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Faithful Voter Reflection Guide



Interfaith Power & Light
Putting Faith Into **Action** for a Safe Climate

Introduction

As people of faith and conscience across the country, we believe elections are a referendum on the values that will shape our future.

How can we renew our fragile democracy, which is imperative to creating policies that protect communities and our Sacred Earth? How do we honor the human dignity and worth of every person? Given our mutual interdependence, how do our faiths call us to live in the world? What policies will prioritize the common good and confront future crises in equitable and just ways?

Many of the defining moral issues of our time are on the ballot, and the challenges they present are daunting. We must move forward with hope and resist despair and cynicism.

Using our voices to fulfill our civic duty and voting in every election makes a difference in our communities—and our world. Your vote is how you can speak up for our common home and our neighbors. Voting is how we create a society based on our shared values.

This reflection guide is intended to spur discussion and discernment. Whether you use it at a kitchen table, in a house of worship, at a community forum, or at an event with policymakers and political candidates, we hope it helps you navigate the urgent moral questions raised by this election.

The issues we address here are not exhaustive. Still, we believe they provide a framework for evaluating issues in a way that prioritizes solutions that promote dignity, social justice, and the common good. Each section includes suggested questions to guide your conversations.

Check your voter registration, make a plan to vote, research every name and measure on your ballot, and learn more about IPL's Faith Votes Campaign at faith-votes.com.



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Protecting Our Sacred Earth

As people of faith and conscience, our spiritual values call us to be good stewards of our Sacred Earth. Climate change and environmental injustices are destroying our common home, harming our communities, especially the most vulnerable, and putting our children and future generations at risk.

From historic wildfires to record-breaking extreme weather to air pollution, climate change is devastating our health and destroying our environment. Everyone experiences climate impacts, regardless of zip code or political affiliation. But those in Black, Brown, Indigenous, and low-wealth communities are impacted first and worst and have the most difficult time recovering from these disasters.

Two out of three Americans are worried about climate change, according to a 2023 survey by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. American voters, including voters of faith, overwhelmingly support policies to protect our communities from a changing climate. Our elected leaders have a moral

responsibility to take care of our Sacred Earth and respond to the climate crisis. We still have time to avert its worst impacts if we act now to reduce climate pollution by transitioning to clean, renewable energy, eliminating fossil fuels, addressing transportation and food systems, and helping communities prepare for more powerful storms.



Questions for Reflection:

- What does your faith teach about our responsibilities for our Sacred Earth and for caring for our neighbors? How are they interdependent?
- How can you tell the story of ways your faith community has tried to reduce its impact on the climate, save energy, and practice environmental stewardship?



Protecting our Democracy and Voting Rights

This election is more than a choice between parties and ideologies. An even more foundational question is at stake: How do we preserve democracy in the face of serious threats to fair elections and our fundamental right to vote?

As people of faith and conscience, we believe all human beings have inherent dignity and worth. Therefore, all Americans should have equal access to the ballot box.

Voting is the very foundation of representative democracy. By ensuring people have a voice in their government, the right to vote promotes a more equitable society and provides an essential safeguard against tyranny. However, this most fundamental right has been undermined by courts and politicians, making it harder for citizens to participate in the political process. Every American should have the right to cast their vote without barriers and have their voice heard, regardless of zip code, race, age, ability, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic. Any obstacle to voting is a violation of our most sacred values and weakens our democracy.

As a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization, Interfaith Power & Light does not endorse political candidates, nor should faith

communities be engaged in political endorsements. What is at stake is more significant than any one party or candidate. Without a functioning democracy, the United States cannot make progress on passing just and equitable policies that will protect our families, our communities, and our Sacred Earth, ensuring a hopeful future for current and future generations.

"In Hinduism, we believe in the concept of dharma, or duty. Voting is our duty as citizens, and it is also a way to contribute to the well-being of society." - Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda



Questions for Reflection:

- How do systemic barriers to voting undermine our most sacred values and the democratic process?
- How can your faith community better advocate for stronger voter protections at the state and local levels?



Loving Our Immigrant Neighbors

Our holy texts repeatedly make clear that immigrants must be treated with dignity. For example, strong admonitions to provide hospitality to strangers and foreigners appear 36 times in the Torah and Christian Scriptures alone. Most of us seek to live by the Golden Rule - to treat others the way we want to be treated.

Pope Francis reminded us during a historic address to Congress in 2015 that the Golden Rule has political implications and requires action: "This Rule points us in a clear direction. Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities, which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves."



Questions for Reflection:

- What can we do to heal the wounds inflicted on immigrant communities by political rhetoric that portrays them as a dangerous "other"?
- Immigrants often feel isolated and experience additional threats living in America. How might you support, build connections with, and learn the stories of immigrants in your community?



Building an Economy of Inclusion

Our economic systems should work for all Americans, not just the wealthy. This is a matter of justice and human dignity. All religious traditions recognize the importance of caring for the most vulnerable through charity, but helping our disadvantaged neighbors also compels us to address the root causes of this disparity.

To build a just economy that enables all people to flourish, our leaders must promote policies that honor the dignity of work through fair compensation and paid time to care for family, protect social safety nets that help the most vulnerable, and create a just tax system that serves the common good, not simply a privileged few.

The teachings of diverse faith traditions make clear that poor treatment of workers and extreme inequality are not just. The Hebrew prophets denounced greed and the hoarding of wealth.

