

I'm a **faithful** voter

I pledge to vote November 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Voters Tool-Kit



Conscience  
& Justice COUNCIL

The Conscience and Justice Council seeks to transform communities surrounding local churches by ensuring freedom of conscience and justice. Instead of pursuing sound bites and 15 seconds of fame, we pursue the best interest of others. Philippians 2:3-4 states, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Regardless of your faith or lack of faith, the Conscience and Justice Council needs you to make a difference in changing our nation, one community at a time.

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# Voters Tool-Kit



This tool-kit is designed to enhance the Souls to the Polls efforts. Research has shown this simple technique is one of the most effective ways to promote voting and build power for our community. It's based on the idea that when people pledge to vote, especially in church, they are much more likely to vote. During Sabbath services, invite your congregants to fill out the "I'm a Faithful Voter" Pledge Card, and turn in to the pastor.

## Tool Kit Contents:

1. Steps for using the Pledge Cards
2. Tips for Pastors
3. Legal Do's and Don'ts for Churches
4. Sermon Seeds (#s1-5)
5. Suggested Scripture readings

### 1. How to use the Pledge Cards in your congregation:

**APPOINT someone to serve as the Faithful Voter Coordinator for your congregation.** It's helpful to have a point person take the lead on distributing and collecting the pledge cards.

**ASK your congregation to pledge to vote this Sunday.** Some people say they have never voted because "I've never been asked." A pledge card is a great way to do this. Take a moment from services to ask your congregation to hold up the pledge card and ask them to join you in pledging to vote by filling out this card.

**DISTRIBUTE the 'I'm a faithful voter' postcards.** Share these with your congregation in services or at bible study, or insert them in your church bulletin. Be sure to take a moment in the service to call everyone's attention to the cards and ask them to take the pledge. They can be collected during the offering.

**COLLECT the completed cards right away.** It's very important to collect all the completed postcards ASAP. Have one person in your congregation be in charge of collecting all completed cards.

**Empower your enthusiastic congregants** to take pledge cards back to their neighborhoods. You know who votes and who doesn't, so let's make sure we ask them to pledge to vote.

### 2. Tips for Pastors on Encouraging "Faithful Voters"

*"So he said to his disciples, The harvest is great, and the laborers are few."  
- Matthew 9:37*

Pastors, deacons, Rabbis and other church leaders are trusted voices of authority that carry enormous influence. Working together, we can encourage faithful stewardship in our

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community, help maximize voter participation and ensure that everyone has a voice in this election, and that our voices are heard loud and clear by our elected officials.

Over the years, recommendations have changed on the best ways to encourage voting. Below are tips based on the latest scientific research on the psychology of what motivates people to vote that we wanted to share with you. Some are common sense, and others may seem surprising. Some you may have been doing for years. Some may be something new to consider trying this year.

Not all of these tips will be a good fit for every congregation, so feel free to treat this like a menu and pick and choose the ones that will work best for you.

**Ask your congregation to pledge to vote – and use “I’m a Faithful Voter” postcards.** In focus groups, some people say they have never voted because “I’ve never been asked.” A pledge card is a great way to ask your congregation to pledge to vote in this election.

**Thank your congregants by name for voting. Ask congregants to let you know after they’ve voted and you will thank them publicly.** If you thank people for voting in past elections, and promise to thank them again after they vote in this election it signals to people that you are watching whether or not they vote. Studies show this is a very powerful motivator. Be clear that how they vote is secret, but whether they showed up to vote or not is public information. Pastors can even promise to thank everyone who voted by publishing their names in the church bulletin

**Remind new voters that their ballot is secret.** This is especially important for young adults and newly registered voters, since the experience of casting a ballot is new and unfamiliar for them. Research shows that when new voters learn that no one can find out who they vote for, they become less anxious and more excited to vote for the first time. If you are conducting voter registration drives, this is a good fact to share. It’s even better if you can show new voters a sample ballot.

**Talk about how voting sets an example for children.** Recent polling shows that this simple message helps excite new voters and it’s also biblical. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way they should go, and when old they will not depart from it.” According to the poll: “Kids look up to adults and our behavior sets an example. One way to set a good example is to register to vote, and to go vote. It’s important to show young people that voting matters and is worth the time.”

