid's team, the folks you see at coffee hour. Who on that list might not vote this year without a nudge?

Then nudge.

A text that says "Hey, are you registered at your current address? Election Day is [date]. Want to make a plan together?" outperforms almost any other GOTV tactic ever measured. It works because it's personal, specific, and turns voting from a private intention into a shared commitment.

Gather a few friends from your congregation for an evening of texts and calls in the two weeks before the election. Each person works through their own list (their small group, their pew section, the parents at their kid's Sunday school class, a section of the church directory) while sitting in the same room. You answer each other's questions

about deadlines and polling places as they come up. You celebrate when someone confirms a plan. Order pizza, put on music, make it a thing. The work is faster, the awkwardness of cold-texting evaporates when everyone is doing it at once, and the people you're reaching feel the warmth of a church that has organized itself around their participation.

**When you talk to people, help them make a real plan.** Voting research is clear that intentions become actions when people answer three questions:

**When** will you vote? Election Day, early voting, or by mail?

**Where** will you vote? Look up the polling place or drop box together.

**How** will you get there? Walking, driving, ride from a friend, on the way home from work?

The plan does the work. Once someone has answered those three questions out loud to another human, they are more likely to follow through.

Remind people, too, that the ballot does not end at the presidency. Most of what shapes daily life (housing policy, school curricula, transit, policing, water quality, library funding) gets decided in the races at the bottom of the ballot. Encourage them to vote the whole thing.

## Help Out

Some neighbors face barriers no amount of reminding will solve on its own. This is where the church can act as a body.

Your Our Faith Our Vote committee can organize:

**A ride-share system to the polls.** Recruit congregants with cars and flexible schedules to drive neighbors who don't drive, can't afford the gas, or live far from their polling place. Coordinate by sign-up sheet at coffee hour or through a shared spreadsheet.

**Election Day childcare.** Working parents and single parents often skip voting because they can't bring kids to the polls or wait in a long line with them. Recruit teens in your congregation (this is meaningful service work for youth who can't yet vote themselves) and adult volunteers to staff a few hours of supervised childcare at the church on Election Day so parents can vote.

**A "voting buddy" system for first-time voters.** Pair experienced voters with people voting for the first time, whether 18-year-olds, newly naturalized citizens, or longtime nonvoters finally taking the step. Walk them through what to expect at the polling place. Go together if they want company.

**Multilingual support.** If your congregation includes members for whom English is not their first language, find out what language assistance is available at local polling places and connect people to it. Voters have a federal right to bring someone of their choice into the booth to help them read or interpret the ballot.

Frame these supports as community rhythms rather than charity. Everyone needs a ride sometimes. Everyone has been a first-time voter. The point is that no one in your congregation should miss an election because of a barrier your community could help clear.

## *Build the Habit Across Generations*

The lowest-turnout group in American elections is young people, and it has been for decades. One reason is structural (they move more, they're newer to the rolls, they face more registration friction), and one reason is habit. People who vote in their first three eligible elections become lifelong voters at much higher rates. The first few times are the most important.

This is a two-way conversation.

**If you are a parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent, or trusted older friend:** Talk with the young people in your life about voting before they turn 18. Explain why you vote and what it has meant to you, including the times it was hard or you weren't sure your vote mattered. Invite them to come with you to the polls when they're young so the polling place feels familiar by the time they can cast their own ballot. When they turn 16 or 17, help them pre-register where state law allows. When they turn 18, make sure they're registered at the right address (school or home) and walk through their first ballot with them. Even children who are too young to vote can write postcards, canvass with you, or help at a registration drive.

**If you are a young person:** You are often the connective tissue your family didn't know it needed. The grandparent who hasn't updated their registration since moving. The parent who has stopped voting because they've grown cynical. The cousin who turned 18 last spring and has no idea how to start. The youth group friend whose family doesn't talk about elections. Your nudge carries weight precisely because it's coming from someone they love. Text three people this week. Ask if they're registered. Send them the link. Then ask again in October.

