

UU the Vote Team Building Toolkit



Welcome to this preliminary edition of the UU the Vote toolkit.

It is designed to introduce you to **UU the Vote** and offer initial steps to prepare for next year, starting with plans for the organizing campaign's official launch on January 12, 2020.

Many Unitarian Universalists are already beautifully and powerfully carrying out justice ministries on multiple issues and working in their communities for civic engagement. Many more want to do more of that together in 2020. We want to **UU the Vote** and move the country to **#VoteLove** and **#DefeatHate**.

Our overall goal is to create a decentralized, large-scale campaign that moves our faith communities into new or deeper action, making electoral engagement a strategic facet of any of the justice work we do, and strengthening our relationships to build direct democracies in beloved communities for the long haul.

This toolkit includes:

- 1. What is UU the Vote?**
- 2. How to Form a Team**
- 3. Planning for the January 12, 2020 Launch**
- 4. Other Next Steps**

The UUA's Organizing Strategy Team, along with Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, Love Resists, and others will put out a much more comprehensive guide in January 2020, including an update to "The Real Rules" guide for 501(c)3 nonprofit entities—including UU congregations—engagement in electoral work.

Thank you for your excitement, your patience, and your role in helping to shape this campaign while we do the work together.

Why UU the Vote?

When California passed Proposition 8 denying full marriage equality, we were there, fighting back. When Arizona passed a racial profiling bill, we were there, fighting back. When organizers declared "Black Lives Matter" in response to police murders, many of us hung banners and took to the streets in solidarity. At the Women's March, at the Climate Strikes, outside the Kavanaugh hearing, for voting rights restoration in Florida or for an end to the "war on drugs" in Ohio, and long before all of that, UUs were there.

In moments of moral crisis, Unitarian Universalists know we are called to show up. And 2020 is one of those moments. If we are to survive—as a human species broadly and as a UU religious community specifically—we are called to speak with moral courage and act with prophetic clarity, making our lives and our actions an embodied example of the relevance and saving power of our values and our faith communities.

As fascism and white nationalism rise both domestically and around the globe, and as corporations barrel the planet toward irreversible climate collapse, the stakes are incredibly high.

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Luckily, Unitarian Universalists are rooted in a theology of human worth and dignity, interdependence and agency as well as a legacy that prepares us for moments such as these.

This year, UUs will continue our justice ministries focused on the issues that matter most to each of us. And we will bring our passions to the polls.

We will UU the Vote for trans lives. We will UU the Vote to confront white supremacy. We will UU the Vote for the future of the planet, for migrant justice, for reproductive rights, and more.

Not all of us can vote, but all of us can be part of organizing. In this political moment, we can powerfully show what's possible when we move together as determined faith communities in relationship with movements for justice.

Our Spiritual Grounding

Progressive people of faith can be powerful and prophetic without being partisan. We can engage our neighbors, educate our communities, mobilize voters, rally around ballot initiatives, and more broadly shape the public discourse with values-based framing, rooted in our theology and principles.

Participating in our democracy is not only about our fifth principle. **As UUs, our deepest beliefs are a life-giving, life-saving, life-sustaining alternative to the narratives and policies of domination, supremacy, exceptionalism, and exploitation that are on the rise. We** are moved in our justice work and electoral engagement by principles of:

- **Interdependence:** We believe that all life is sacred and interconnected, and that human beings are radically dependent on one another and on our precious earth and its creatures. This interdependence calls us to build societies that care for all species, and to enact policies that privilege cooperation and solidarity over individualism and competition.
- **Democracy:** We believe that decision making must be done in a way that allows all communities to be heard, especially those who have historically been silenced. We believe all people should have a right to elect leaders and shape policies that directly impact the quality of their lives and their access to resources.
- **Inherent Worth and Dignity Across Difference:** We believe that all people are born from love, and that nothing a person is or does can separate them from that inherent belovedness. We believe explicitly that people of all races, genders, abilities, sexualities, nationalities, and religions deserve to have their inherent belovedness mirrored back to them by the societies, structures, institutions, and policies that shape their lives.
- **Pluralism and Diversity:** We believe in the teachings of the natural sciences that teach that the richest and healthiest ecosystems are those with the greatest diversity. While there are many commonalities that draw us together as humans across experiences and identities, we believe that our differences are fundamentally beautiful, and our diversity—of race, gender, belief, practice, culture, ability, sexuality, and more—is to be celebrated with curiosity and affirmation, not minimized or flattened.
- **Self-determination and Human Agency:** We believe that each and every person is an expert in their own experience and should have uninhibited access to the material conditions that ensure lives of belonging, safety, wellness, and joy. We believe that any system, structure, or policy that prevents people from making decisions about their own lives, or accessing what they need to be free and whole, must be dismantled.