**Remind people to think of themselves as voters.** Identity is important. Research shows that reminding people to see themselves as voters helps make them more likely to vote. This is why we talk about being “faithful voters” and have a “I’m a faithful voter” pledge. Or, you could say something like: “As a community of people who vote, we’re going to continue voting this November because \_\_\_\_\_. (insert an issue important for your congregation).”

**Remind your congregants of their commitment to vote.** Every opportunity you have to remind your congregants of their commitment to vote is a good thing. Mailing the “I’m a faithful voter” pledge postcard is one way to do this. It’s also great to remind congregants from the pulpit too.

### **3. LEGAL DO’S & DON’T’S FOR CHURCHES & PASTORS:**

Encouraging your members to vote is one of the most important ways you can contribute to public life. Telling your members who to vote for or against is never allowed.

#### **DO:**

- DO participate in non-partisan voter registration and identification (these activities
- CANNOT be affiliated with a political party.)
- DO provide non-partisan voter education (CANNOT be affiliated with a political party.)
- DO campaign for or against legislation (as a congregation and/or as an individual church leader).
- DO discuss the candidates’ positions on issues to the congregation, but only in a manner that is purely informational. Be careful not to compare your opinion on the issue to the candidate’s position.
- DO allow candidates to make appearances at church events/services if they appear in a private capacity and not as a candidate.
- DO distribute candidate surveys and/or voting records of office holders but be careful to prepare these in compliance with IRS guidelines (visit [IRS.GOV](http://IRS.GOV) for more details).

#### **DO NOT:**

- DO NOT support or oppose the candidates on the congregation’s behalf.
- DO NOT use the congregation’s funding to give financial contributions of any kind to the candidates/office holders.
- DO NOT convey your (the church leader’s) personal opinions about candidates to the congregation when speaking as a church leader. Please note: the Pastor’s personal views and personal donations (not affiliated with the church) can be used to his or her own discretion, as long as these views/endorsements are not attributed to the congregation.
- DO NOT publish church editorials that are meant to support or oppose candidates.
- As a part of the congregation, DO NOT distribute candidate campaign literature; however the individual church leader is allowed to do so.

## **4. Sermon Seeds**

If you are looking for sermon ideas to talk about what's at stake in this election, below are several 'seeds' you might plant in your sermons.

### **SERMON SEED #1 – “Not Without Hope”**

#### **Scripture: Romans 5:1-5**

Daily news reports show the sad state of affairs in our communities. There is senseless violence that ends the lives of young people before they can follow their dreams. There are funding cuts that damage our children's education. Hospitals are closing, leaving patients without needed care and entire communities devastated from the loss in jobs and revenue. Families with working parents increasingly struggle to feed their families with many ending up at food banks in spite of their regular paychecks. Crime is even growing because there are not enough opportunities for young people. Mothers are still dying as a result of childbirth in Florida despite the technological advances available to us. Elected officials are enacting laws that benefit them but not the people they represent, and there is an ongoing effort to make it harder for communities like ours to vote.

Looking around at these conditions facing our communities, it's hard to see how things will ever change. But, through this letter to the church in Rome, the Apostle Paul reminds us that no matter what the situation looks like or the troubles that we face, there is hope that change is coming!

This expectation of hope is what the civil rights workers were depending on when they participated in Freedom Summer over 50 years ago to register African American voters in Mississippi. This expectation of hope is what kept the leaders and participants in the Civil Rights Movement moving forward as they walked the streets of cities across the country from Birmingham to Selma to Cleveland, demanding the right to vote decades ago. It was this promise of hope that compelled those who marched and protested and organized so that African Americans would have the right to vote for the people who would represent them and for the laws that would impact their lives. They had a sense then, and the same is true now, that registering and going to the polls is a critical part of changing the conditions in our communities and guaranteeing a better life for future generations.

That's why we cannot give up on hope now. That's why it's even more important that we continue to press forward and register to vote this year and make sure everyone we know who is eligible to vote, registers and casts their ballots on Election Day – or votes early or votes by mail. We are not without hope and at the same time, without hope we will not be able to secure the future that we want for our families and our communities. Change can come to our communities simply by voting.