Voting is one step in a much longer life of civic and faithful engagement. It is not the whole of citizenship. But it is a real and recurring opportunity to show up for your neighbors, for the most vulnerable, and for the kind of community you want to belong to. Every conversation you have between now and Election Day makes it more likely that the people you love will show up too.

## *Spread the Word About Election Protection Resources*

### **Become a Poll Worker or Poll Chaplain**

There are many ways you can help ensure a safe and accessible election. One way is for the Our Faith Our Vote committee to recruit poll workers and poll chaplains. Poll workers are election officers who volunteer to help run a polling location. Poll chaplains are lay people and clergy whose presence at the polls is meant to deescalate and keep the peace. Both roles can provide credible information on Election Day and help things go smoothly. Make sure your committee knows who in the congregation is a poll worker or chaplain so that they can help your committee stay informed, and your committee can help support these front line workers on Election Day. You can learn more at <https://www.powerthepolls.org/> and <https://www.turnout-sunday.com/volunteer-chaplain>.

Your committee can also organize congregants to provide food and water or act as faith observers at the polls by standing outside of the polling location with nonpartisan signs (check local election guidelines before planning).

## Educate Others on the Election Protection Hotline

In advance of the election, your Our Faith Our Vote committee should also circulate the Election Protection Hotline to your congregation. If you have any questions about voting or if you or someone you see at the polls encounter difficulty when attempting to vote, you can call the Hotline and then reach out to your Our Faith Our Vote Committee to help find a solution. If you are at your polling location when you face this difficulty, find a poll worker or poll chaplain who should be able to help.

The national, nonpartisan Election Protection coalition of which the United Church of Christ is a member, was formed to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. Made up of more than 100 local, state and national partners, Election Protection works year-round to advance and defend the right to vote.

Election Protection provides Americans from coast to coast with comprehensive voting information on how they can make sure their vote is counted. Election Protection focuses on the voter - not on the political horse race - and provides guidance, information and help to any American, regardless of who that voter is casting a ballot for.

If you have any questions about voting or encounter difficulty when attempting to cast your ballot call the Election Protection Helplines!

## **866-OUR-VOTE**

*Administered by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights*

## **866-VE-Y-VOTA**

*Administered by the NALEO Educational Fund*

## **888-API-VOTE**

*Administered by APIAVote & AAJC*



## BEING A CIVIL VOICE FOR UNCIVIL TIMES

While public discussion of political issues has the potential to bring out the best in us – by surfacing creative new ideas or developing effective problem-solving strategies – more often than not the opposite seems to happen. Whether around the office water cooler or the extended family dinner table, reasoned conversation is taking a back seat to personal attacks and replayed sound bites. Because we avoid these conversations, we miss out on deeper understanding.

As people of faith participating in the public square, we are called to a higher standard of engagement and interaction with our neighbors. Our faith provides us with spiritual resources to take the conversation to a different level. We can choose respect and hope over animosity and bitterness.

We do not have to avoid the hard issues. We can prepare ourselves for a better conversation by thinking about some of the following ideas to shape the conversation on difficult and emotion-filled issues of the day.

### Show Respect

Rather than trying to “win” a debate with your arguments, judge your success by how well you demonstrate respect for other people and for the insights or interesting challenges arise for you. Stay away from insults and personal attacks, and keep trying to return to the substance of the issue. The more respect you show for someone else’s opinions, the more reason they have to respect yours.

### Listen

One of the best ways to show respect is to listen. Focus on what the other person is saying, rather than focusing on what you are going to say next. Ask yourself, “What are they trying to express?” “What is important to them?” “Where do we agree?” Ask them questions about their viewpoint.

### Seek Understanding

Try to understand the context from which other people are speaking. Ask yourself why they see things the way they do. Ask open-ended questions that invite others to say more about why they believe what they believe.

### Share Your Own Views Well

Put thought and energy into articulating your own views clearly and concisely. What do you believe and why? Statistics can be helpful, but often sharing your personal stories is most effective. Claim your own opinions by using “I” statements, such as “I believe ...” and “In my experience ...” Try to avoid exaggeration or the use of sound bites or slogans – use your own words.