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What is UU the Vote?

If you have attended a rally, written a letter to an elected official, registered a voter, or supported a partner organization, you have already been doing the work of UU the Vote.

It is a collaborative and distributed effort by individual Unitarian Universalists, committees in our congregations, our ministers, State Action Networks, advocacy groups, the national association, Love Resists, Side with Love, and multiple partner organizations representing and organizing frontline communities.

UU the Vote is not about abandoning the justice ministries you've been doing and switching to work on voting rights and democracy defense. Nor is it only facilitating voter registration drives or get-out-the-vote campaigns in our congregations or broader communities. UU the Vote is about integrating electoral engagement into our strategies for change so that we are advancing our vision of a just world and beloved community in every arena available to us.

UU the Vote is convincing our neighbors to **#VoteLove** because no one should ever be fired for coming out. It is recruiting climate activists to become climate voters. It is bringing electrical cords to the precincts where registrars will purposefully leave voting machines unplugged. It is offering our buildings to community groups in need of a space to launch their canvassing operations. It is being a faithful and courageous presence to counter white supremacists who intend to intimidate. It is hosting candidate forums, phone banks, fundraisers, cross-state mobilization week-ends, and much more.

Starting January 12, 2020, and beyond, UU the Vote will be supporting congregations to form volunteer teams (or empower current justice leaders) to lead the work in ways that make sense for your community. We will specifically be supporting these teams to lead in the following areas of electoral engagement work:

- Mobilizing voters
- Challenging voter suppression
- Holding values-based conversations to persuade our neighbors on the issues that matter
- Opening the doors of our congregations to the activities of frontline communities and justice partners
- Providing the spiritual sustenance and movement chaplaincy to ground our faith and respond to the injustices we confront through the work

The UU the Vote team at the UUA will roll out tools, trainings, and support to equip each of us with the skills and analysis to participate, to amplify the good work happening on the ground, to connect UUs to each other and to partners, and to coordinate moments of convergence. As a distributed effort, we'll establish online and on-the-ground communities of practice for UUs to coordinate with each other to unleash our potential and to scale up in strategic locations across the country.

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A Note on 501(c)3 Status: How We Can Be Powerful and Prophetic Without Being Partisan

UU the Vote encourages Unitarian Universalists to boldly engage our values in the electoral cycle in ways that are appropriate for churches and nonprofits.

Nonprofit organizations can engage in issue-based advocacy, promote local ballot measures, and perform voter education and mobilization, as long as it is not doing so for a specific political party, as an endorsement of a specific candidate, or to impact whether or not a particular candidate wins an election.

In many states, other nonprofits and frontline community organizations have already organized to collaborate and coordinate non-partisan voter engagement activities and can be a ready partner and resource. You can find many of them in the [State Voices network](#), for example.

Because we know many of you have questions or concerns, we'll be updating and providing clear guidance to the most frequently asked questions by mid-January 2020, including online trainings where you can ask questions about the opportunities and limitations of doing electoral work as a 501(c)3 organization. In the meantime, the UUA publication [The Real Rules](#) is a terrific go-to source for any questions that arise, as are the summaries provided by [Bolder Advocacy](#).

How to Form a UU the Vote Team

Some of our congregations have a long and active history of including voting and electoral engagement in our justice ministries. Others are just getting started. For some, this is work we've done with partners or friend groups, and not with our faith community.

Regardless of whether you're just starting or already far along in the process, **it's always the right moment to strengthen your team.**

Change happens when we work together. That means the first step toward participating in UU the Vote is to find and connect with others who are also interested in making sure voters who support racial, migrant, climate, economic, LGBTQ and gender justice are registered, active, and prepared to participate in the democratic process this year.