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When we vote, we're not just voting for the president or governor. We're also voting for the local officials who decide which streets get paved and which schools get new books and teachers.

Hope drives and compels us to believe that there is something more for us and for our communities than what is in front of us right now. Hope helps us to envision greater possibilities for our children than we ever imagined for ourselves. Hope calls us into action to vote for elected officials who care about us and represent our interests. You all look like the kind of people who have hope, like the kind of people who vote.

Hope has meaning, and voting matters:

- Hope means our children don't go to bed hungry and have a great education.
- Hope means mothers don't die giving birth because the health care system has failed them.
- Hope means our hospitals stay open and are able to provide the best available health care to those in need.
- Hope means more programs and opportunities for young people so we can reduce crime.
- Hope means I won't let new voter ID laws stop me from going to the polls but I will vote for elected officials who will do something about these unjust laws when they get into office!

Hope does not disappoint. It comes with promise and responsibilities. I'm not without hope and I believe that I can—we can—make a difference by registering and voting this year.

**Illustration:** She spent hours being trained on what to do when she sat at the lunch counter at Woolworth's in Columbia, S.C. in the '60s and refused to move. She was shoved and called names but she would not, could not, be moved. You see, she believed that all people, regardless of the color of their skin, her skin, should be allowed to vote. So, when she heard about the Supreme Court's decision to do away with parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 last year, she was devastated. How could they do that after all we went through and still go through in this country, she wondered? In spite of her disappointment with the Supreme Court's decision, she still has hope. "We were able to change things before and we'll find a way to do it again." That's why she is committed to going to the polls in November. That is why she is still going to serve as a poll worker to make sure the elections run smoothly. That is why she is not without hope.

**Prayer:** *Lord, we thank You for the promise of hope and that it will not disappoint us or put us to shame. Help us in the midst of great adversity to be overcomers with great faith, everlasting love and enduring hope. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**Traditional Hymn:** “The Solid Rock” (African American Hymnal #385)

**Contemporary Sacred Music:** “Moving Forward” by Israel and New Breed

**SERMON SEED #2 – *The Sound of the Trumpet***

## **Scripture: Jeremiah 6:1-14**

The sounding of the trumpet has particular significance and meaning for God’s people. It was a sound of preparation, letting God’s people know that it was time for them to act. It was a sound of victory, declaring God’s goodness and triumph over obstacles. And, it was a sound of warning, instructing God’s people about the need to be alert, change their behavior or to be watchful of what was going on around them.

But, when the trumpet sounded, the people knew they were supposed to pay attention. They knew they were supposed to respond. Sometimes the response was taking action against an enemy. Sometimes it was to praise God for victory. Sometimes it was to harken their ear to a set of instructions. Sometimes it was to repent of attitudes and behaviors that had drifted away from God. The sound of the trumpet was, and continues to be, significant and requires the response of God’s people.

In this passage of Scripture, the Prophet Jeremiah is sent to the people of Israel to sound a trumpet about the conditions in their land. He both gives a warning about the imminent destruction that is to come and he sounds the alarm to urge God’s people to change their behavior. There is violence, oppression, stealing, looting and greed for unjust gain. According to this text, from the prophets to the priests—everyone—deals falsely. Meaning no one could be trusted. Those who are supposed to help, the officials, the ones who are supposed to help people in need don’t seem to be paying attention or simply don’t care about the deteriorating conditions in the city. People are wounded and their wounds are treated carelessly. There are cries of “Peace, peace” but there is none. There is chaos and confusion but no justice, no peace and no regard for God’s words or laws.

God sends a warning through the Prophet Jeremiah that these conditions in the city are an atrocity and not consistent with God’s ways. The conditions in the land of Israel at that time may sound familiar to us today. Many of our communities are dealing with violence, injustice and oppression. And, the trumpet is sounding:

- When crime is increasing among young people in our communities and no one seems to do anything about it, the trumpet is sounding.
- When Duval County has a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the state, the trumpet is sounding.
- When school budgets are being cut so that children have fewer days of learning in an education system that is already ranked one of the worse in the nation, the trumpet is sounding.

