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# Not Ordinary Church

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## Blessing of the Ballots

October 25, 2020, at Washington Park UCC, Denver, CO

*This liturgy was created by members of the Vigils and Rituals Team of the Washington Park United Church of Christ, Denver, Colorado; September 2020. This ritual is provided under the terms of the Creative Commons license (see the end of this document).*

*Colorado has what most experts consider to be the “gold standard” for a vote-by-mail system. The ritual recognizes that the laws and processes vary widely in different jurisdictions.*

**Opening Words** (you might send an email to the congregation with some of these details, or print it in a bulletin insert)

As Christians, we are ordinary people living in not so ordinary times. And as always, we are called to extraordinary action.

Voting is one such action, particularly when there are many obstacles to voting intentionally placed in the paths of many people, especially people of color. Voting is a right; make your voice heard! Help others to be heard; work against voter suppression and for voter access.

Here are some things to remember as you prepare to request your ballot, vote (in person or by mail), or deliver your ballot:

- Are you registered to vote? Check your state’s procedures for registering, and sign up.
- If pandemic rules are still in place, and you decide to vote in person make sure to wear your mask, and stay safe.
- If you are voting with a ballot mailed to you:
  - Have you requested a ballot? (only a few states send them automatically to all voters)
  - Did you sign your ballot?
  - Do you know where you can drop off your completed ballot (a drop box, polling place, etc.)?
  - If you are mailing your ballot, make sure to have correct postage, and check your state’s deadline for mail-in ballots.
- Resources to help you find voter information for your state:
  - [rockthevote.org](http://rockthevote.org) (a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to building the political power of young people)
  - [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) (by the League of Women Voters Education Fund)
  - [usa.gov/election-office](http://usa.gov/election-office) (USA.gov is an interagency product administered by USA.gov – formerly the Federal Citizen Information Center – a division of the US General Services Administration’s Technology Transformation Service.

Voting is a right. And as we know within the United Church of Christ, it’s also a way to express and live our faith. It is a spiritual practice.

Rev. Traci Blackmon, the national UCC Associate General Minister (Justice and Local Church Ministries) says of voting:

...our faith is infused with hope and built on a foundation of action. By serving the vulnerable, feeding the hungry, and standing in solidarity with the oppressed, we serve as God's hands. Voting is a natural extension of faithful action. (*quote taken from ucc.org/ourfaithhourvote*)

So we gather today, to give thanks for the opportunity to vote and for all those who help make elections possible. And we gather to bless our efforts, our ballots, our voting, and to pray for our nation.

**Charge to the Congregation** (*led by the pastor or liturgist*)

Vote for the candidate who *most closely* meets your values and ideals; no candidate or issue will ever be perfect. DON'T sit it out! Your vote in each election helps decide the future character of our country.

Encourage others to vote.

Help others to vote (you could drive them to polling places, or help deliver their ballots, or pay for postage).

Pray for each other and for our nation. We need each other.

Vote with your heart, your mind, your soul, your courage, and your faith.

**Affirmation of Faith Especially During These Times** (*responsively*)

**Leader:** As people of faith, let us affirm who we are and whose we are, and where we are called to be: We are in this together. We move together in covenant with each other and with God, for the sake of all God's children, all of Earth Community.

**People:** **We are in this together, for the sake of God's world.**

**Leader:** We are the Body of Christ, and each one a beloved and essential part of it. We are not alone. We need each other. We are here to love each other.

**People:** **We are the Body of Christ, empowered by Christ for the sake of God's world.**

**Leader:** In the United Church of Christ, we come from a history of mergers, of disparate groups coming together to form a greater whole. Our ancestors in faith knew what it meant to struggle, argue, create, disagree, and move into and for a future of diversity, hope, and community.

**People:** **May it be so with us, for the sake of God's world.**

**Leader:** We affirm the goodness of Creation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, creating and re-creating Beloved Community. And, strengthened by the love of God and our love for each other, our nation, and our world, we move through this season with hope and hard work.

**ALL:** **We move together, into a future of justice, healing, hope and community, for the sake of God's world. Amen!**

### **Prayer and Blessings for Ballots, Voters and Those Who Help Make Elections Possible**

*(led by liturgist/pastor, congregation can extend hands to each other as a sign of blessing)*

God of life, of hope, of voice and of justice, we give you thanks for this awesome responsibility called voting. We give you thanks for all those who help make elections possible, secure, and safe. And even though all those dang political ads and phone calls make us crazy, we are thankful for freedom of expression, fact-checking, and people willing to undertake the grueling job of working for candidates and running for office. Even the ones we don't like, O God.

God of life, of hope, of voice, and of justice, we confess that our system is deeply flawed, that lies flow and division festers. Racism silences and strangles. Environmental damage and environmental injustice ravage your good Creation. And we confess to our own despair and fear in the face of all this. It makes us want to stop and hide our faces and silence our voices.

God of life, of hope, of voice, and of justice, bless us with courage, strength, good humor, and love, so we might continue to move through these times, open our eyes, and speak from our deepest foundations of power and compassion.

Bless us, O God, as we fill out our ballots. Bless this work of our hands. Bless our voting for the good of our nation, and all your Creation. Amen. May it be so!

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*The following prayer may be circulated to members and friends of the congregation in the weeks prior to an election, so that it may be used whenever people are participating in the voting process.*

### **Prayer for use at home as you vote, or as you prepare to leave to go vote**

**I pray with gratitude:** For being able to live in a nation where I can vote, where I can speak my mind, where I can march and write letters and question and try to make a difference.

**I pray with humility and confession:** I acknowledge that this nation I love was founded on the enslavement of human beings, the stealing of indigenous lands, and the ravishing of nature. Some of us have benefitted from this, others of us have suffered and died. And we are all trying to figure out where we go from here.

**And I pray with hope:** Even in these times of violence, turmoil, injustice, and fear, we are striving to be together, making a way forward. I commit to vote, to make my voice heard, so that we all might do better. Even with a history that hurts and a future that is unknown. All this I pray as I put pen to paper and fill in my ballot, or as I prepare to leave the house, to cast my vote in a polling place.

In all your holy names I pray. Amen.

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### **Notes:**

- The Opening Words contain a lot of logistical information. If you'd rather, just put that in your bulletin or newsletter and refer to them briefly in the ritual.
- Allyson is a member of the Vigils and Rituals team of Washington Park UCC, and had a part in planning and writing these materials. She wrote the prayers and blessings. But it was a collaboration of the whole group.
- This service is adapted and updated from the 2020 election Blessing of the Ballots service, held during pandemic times. It also refers to the UCC and our history in at least one place, but can be adapted if your congregation is not UCC. You may view [a video of this section of the October 18, 2020, worship service](#).



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