

Youth Groups

Throughout history, political leaders have looked to young people as a source of inspiration for the continued success and health of our nation. In addition, young people have both a right and a responsibility to help shape the future that they will inherit. Youth bring a unique perspective and tangible energy to election year activism. Although young people under 18 may not be able to legally cast their votes, their voices can still be heard. There are a number of ways for youth to participate in elections and make an impact on their future. The UCC Our Faith Our Vote campaign is not only for adult leaders in the congregation. Youth groups can and are encouraged to take the opportunity to engage their local congregations and their communities in the Our Faith Our Vote campaign by becoming their congregation's team leader.

Registration Ideas

ÉSet up a voter registration table before and after church.

ÉSet up a voter registration table at church events.

ÉGo out into your community and register voters at the local shopping center, grocery store, fair and other community events.

ÉEncourage your school administration to hold a registration drive or include voter registration cards with high school diplomas.

Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) Ideas

ÉVolunteer to drive individuals to the polls.

ÉOrganize or participate in phone banking.

ÉOrganize or participate in canvassing.

ÉVolunteer to provide child care while people vote.

Education Ideas for Youth Ministries or Sunday School

Discussion questions on civic responsibility:

ÉWhy do you think voting is important? Why do you think some people don't vote?

ÉWho is running for office and what do they stand for?

ÉHow do you believe people should be treated in our society?

ÉWhat things do people need to live a good life?

ÉWhat are a few local, national, and international problems (that you see on TV or in the newspaper), and what can we do to help solve them?

ÉWhat are some examples of public policies from the past that were harmful to people (e.g. slavery, the Holocaust, lack of voting rights for women or minorities)? What does our faith or ethics tell us about these policies?

ÉWhat are issues being discussed in the campaigns that have moral or ethical dimensions (e.g. hunger, environmental protection, and education)? Explain both sides of the debate.

ÉWhat did Jesus say about taking responsibility for our society?

ÉCan you name some New or Old Testament figures who were part of the political debate of their time? (Moses and the law, the prophets, etc)

Activities

ÉHave a "Love Your Neighbor: Vote" poster contest in your church or community, or ask youth to create posters or flyers that inform their congregation and community about the upcoming elections.

ÉCreate an "Investigating Political Reporter Sheet" and have youth interview family, congregation, or community members with several questions: Have you ever voted? Are you registered to vote? Did you vote in the last election? Do you plan to vote in this election? Is it important to vote? If so, why? What issues concern you? Which presidential candidate do you think best represents your views? Why?

Activity: (30-45 minutes)

The Prayer Tree/The Wish Tree

Objective:

ÉStudents make a wish or offer a prayer for their country to clarify what changes they can make.

Get Ready:

ÉFind a bare tree or large branch and place it in a pot filled with pebbles.

ÉPrint and cut apart a star for each student.

Locate:

ÉOne 8-inch piece of string or yarn for each student

ÉCrayons, markers, or colored pencils

ÉScissors

ÉPaper Punch

Make the Tree:

ÉInstruct the students to cut out the star, and decorate the cover.

ÉAsk the students to think of the wish they would most like for our country, or to offer up a prayer.

ÉHelp the students draw or write their wishes and prayers on to their stars and sign their names.

ÉHelp the students punch a hole in the corner of each card and tie a string through the hole.
ÉHold a ceremony, inviting the students to tie their cards to the tree. They may read or describe their wishes and prayers as they place them on the tree or students may discover the wishes privately one by one later on.

(You can also place the bare tree at the front of your church and during the church service invite the students to come place their wishes and prayers on the tree. You can invite the entire congregation to pray for the concerns of the students.)

For other activities log on to <http://www.kids-voting.com/educators.html>