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- When children in our state are not given access to high-quality schools for their education, the trumpet is sounding.
- When hospitals are being closed and more babies and mothers are dying during childbirth, the trumpet is sounding.
- When after years of marching and protesting for the right to vote, some politicians are trying to make it harder for people to register and to vote so that our power to change the conditions of our communities is weakened, the trumpet is sounding!
- When new voter ID laws make it harder for the elderly, the poor, people who are disabled, minorities and students to cast their ballots for elected officials, the trumpet is sounding!

Yes, the trumpet is sounding and the call is clear. It is time for us to respond. It is time for us to do something about the destructive forces in our communities. It is time for us to register and vote in the upcoming elections. It is time for us to hold our elected officials accountable for doing something about issues that are important to us. It is time to make sure our voices are heard and that our cries for justice are heeded by elected officials who work on behalf of *all* communities and not just for a select few. You all look like voters. You look like the kind of people who vote. Don't prove me wrong.

The land is being destroyed. There is a clarion call for justice. The trumpet is sounding. Won't you respond today?

**Illustration:** The sign held by the little girl who looked to be about seven years old said, "I'm Paying Attention." You see, in a recent election, the citizens of North Carolina elected several government officials who used their power to severely cut social programs that helped the most vulnerable in the state; to enact voter ID laws that limiting participation from elderly, poor and minority voters; and, to change voting laws so that same-day voter registration ended and early voting was restricted. But, a group of religious leaders declared, like the little girl, that they, too, are paying attention. They began to march and protest and just like during the Civil Rights Movement, they began to stage non-violent protests every Monday at the state capital building in Raleigh. Here in Cleveland, we need to make sure our elected officials know that we, too, are paying attention. That we've heard the trumpet sound and we are not afraid. We will make our communities better by voting for those who support making them better.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us this day to heed to the sound of the trumpet so that our homes and our communities will reflect Your kingdom on Earth. Give us wisdom and courage to do what must be done, to say what must be said and to respond to the call for justice throughout this land. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

**Traditional Hymn:** "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory), African American Hymnal #490

Contemporary Sacred Music: "Can't Give Up Now" by Mary Mary

## **SERMON SEED #3 – “*Laborers for the Harvest: There is Work to Be Done*”**

**Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38**

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus recognizes what is often a sad reality. When there is work to be done, there are not always people around to do it. Jesus is going from city to city, from village to village. He is teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Most of all, He is healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But, as He looks out among the multitude, the Bible says that He is moved with compassion for them because they are weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd.

It is at this moment that Jesus declares, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

There is work to be done.

This declaration about the harvest is not a statement about what Jesus is or is not able to do. It is a statement about the reality that there is a lot of work to be done and only a few people either willing or able to do it. While Jesus could have healed the entire multitude of the illnesses that plagued them, instead He invites us through this narrative to participate in this work with Him.

You see, according to this passage, Jesus recognized that the people were weary and scattered as if they were sheep without a shepherd or to put it another way, a people without good leadership. Perhaps the weariness was from the sickness and disease that was spreading from person to person in their communities with no place to go for proper treatment and no means to pay for it. Perhaps it was because they were under the Roman Empire and did not have leaders representing them who truly had their best interest at heart. Regardless of why, the people were in need, there was work to be done and there were not enough people committed to help.

There is work to be done...there is work that must be done!

When Jesus saw the multitude and had compassion on them, He didn't just feel bad for them. He took action on their behalf. He named the 12 disciples and gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal “all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.” In other words, He appointed laborers for the harvest, gave them power to do what needed to be done and sent them out to make a difference.

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That is why it is so important for us to register and to vote this year and make sure that we elect leaders who will actually do something about the problems facing our communities—those who will do the work that needs to be done. Those who will go out and make a difference. Those who will see the multitude in need and rather than pity them or ignore them, will have compassion and begin to work on their behalf. For this work we need elected officials who will work to fix our schools, save our hospitals, take care of birth mothers and their babies and make sure no one goes to bed hungry in the wealthiest nation in the world!

If we were able to reach the millions of African Americans in Florida who are not registered to vote and if all of them were to come together to register to vote and to cast their ballots we would have a lot of power in deciding elections.