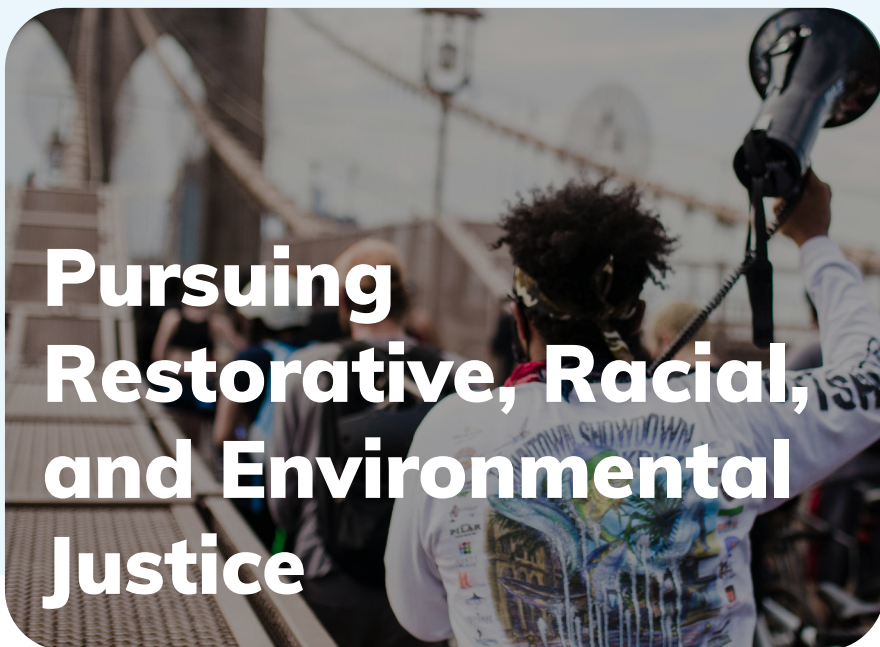
Our leaders should invest in the future we vote for - one with a safer climate, an economy where everyone can earn a good living and have a good life, and modern clean energy infrastructure that improves the lives of all Americans.

"As long as followers of the Way gather together and meet in harmony...care for the vulnerable among them...tend the sacred places in their environment...can they be expected to prosper and not decline." - MahaParinirvana Sutra (Buddhist scripture)



Questions for Reflection:

- How can we ensure all Americans can provide for their families and live with security and dignity?
- How do we create a just tax system that is fair to all Americans, including lower-income working families?



Pursuing Restorative, Racial, and Environmental Justice

Justice and redemption are at the very heart of faith. Restorative justice begins with listening to and empowering communities that have historically been exploited, excluded, and denied equal representation and freedom. The ideology of white supremacy and Christian hegemony shaped our nation from its founding and continues to impact policies and communities today - especially in the criminal justice system. The murders of so many Black people at the hands of police have provoked a growing, multi-racial moral movement for accountability and systemic reforms for racial justice.

Research shows us that race is the number one factor in whether a community faces environmental injustice. Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis coined the term "environmental racism," defining it as the intentional siting of polluting and waste facilities in communities primarily populated by African Americans, Latinos, Indigenous People, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, migrant farmworkers, and low-income workers.

Environmental justice means that everyone—regardless of race, color, national origin, or income—has the right to the same environmental protections and benefits and meaningful involvement in the policies that shape their communities. While race is the most significant determinant of environmental injustice, environmental justice should be viewed through the lens of the most historically marginalized communities, particularly the

intersection between multiple socioeconomic stressors and the unequal environmental burdens that those communities face.

We must hold accountable our elected officials who choose to look away from the persistent racial bias leading to unconscionable harm to communities of color and communities on the frontlines of racism, poverty, and pollution. We want a country where our rights are respected and everyone can live healthy lives without fear, with no exceptions.

"O humankind! We have made you...into nations and tribes, so that you may get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is the one who is most righteous."
- Quran 49:13.



Questions for Reflection:

- How can we dismantle the ideology of white supremacy in our culture and in our political and criminal justice systems?
- Who are people in your community and nation who you can learn from about how to advance environmental justice and address environmental racism?



Respecting the Dignity of LGBTQ+ People

Creating a More Peaceful and Just World

It is a moral imperative that all people's human rights are respected. Our LGBTQ+ family members, neighbors, and co-workers deserve equal rights. They also deserve the right to live without fear or discrimination simply for being who they are.

Elected officials who have the power to shape policies should ensure LGBTQ+ people are protected from all forms of discrimination. Our elected leaders should consistently speak out against those who use hateful rhetoric to demean the dignity of LGBTQ+ people.

"The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it," said Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph.



What does it mean to love our neighbors as ourselves in a globalized world? The health and future of our people and communities are interconnected to the health and future of other peoples and communities around the world.

Americans have understandable fears about violence at home and around the world. However, many leaders have stoked fear that leads to misplaced priorities and disproportionate funding for the U.S. military budget, which now accounts for nearly half of the world's total military spending. In contrast, less than one percent of the federal budget goes to foreign aid. If we want peace, we must also work for justice here and around the world.



Questions for Reflection:

- How can your faith community more fully support the equal dignity of LGBTQ+ people in your state and local area?
- Who are LGBTQ+ people in your community and nation who you can learn from about threats to LGBTQ+ populations and ways you can help?

Questions for Reflection:

- What role should the United States play in helping build global peace and security?
- How can your faith community advocate for policies to create a more peaceful and just world?