### Keep Your Head

Talking about public policy issues often taps into strong emotions and passions in all of us. Remember to pause, take a deep breath from time to time, and give yourself time to respond. You can help set the tone of the conversation by continuing to act with civility even when others do not. If someone is not showing respect – for instance, by interrupting or not listening to your comments – calmly ask that they do so. “You just shared your opinion and I listened without interrupting, could you please listen to mine?”

## COLLEGE RESOURCES

College campuses are the ideal place for election work. Colleges are natural places to discuss ideas and they bring together a wide variety of people to one central location. Campuses are home to people from a range of backgrounds and faiths.

To be most effective, we suggest that you try working with the college presidents, dean of students, student leaders, chaplains, registrars, and employee groups to develop creative and effective ways to both encourage voter registration and increase voter participation. They too will have ideas to share, and if your energy inspires them to get involved, they will be able to help strengthen and broaden your efforts.

There may be other organizations on campus registering voters, holding rallies and making phone calls to get out the student vote. If you have a group of UCC students or students of faith, it might be helpful to work as a group within a larger effort - unless of course your group is the only one doing election work or is large enough to run a campus program of your own!

### VOTER REGISTRATION

Many college students are newly eligible to vote. Others might be registered at home but not in the state where they attend school. Students must live in the area a minimum of nine months out of the year to vote in that area so some may want to register locally. Here are some ideas for voter registration:

Attach a voter registration form to each course registration form or set up a registration table by the registrar. If your school does online or phone course registration, ask to add a message encouraging all students to register to vote and informing them of how to do so.

Include voter registration information in paychecks, with student loan disbursements, and course catalogs.

Work with the Dean of Students or head of student life to present to students on the importance of voting. There you can distribute voter registration materials and help students complete their forms.

Mass mail registration forms to all students or send an email blast with a link to register to vote. Consider including faculty and staff!

Encourage faculty to discuss and distribute voter registration materials in class. Having the support of the Dean or some Department Chairs will be useful.

Have a party! Invite a local band to play, sponsor an ultimate Frisbee tournament or get student life or campus ministry to sponsor a cookout. While everyone is gathered, get them to register!

Set up a table outside of the cafeteria, sporting events, concerts, plays, activities, fairs, etc. Provide physical registration forms and a laptop or tablet for online registration. Ask students to complete their form in front of you so you do not have to chase down forms later.

Go door-to-door in the dorms, or better yet, get Residence Assistants to help you get people registered! R.A.'s are typically required to host periodic social events with their residents. Ask them to do an election themed event and register everyone on their floor!

## Things to Remember

Encourage people to register locally - most students live in or around campus for nine months of the year for four years. They can establish residency and often stay close to school after graduation. They can vote where they live!

Include absentee ballot, mail-in, and early voting information with all voter registration materials. It's important that you have both federal and state voter registration forms on hand. Some people may register to vote locally, others may prefer to use their home address. Even if you make registration forms available to everyone on campus, your work isn't done! You need to establish a system to collect all the completed forms. Set up secure drop boxes in high traffic areas or establish a campus mailbox the forms can be sent to.

The most important step of all is to mail in the completed forms within 7-10 days of collecting them. To save time and postage, just bundle up all the forms, put them in an envelope or box, and mail them to the elections office in your state or local jurisdiction.

## OPENING A POLLING PLACE ON YOUR CAMPUS

If you are interested in opening a polling place on campus, you will have to begin planning well in advance of election day. Here's where having the involvement and the buy in of your college administration will enhance the success of the project.

Contact the local elections officers and see what is required to operate a polling place on your campus. College campuses are ideal polling places because they offer ample space, usually have plenty of parking, and are accessible. Plus, opening a polling place will make it easier for people to vote between classes and will increase voter participation.

## MAIL IN BALLOTS

Providing mail-in ballots will increase your voter participation enormously. Many students and even some professors may be registered to vote at their home address, or may be unable to make it to the polls on election day. You can help make it easy for them to vote by providing the website of their local election office so they can request an absentee ballot. Each jurisdiction has different laws and regulations for mail-in voting, so each person should look at their local election office website to get further information on when they can apply and when the ballots are due.