There is work to be done and we have the power to get it done. Let's do it by registering to vote by the October 9th deadline. Let's do it by going to the polls and casting our ballots on Election Day, or by voting early, or voting by mail. Let's do it by making sure others register and vote as well. You all are the kind of people who vote and make a difference. Let's do it!

**Illustration:** It's not just those living below the poverty line going to bed hungry or in need in Cleveland every night. The minimum wage in Duval County is \$8.05, but the living wage for one adult is \$10.48 and it's \$23.12 with one adult and one child. Every child or adult added, increases the need for more income. In Cleveland, household incomes are slowing growing, but there is still a gap. Black households are making 61.5 cents to every dollar a white household makes. It's no wonder that around 280,000 people in the region are relying on food pantries, to keep food on the tables, to feed their families. There is work to be done.

There is work to be done because in Duval County, the rate of death from cancer and heart disease is higher than state of Florida, residents lead the state in risk factors for diabetes compared to the rest of the state. With those higher rates, not every person in Cleveland is covered by health insurance and those who do have coverage still have out-of-pocket costs. Those people may have to choose between health and putting food on the table. There is work to be done.

**Prayer:** *Lord, please open our eyes that we might see the harvest before us and be willing to take action so that there is healing and hope in our communities. There is a multitude in need, O Lord. Help us to use the power we have been given to make a difference. In Jesus' Name and for His sake. Amen.*

**Traditional Hymn:** "He Touched Me" (#273 African-American Hymnal), "There Is A Balm in Gilead" (#524 African-American Hymnal)

**Contemporary Sacred Music:** "A Balm in Gilead" by Richard Smallwood

## **SERMON SEED #4 – Rise and Rebuild!**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 2:17-18**

Let's face it. Some of our communities are in a mess. There is degradation all around and if we were to take an inventory of the things that are supposed to make our lives better—schools, health care, jobs—we would have to admit that in some cases they are a mess, too.

This is the situation that was facing Nehemiah when he considered the conditions in Jerusalem. The city was in ruin with the wall torn down and the gates destroyed by fire. The city was vulnerable and its inhabitants were unable to go on with business as usual.

But, Nehemiah was determined. He knew he had to do something. This was the place where his fathers and mothers were buried, the place of his foundation, the place where his identity and destiny met. He knew that he could not sit idly by and watch as his community stood in ruin. Nehemiah was determined to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, restore the honor due to the Lord and reclaim the community for those who would return to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity. He was determined to bring new life and new possibilities to the city and all those who would live there. In other words, Nehemiah was declaring, “We’re going to clean up this mess!”

Similarly, all across our nation, there are cities and towns that are lying in ruin. While there is no wall surrounding these cities, there are some indications that we need to have competent leaders, mobilize our community, galvanize our resources and heed this call in Nehemiah to arise and rebuild--to clean up the mess in Cleveland!

- In 2015 the Florida Senate voted to expand Medicaid, but it was rejected by the governor and state House. If the bill had passed thousands would have access to affordable healthcare. 600,000 people are uninsured in Florida. Elected officials seem to be more interested in politics than people by refusing to take measures that would help solve those problems, like expanding Medicaid. A mess.
- Florida continues to lag behind in maternal health, it is ranked 38 in maternal mortality. A black woman is dispositionally at a higher risk than her white counterpart when ½ of all maternal deaths are considered to be preventable. A mess.
- Duval County still has a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the state and many more are working part-time because they can't find full-time employment. A mess.
- Our children are not getting the quality of education they deserve in Cleveland. For the Florida Standards Assessment, Duval tested the lowest among the urban districts. Our children are not getting the recess time they deserve and studies show they need to succeed. A mess.

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It's time for us to clean up the mess!

To get things done, we need good, strong leaders with the community's interest in mind. The Bible records that Nehemiah worked with the priests, the nobles, the Jews, the officials and others who were willing to do the work. We can also work with our leaders to better our communities—as long as we have elected officials, who listen when we call, represent our concerns (not their own) and who care about what's going on around us. And, just like Nehemiah represented the interests of his community before the authorities, we can elect leaders who will act on our behalf.