Identify Who Else is Interested

It may be that your congregation already has a practice around elections. Maybe you've hosted phone banks or sent members to canvass with an interfaith coalition. Maybe someone hands out voter pledge cards each election year.

Connect with your congregational leaders. Ask around. Who is already active? Is there a group to be a part of? How does it work? If you are someone already coordinating such a group, this is a chance to connect with others who may not have been involved yet, but are ready to go this election year.

Maybe your congregation hasn't been involved in electoral work but does have active committees for sanctuary, climate, challenging police brutality, fighting for LGBTQ rights, or supporting each other during unemployment or issues at work. Who are the people active in or anchoring those groups? How do they envision interacting with the elections in 2020? If you're active in one of these groups, the invitation is to see the 2020 elections as an opportunity to

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incorporate civic engagement into the strategy to advance your issues and bring your passion to the polls as part of the larger work for justice.

Get to Know Each Other

If you are already coordinating a group inside your congregation, terrific!

This is an opportunity to deepen your relationships with other active volunteers. The deeper our relationships with one another, and the more trust we build in slower moments, the more nimbly we're able to mobilize when the stakes feel urgent and the pressure is high!

If this is new, now is the chance to start to hear from each other about what motivates you, what you're most interested and available for, and what visions for the world you each are working toward. This can be done during coffee hour, at potlucks and dinners, through group meetings, and through taking time to sit one-on-one with each other. We've included a quick guide for one-on-one conversations in this toolkit to help make those encounters be meaningful and productive.

Plan for January 12, 2020, and Beyond

On January 12, 2020, UUs across the country will gather for an online event where we highlight the work our members are committing to, share the values and the vision that drive UU the Vote in this crucial time, and further advance what that work can look like for our groups.

It's hard to build in the abstract. It's easier with concrete activities and benchmarks. You can use the launch event on January 12th as a specific ask for people to say "yes" to participating in.

Remember, an organizer is someone who develops the leadership of others, and the role of the organizer is to create roles for others to play. It can be tempting to do everything yourself to make sure something goes well or to go it alone because you're not sure how to invite others in.

Groups are strengthened when everyone can share the vision and has a role in bringing it to fruition. Who can create the sign-in list and store the data you collect? Who can bring snacks? Who can set-up the audio/visual? Each of these are crucial to the event's success and many hands make light work.

Planning for the January 12, 2020, UU the Vote Launch

On the afternoon of January 12, 2020, (4pm ET/1pm PT), we'll gather as a virtual community of Unitarian Universalists across the country, joined by the fierce urgency of our times.

Together we will explore how we are called to wear the mantle of our shared legacies, principles, and values as we move boldly together, making our faith relevant and effective in bending the arc of the universe toward justice in this political moment.

What Do You Need?

1. An accessible room at your congregation, in your home, or wherever you invite people to come together
2. Reliable internet access
3. A way to view the Zoom conference with a large screen or projector

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4. Audio speakers loud enough for the group to hear
5. Snacks and drinks (you decide whether the host will provide, or if you want to do potluck)
6. A sign in sheet to collect names, emails, cell phone, and address

Roles People Can Play (You don't need one person for each of these, but the more the merrier)

1. Greeter
2. Note-taker
3. Facilitator
4. Song or prayer lead
5. Snack and drink bringer
6. Audio/visual
7. Carpool
8. Outreach and promotions (inviting people ahead of time)
9. Childcare volunteers

How to Host a Gathering

Once you've secured a location and confirmed a few others to help host with you, go to UUtheVote.org and [add your event details to the map](#) so that others can find it.

You may want to also have your congregation create a Facebook event, include it in a church bulletin, or make your own flyers or email to invite people and spread the word.

Those who sign-up to host will get a host packet emailed to you closer to the date of the event with details and a draft agenda. It will be one-hour online together and we strongly encourage people to then hold a group discussion to reflect and brainstorm together afterwards.

How to Do a One-on-One Organizing Conversation

There are many different schools of organizing thought. All of them include one key building block: one-on-one conversations. Some highly motivated people will respond to announcements and bulletins, but many more people more readily join when they're invited in by a friend, co-worker, fellow congregant, family member, or by an organizer who creates a direct connection with them.