Keep a list of people who have registered to vote at their home address. Then you can contact them about three weeks before the election to be sure they have requested their mail-in ballot, and again about one week before the election to be sure they have mailed the ballot back to the appropriate elections office. It might be useful to send out campus wide email reminders or put up signs so people are reminded to vote by mail.

## ORGANIZE A CANDIDATE FORUM ON CAMPUS

### Invite the Candidates

Candidates for office at all levels love to visit college campuses. It gives them a chance to connect with young voters and be seen in an academic setting. Holding candidate forums helps open up the communication between candidates and their constituents and gets people interested in an election. Here's some ideas to help you get started.

Send an invitation email to the candidates well before the planned event and follow up with a phone call. It may take some time to find a date that will work for the schedules of the candidates in the race. Be flexible.

### Plan the Format

There are many ways to set up a candidate forum. Here are some of the common formats you can choose from: 1) Allow the candidates to give prepared remarks and have people ask follow-up questions; 2) Have prepared questions to ask the candidates on themes important to your church and community; 3) Pass out index cards to the audience to write questions on and pass them in to be read on the day of the event or solicit questions from members via email or question box after services prior to the event. Leave enough time at the beginning for the candidates to give opening statements. Give candidates the same amount of time to make their closing remarks.

Make sure to have your moderator thank the candidates for their attendance and to remind people of voting day and encourage them to get out and vote.

### Publicize the Events

Post on social media. Include brief notices in the newsletters of churches, campus groups, community-based organizations, and other groups. Ask your campus radio station and other media sources to run public service announcements. Ask to be listed in calendars of events in the local newspapers. Display posters in high-traffic areas.

### Inform the Press

Invite the local newspaper, campus media outlets, and TV stations to cover your candidate forum or debate. This is a great way to get coverage of the issues to a broader audience. It also gives us a chance to show that your campus and UCC churches are engaged in the political process.

### Debate Screenings

Screening a debate is a simple way to get people interested in elections. Arrange a place to view the debate (maybe a large gathering in the theater or a small group in your dorm or student center). Promote the event with posters, campus-wide emails, or a Facebook invitation. Provide food! Once everyone is gathered, watch the debate and leave time at the end for discussion. It may be helpful to invite a moderator to keep things ordered and respectful.

Screenings are great ideas for residence life staff who need to plan social events. They are also a terrific opportunity to get people to sign up to vote.

## Voter Transportation

One of the most useful things you can do is provide voters a ride to the polls. Try to enlist the help of your campus transportation. Does your school have a shuttle? Does your University own buses or vans for transporting sports teams? See if you can get the college to pledge some time, vehicles, and drivers. If not, maybe you can get together a crew of students who are willing to carpool. Arrange a meeting place and head to the polls. Make sure to publicize your transportation options.

## Voter Files

A voter file is a list of names, addresses, phone numbers, and party registration that is maintained by your local elections office. This is public information and can be purchased for a nominal fee to use in your Get Out the Vote efforts.

Most partner nonpartisan organizations will already have this information, so teaming up with another group, such as the [Poor People's Campaign](#) or the [Center for Common Ground](#) will save a lot of time and effort.

## Phone Banking GOTV

Phone banking is the easiest and fastest way to contact people and urge them to vote. You will need a list of names and phone numbers. You can begin calling now, and remind people to vote, remind them of any ID requirements, and give them clear directions to their polling place as well as its hours. Also provide them with the Election Protection Hotline, the deadlines to request and submit a mail-in ballot, and the timeline for early voting.

In general, if you call people the night before the election and remind them that tomorrow is Election Day, this will help ensure less likely voters get out to vote. Typically, one person can contact 20-25 people per hour.

## Canvassing

Canvassing is walking through the dorms or the neighboring precincts and knocking on doors reminding people to vote in the election. Canvassing provides a cheap and effective way to distribute voter education materials. Using your voting list, start walking through the neighborhoods and dorms knocking on the doors of registered voters. When you approach the door, identify yourself and tell them why you are there (to make sure they remember to vote). Leave materials with them - including directions to their polling place and the voting hours. Also provide them with the Election Protection Hotline, the deadlines to request and submit a mail-in ballot, and the timeline for early voting.