That's why we have to register and vote this year! We can vote early. We can vote by mail. We have an opportunity to do something and not just watch our communities lie in ruin. Although there are obstacles and opposition, we can register and vote to rebuild what has been destroyed and restore what has been burnt up. We can vote to put people into office who have our interests at heart. We can vote for those who will work to get rid of voter ID laws and other tricks to stop people from going to the polls and casting their ballots. As a community of faithful voters, we cannot and we will not stand idly by!

Now is our time to respond to the mess we see in our communities. Now is the time for us to rise and rebuild!

**Illustration:** In Duval County school district, 44% of the students are African American and 36% are white. Yet, our African American students are less likely to be given the opportunity to participate in the district's gifted program. In fact at the end of the last school year there were 950 black gifted students and 3,300 gifted white students. Part of the issue is that the school board continues to refuse to have kids bussed to schools where gifted programs, effectively excluding our children to have access to equal education. Our children should be afforded the best education regardless of their zip code, especially when our elected officials have power to change this. It's time to clean up the mess!

**Prayer:** *Lord, many of our communities are in a mess and, like Nehemiah, we need guidance, good leadership, vision and people with a mind to work to help us to rebuild and restore all that lies in ruin. We pray for wisdom, insight and creativity so that every need will be met and every defective place renewed. Amen.*

**Traditional Hymn:** "Revive Us Again" (#569 African American Hymnal) or "Renewal" (#570 African American Hymnal)

**Contemporary Sacred Music:** "99 ½ Won't Do" by Hezekiah Walker or "I Need You to Survive" by Hezekiah Walker

## SERMON SEED #5 – “A Faithful Witness”

### Scripture: James 2:14-20

This passage raises a powerful question for Christian believers. What good is it to see someone naked and hungry, wish them well but do nothing to help them with their physical needs? Faith, says the Apostle James, without works, is dead or barren. He wants believers in Christ to be clear: faith and good works go hand-in-hand. We have a responsibility to one another that does not end with exchanging pleasantries or saying “I’ll pray for you.” Being a faithful witness to God means taking action.

That’s why James emphasizes the point in this text that faith without works is unproductive and empty. In other words, having faith and doing nothing does not reflect who God has called us to be as Christ’s ambassadors. After all, Christ often met the physical needs of people before their spiritual ones. And, our faith should also drive us to *do something*. Our faith requires an outward response from us that reflects what we believe in our hearts. Our faith moves us to fight for justice, righteousness and for our voices to be heard. Yes, individually, I can give someone something to eat. But, collectively, we can make sure that no child goes to school or to bed hungry. Individually, I can help someone find a job. Collectively, we can make sure that there are programs in place so that our young people have a good education and can become who God created them to be. Individually, I can write or call my elected officials to tell them that there is too much crime and not enough opportunities for young people. Collectively, we can elect politicians who will listen to us, care about our issues and actually do something to help our communities.

If there were a way to sum up what James is talking about in this text, it would be talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words. We have heard people *talk* about doing something in our communities but this is the year when we can put our faith into action, have our voices heard and make sure we elect people who will *take action* on our behalf. Just think about it:

- When more than 48,000 in Duval County are unemployed and trying to find work, we need to put our faith into action.
- When still thousands more are working part time because they can’t find a full-time job, we need to put our faith into action.
- When African-American women are three times more likely to die giving birth than women of any other group and Florida could do more to prevent women dying from giving birth; our faith needs to be put into action.
- When opportunities for our young people are limited because of a lack of jobs and a poor education system, our faith needs to be put into action!

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And, we can have our voices heard and our concerns met—through the ballot box. Participating in this year’s election, whether you vote early, by mail or on Election Day—you can be a faithful witness, a faithful voter—by registering and making sure you vote and not just for governor senator but also for our local officials, too.

Frankly, our communities are facing many challenges and yes, they can be overwhelming. But, now is the time for us to make changes and do something about what we see going on in our communities. Now, is **not** the time for us to be silent or unproductive. While having faith is very important, being a faithful witness is even more critical. We can do something about the struggles. We can do something about the crime and the lack of opportunities and the unpaved roads and the failing school system. It is up to us to start turning things around in our communities. Voting will help us start the process.

