

# Voter Registration Drive in Your Church

*Goal: 100% registered and 100% voting*

The first phase of the Our Faith Our Vote campaign is to launch a voter registration drive at your church. Our goal is to have every eligible voter at your UCC church registered and voting.

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

## Form a Committee

ÉForm 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 national UCC to get updates and support throughout the campaign.

ÉA good committee will consist of members of your church social action committee and/or people who volunteer to help due to your recruitment strategies. One person for every 50 people in your church is a good guideline. The more people involved, the more effective your campaign will be.

ÉSeek the support of your minister 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 minister(s). Pastoral leadership is crucial for a successful campaign.

## Getting Started ó First Steps

ÉAt the first meeting of your Our Faith Our Vote committee, set a time-line for your voter registration drive. You can register voters in the pews and/or set up voter registration tables before and after services. We strongly encourage holding voter registration drives on more than one Sunday at your church.

ÉBefore setting up your registration drive, contact your local Election Office to get voter registration cards, learn about deadlines, learn about absentee ballot or voting by mail options, and get briefed on local and state voter registration laws. You might even set up a meeting with local election officials and your Our Faith Our Vote committee members. See the website or this packet for more information.

ÉIf 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 the people who come to your church. They should be given the same opportunities to learn about voting as everyone else in your church.

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## Launching the Our Faith Our Vote Campaign

ÉAsk your minister to help you launch the Our Faith Our Vote campaign in your church. On the first Sunday you plan to register voters, encourage your minister to give a sermon on the importance of civic participation. See the Sermon and Worship Resources section of this kit for ideas.

Announce your plans by writing an article for your church newsletter. Place announcements in the church bulletin and arrange to give an announcement during your congregation's time for sharing concerns (i.e. 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 for 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. Talk with your pastor and necessary church leadership about registering voters in the pews.

On the Our Faith Our Vote Sunday, prepare ushers with a sufficient quantity of voter registration cards (it is better to have too many than not enough). 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 cards. Give people time to fill out the cards. Gather back the registration cards in a collection plate or ask church attendees to place the cards in baskets at the church exit. Once the registration cards are collected, turn them into the Our Faith Our Vote committee members at the voter registration table.

Make sure to have on table information in the foyer with members of your committee so that you can answer any questions after the service.

### *Voter Registration Tables Before or After Worship*

Another common method of voter registration is to simply 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.

### *Collect Voter Registration Cards at Your Registration Table*

Make sure people complete the registration cards and leave them with you. This will ensure that people actually fill out their voter registration card ó if they take it home, they are less likely to complete it.

## Voter Registration Table Check List

- Voter Registration Cards
- Absentee ballots and information on absentee or mail-in voting
- Tables & Chairs
- Pens
- Name Tags
- Flyers on Our Faith Our Vote
- UCC publications on social issues
- State voter information from your Election Office
- Posters: Register To Vote Here
- Sign: *"Our voter registration services are available without regard for the voter's political preference"*
- UCC Our Faith Our Vote buttons

## How to Turn-in Voter Registration Cards

Most states require that voter registration cards be turned in within 10-15 days from the date of the signature. After you collect all the completed cards, turn them into your local Elections Office 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. Rather 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 provided that you do not present issues in support of particular candidates. The following are acceptable appeals: "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 tables. 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. It is also the only way to guarantee that you have registered every eligible church member.

## Bulletin or Newsletter Sample Announcement

### **Our Faith Our Vote**

*"Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!"* . Isaiah 58:1

Plymouth Congregational [substitute your church 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 [insert dates]. Please come by the table to register yourself and learn more about the importance of voting. Our goal is to have 100% of our eligible church members registered and 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 committee meeting on [insert date]. Learn more at [www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvoice](http://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvoice).

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 and again later on to make sure they get out and vote.

ÉMake photocopies of your church directory so that committee members can easily mark who they have reached, whether they are registered and make notes for follow-up.

ÉYou can hold a phone banking party and make calls together from the church ó you will need a number of phone lines ó 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 cards to those who requested them in a timely manner. Each volunteer is responsible for the church members they agree to call ó 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 and mark your progress in the church newsletter or with a poster displayed at church.

### Sample Phone Script:

Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_ from First Congregational (substitute name of your church). We are calling every member of First Congregational as part of the UCC's Our Faith Our Vote campaign to make sure that you are registered to vote in this fall's elections. 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 card at the church voter registration drive.

If they say NO . tell them about the voter registration drive at your church and encourage them to come by and fill out a voter registration card. If they can't make it to church when you have the registration table set up, offer to send them a voter card in the mail. Thank them for their time and let them know that you will be back in touch to remind them to get out and vote.