**Remember: Do not endorse a particular candidate or political party. You are not advising people how to vote. If you want to promote a particular candidate, sign up with one of the campaigns to engage in this activity.**

In general, canvassing should not be done on Election Day, since you can reach more people faster with a phone call than knocking on doors. Canvassing is a good activity for the weekend before the election or earlier as a voter education tool.

## Public Announcements

Ask your campus radio and TV stations to broadcast public service announcements in the days before the registration deadline and the election, reminding people to register and vote. Put up table tents in the cafeteria, the library, and the student union urging people to vote. Make sure to list the date of the election, polling locations, and what time the polls open and close.

## On Election Day

Make yourself visible. This could range from standing on the side of the street with signs saying “VOTE,” to leafleting the parking lots with fliers reminding people to vote before the polls close. Emails and table drops in the cafeteria can be helpful. Be creative!

Be a poll watcher or faith observer. Some states permit representatives of nonpartisan citizen organizations to observe polling places. Contact your local elections officer to find out requirements your organization must meet to serve as poll watchers/faith observers.



## YOUTH IN ACTION

Young voices have always been at the heart of movements for justice in this country, and elections are one of the places those voices carry real weight. Research on voting behavior consistently finds that the habit of voting is formed early: people who cast a ballot in the first three elections for which they are eligible are significantly more likely to become lifelong voters. The years between 16 and 25 are decisive. What happens in this window shapes a generation of civic participation.

### For College-Aged Voters (18+): Make a Plan, Make It Stick

If you are voting for the first or second time, three steps move you from eligible to engaged.

**Register, and register at the right address.** College students get to choose: you can register at your school address or at the address you consider home, but only one. Each has tradeoffs. Registering at school means your vote shapes the community where you actually live nine months of the year, including the local races (city council, school board, ballot measures) that touch housing, transit, and policing where you study. Registering at home keeps your registration stable across moves and connects you to your home community, though it usually means voting absentee. Whichever you choose, confirm the deadline in your state and check your registration at [vote.gov](http://vote.gov) or [[vote411.org](http://vote411.org)] well before Election Day. If you have moved across state lines or even across town, your old registration will not follow you. Update it.

**Research the issues, especially down-ballot.** Presidential races draw the attention, but the offices that most directly shape daily life (sheriffs, prosecutors, state legislators, school boards, judges) often appear at the bottom of the ballot. [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) offers a personalized ballot guide based on your address. The UCC's Our Faith Our Vote issue briefs are a starting place for thinking through how your faith informs your engagement with the policies on your ballot.

**Make a plan.** Decide now whether you will vote early, vote by mail, or vote on Election Day, and put it on your calendar like a class. If you are voting by mail, request your ballot as early as your state allows and return it promptly. If you are voting in person, locate your polling place in advance and know what ID you need to bring.

### Get Involved Beyond the Ballot

Voting is the floor, not the ceiling. Consider:

**Serving as a poll worker.** Most states pay, training is provided, and many jurisdictions face shortages. Research finds that 33% of young people would serve as poll workers if asked, but only 8% have. Sign up at [powerthepolls.org](http://powerthepolls.org).

**Volunteering with nonpartisan GOTV efforts** in your community through groups like the League of Women Voters, When We All Vote, or Rock the Vote.

**Running a registration drive on campus** with your campus ministry, student government, or a partner like The Civics Center or New Voters.

**Plugging into local advocacy** on the issues that move you, whether that is housing, climate, immigration, or peace.

## For Youth Under 18: Your Work Starts Now

You cannot cast a ballot yet, and that does not mean you sit this one out. The work of building a free and faithful democracy belongs to you too.

**Pre-register where you can.** Most states allow 16 and 17-year-olds (some allow younger) to pre-register so that your registration activates automatically on your 18th birthday. Check your state's rules at [vote.org](http://vote.org).

**Volunteer.** In many states, 16 and 17-year-olds can serve as poll workers. You can register voters in your community (no age requirement in most states for handing someone a form), help with literature drops, write postcards to new voters, and join phone banks. Groups like The Civics Center and New Voters are built specifically for high schoolers.