Our faith tells us many things. It tells us that we are more than conquerors. It tells us that even when we are hard-pressed on every side, we are still not crushed. It tells us that even when we are perplexed, we are still not in despair. It tells us that even when we are persecuted, we are not forsaken. It tells us that even when we are struck down, we are not destroyed. It tells us that we can do *all things* through Christ who gives us strength. That strength along with our faith means that we can make a difference. We can be more than just hearers of the word and more than just complainers who do nothing to make things better. We can be faithful witnesses. We can be faithful voters and take action to make sure our voices are heard and our communities are better than they are now and more than we thought possible. Amen!

**Illustration:** It was enough for one fast food worker in Duval County. He was a faithful worker, showed up on time and did his job to the best of his ability but he could never make ends meet with his paycheck. He, like many fast food workers in Cleveland and other parts of the country, has taken to the streets, protesting his low wages. But, if you’re able to get a job in Cleveland, which more than 48,000 people have not been able to do, working full-time at a fast food restaurant adds up to living in poverty with no health insurance or retirement plan. Not only that but many young people in Cleveland are turning to crime because there are not enough opportunities for them to excel. But, we can change this by registering and voting this year. Just by being faithful voters we can elect officials who will work to get jobs and access to health care in our communities. We can elect officials who care about our young people’s future as much as we do. Let’s be faithful witnesses and faithful voters this year.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to be Your faithful witnesses at home, at church, on the job and in our communities. Give us the determination to raise our voices and speak on behalf of others even when things look empty and unproductive. Move us to bring new life to dead situations in our communities, to pray and to act, to hear and to do. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

**Traditional Hymn:** “We’ve Come This Far By Faith” (#412 African American Hymnal)

Contemporary Sacred Music: “Faithful to Believe” by Byron Cage

## **5. Suggested Scripture Readings**

### **The importance of justice to God**

Do good, seek justice—Isaiah 1:17

The Lord is a God of justice—Isaiah 30:18

Good news proclaimed and God loves justice—Isaiah 61:8 (1-8)

Warning against mistreating the poor, encouragement to establish justice in the city Amos 5:11-15, 24

What the Lord requires of us—Micah 6:8

Promise fulfilled that Christ will declare justice to the Gentiles—Matthew 12:18-21

### **Calls to Action**

The Lepers at the Gate—1 Kings 3:28

The Timing of Things—Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For Such a Time as This—Esther 4:10-17

Consider your ways—Haggai 1:3-7

A Plea for Justice—Psalm 82

### **Speaking/Acting on behalf of Others**

Esther risks her life to speak on behalf of her people—Esther 4:10-17

The King’s mother encourages him to plead the cause of the poor and needy—Proverbs 31:8-9

Look out for the good of others—1 Corinthians 10:24

Philippians 2:1-4

### **Community Revitalization**

Time to Rebuild—Nehemiah 2

Can these bones live?—Ezekiel 37

### **Hope and Help for the Oppressed, Those in Need**

Rebuke for oppressing others—Nehemiah 5:1-13

The Lord will arise to protect the poor from oppression—Psalm 12:5

Woe to those who take advantage of the vulnerable—Isaiah 10:1-3

Break every yoke and let the oppressed go free—Isaiah 58:6-12

Good News for the poor, brokenhearted and prisoners—Luke 4:18-19

### **Importance of Community**

Encouragement to establish justice and do good—Amos 5:11-15, 24

Early Christians take care of one another’s needs—Acts 2:42-47

# Voters Tool-Kit



## Being Faithful Witnesses

Believers as “salt and light” to the world—Matthew 5:13-16

Helping the “least of these”—Matthew 25:34-46

The Persistent Widow never gave up, keep fighting injustice—Luke 18:1-8

Ambassadors for Christ—2 Corinthians 5:17-21

**For more information about the Conscience and Justice Council visit us at  
[cjcouncil.org](http://cjcouncil.org)**

I'm a **faithful** voter

I pledge to vote November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Side 1

Side 2

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a faithful voter. I pledge to vote in this year's election.

As people of faith, we know this Fall's election has high stakes for so many people in our congregation.

That's why we're all coming together to take this pledge as faithful voters. Here's my plan to vote:

I'm voting by mail     I'm voting early in person     I'm voting on election day, Nov. 6

Even if things come up, I know my pastor at \_\_\_\_\_, my congregation and my community and counting on me to vote.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_