One-on-ones give you the opportunity to connect deeply with other Unitarian Universalists, as well as community members and those in partner organizations, to lay the foundation for building a strong UU the Vote team where you live.

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The goal of a one-on-one

- **Build a Relationship:** Many of us are more responsive to people we know and have relationship with. This is a chance to establish that.
- **Identify Someone's Motivations:** What's important to them? How does that connect to the work?
- **Explore their Networks and Connections:** How are they positioned within your congregation and outside of it? Are they self-motivated, or do they look to others for leadership? Do they have relationships from work or life that are relevant to the initiative?
- **Identify their Goals:** What are they most interested in getting out of the experience? Are they looking for a group to be a part of for social ties? Are they upset and looking for something to do about it?
- **Strengthen Your Own Skills:** This is a chance for you to practice active listening, making assessments, and building connections with potential group members.

After inviting someone into a conversation, whether it be after services or after work, potential questions include:

- Getting to know you:
How long have you been a UU? Part of this congregation? What do you find here that keeps you coming? [make sure to listen and follow-up with more inquiry]
- Identifying motivations:
How are you doing given everything going on around us these days? What's been the thing that most gets to you?
- Explore experience:
Are there ways you've found to deal with it? Have you been involved in anything? Are there other people you've gotten to do that with? Have you found support in your faith community?
- Test for interest:
We're talking about really doing more to make sure people vote for racial justice and our values this year. Would you want to be a part of it? What would be exciting for you? Are there things you think that we should really prioritize?
- Asking for a commitment:
Minimal: *Can I circle back with you as things develop?*
Medium: *Would you come to the watch party and discussion on January 12th?*
Higher: *I can tell you see this is really important, are there two other people you can invite to bring on the 12th?*
- Gratitude: Always thank someone for taking the time.

Remember, when you're speaking, you're not learning. Make sure that you're listening 75% of the time and speaking 25% of the time.

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Other Next Steps

Identifying Possible Partners

In most areas, UUs are connected or can connect with community organizations as partners in the work. That might be a multi-faith coalition, a state voter engagement table, a UU State Advocacy Network (SAN), a labor union, or a community-based organization.

If you're already connected, this is a great time to compare notes about what non-partisan activity is coming in 2020. Mobilization for the primaries, the 2020 census, local ballot initiatives, registration drives, and on-going issue-based campaign events like climate strikes, the Women's March, or campus-based rallies might all be things to put on the calendar and begin to plan around.

What are their plans around voter registration, countering voter suppression, and on-going issue organizing? Are there things they could use support with, like meeting space or volunteers? What unique contribution do they see Unitarian Universalists making in 2020?

Start Asset-Mapping in Your Congregation

As part of an ecosystem of organizations, institutions, and changemakers, our work is more powerful when we know how we're positioned and what our unique contributions can be. Begin asking yourselves, what resources (space, equipment, human resources, infrastructure) might be useful to people in our community who are aligned with this effort? How can we make those resources available on a regular basis? How can we let people know they can access them?

Apply for Support from the UU Funding Program for Your UU the Vote Plan

The UU Funding program provides [\\$500 micro-grants](#) to UU congregations for Get Out the Vote efforts, awarded on a rolling basis starting January 1, 2020. You can also seek funding for your bigger project idea related to electoral engagement through the [Fund for UU Social Responsibility](#) (applications due March 15, 2020).

The UU the Vote Team is excited to help shape your grant proposal for this work! Please reach out for coaching on drafting a compelling grant proposal by contacting Rev. Ashley Horan, Organizing Strategy Director, at ahoran@uua.org, with "UU the Vote Grant Proposal" in the subject line.

Learn More About Organizing

There's endless amounts to read about how people come together to make change. One great book about UU roles in this is [Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square](#) and Susan Leslie compiled [Organizing from the Heart](#), a pamphlet on UU organizing efforts. You might also enjoy:

- [No Shortcuts](#) by Jane McAlevey
- [The Long Haul](#) by Miles Horton
- [Playbook for Progressives](#) by Eric Mann
- [Unapologetic](#) by Charlene Carruthers

And if you want to read more on one-on-ones, we've compiled a few guides with more details for you [here](#).