**Be the reminder your people need.** The single most effective predictor of whether someone votes is whether the people around them are voting and talking about it. You have a parent who has not registered since they moved. A sibling who is in their first semester of college and has no idea how absentee ballots work. A grandparent who is unsure where their new polling place is. A youth group that has never had a conversation about what voting means to people of faith. Your voice in their lives carries weight precisely because it is personal. Text three people this week. Ask if they are registered. Send them the link.

**Form the habit before you cast the ballot.** Pay attention to local races. Read your sample ballot when one comes home. Sit in on a city council or school board meeting. Ask questions. The vote, when it comes, will land in soil you have already prepared.

*“Let us not love with words or speech, but in action and in truth.” (1 John 3:18) Voting is one way young people put love into action, and getting their friends, families, and neighbors to the polls is another. Every voice, including yours, makes a difference.*

## Youth Ministries or Sunday Schools

Election seasons offer youth ministers and Sunday school teachers something rare: a moment when the questions young people are already overhearing at the dinner table, on their phones, and in school hallways line up with the deepest questions of Christian formation. Who is my neighbor? What does justice look like when my neighbors disagree about it? Where is God at work in a contested public square? The point of taking up these questions in a youth setting is not to produce the “right” political answer. It is to help young people develop the moral muscles they will use for the rest of their voting lives.

## Discussion Questions

The questions below assume disagreement in the room and reward youth for thinking out loud rather than performing a correct answer.

A candidate you mostly agree with holds one position you find deeply wrong. A candidate you mostly disagree with happens to be right on that one issue. How do you decide what to do? What does the decision cost you either way?

Scripture treats kings, governors, and empires with a complicated mix of respect, suspicion, and outright resistance. Read 1 Samuel 8, where Israel demands a king. What is God's

warning, and what does it suggest about how Christians should hold political power, our own and others’?

Jesus tells his followers to “render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Mark 12:17). What do you think actually belongs to Caesar? What belongs only to God? Where is the line hardest to see?

The prophet Amos thunders against people who “trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end” (Amos 8:4). If Amos were preaching in our state this year, what would he likely name? Would your congregation be uncomfortable hearing it? Would you?

Most people do not vote on every issue. They pick one or two that matter most and weigh from there. If you had to name the two issues most central to your faith right now, what would they be, and why those two?

Think of someone in your life whose politics differ sharply from yours and whom you also love. What does loving that person well look like during an election year? What does it not look like?

People sometimes say “I don’t vote because both sides are the same” or “my vote doesn’t matter.” Take that seriously for a minute. What is true in it? What is incomplete in it? How would you respond without dismissing the person?

The early church lived under Roman rule and could not vote at all, and yet Paul wrote letters that reshaped how Christians thought about authority, citizenship, and community. What does it mean that the most formative period of Christian political thought happened without ballots? What does that free us to do, or refuse to do, today?

### Group Activities

**Interview across generations.** Send youth to interview three voters from different generations in the congregation. Suggested questions: What was the first election you remember caring about? Has your faith ever made you change your mind about a political issue? Have you ever voted for someone you had real reservations about? What do you wish young people understood about voting that you have learned the hard way? Bring the interviews back and look for patterns. What do faithful voters across generations seem to share?

**Map the ballot.** Pull up a sample ballot for your area from [vote411.org](http://vote411.org). Most youth (and most adults) recognize the top of the ballot and have no idea what the rest of it does. As a group, research what each office actually controls. Where do school board, county prosecutor, judges, and state legislators show up in the daily life of your community? Where do they show up in the lives of the most vulnerable people in your community?

**Write your own voter’s prayer.** Have youth write a short prayer they would want to pray before voting for the first time, or that they would want an older voter in their family to pray. Collect them and share with the congregation in worship the Sunday before the election.

*The goal is formation, not conclusion. Youth who learn to hold political questions with seriousness, humility, and scriptural depth will be better voters than youth who learn the right slogans. Trust the questions. Trust the young people. Trust the Spirit at work in the room.*