

# How Would Jesus Vote?

## *A Voting Study Resource*

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### *Vote 2020*

This resource is offered by the Grand Canyon Synod of the ELCA to assist individuals, small groups, and congregations in gathering conscientious followers of Jesus, to discuss the pertinent issues upon which we will cast our votes in just a few short weeks.

### *How Can We Approach Tough Conversations?*

In the excellent ELCA document, “Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues” (accessible on the ELCA website, under Resources), there are necessary ground rules to allow for open, passionate, and respectful conversation. Participants are encouraged to read these ground rules – perhaps add to or revise them – and make a commitment to honor these guidelines.

As we approach this fall’s national elections, one thing the remarkably different political parties agree on is this: the 2020 presidential election will present the starkest choice between competing visions for our nation. As people of faith, we have particular interests and responsibilities in this and all elections. Considering this, how do we, as people of faith, approach the privilege and responsibility of voting? How will we become best informed? How will we exercise our faith?

### *Who are we, and what are our responsibilities?*

In the Affirmation of Baptism liturgy (used in the liturgy for Confirmation), the one who is publicly affirming his/her faith is asked to make this affirmation: “Do you intend to live among God’s faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Christ, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?” To that, the faithful responds, “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.”

### *Discerning paths of striving for justice*

So, how, exactly, do we discern paths of justice? Within our own conscience, and within our communities of faith, we can wrestle with difficult moral, ethical, and political questions by participating in a community of moral deliberations.

“Such a community looks together to Scripture as the normative source of faith and life and to the best knowledge available in the secular realm as it deliberates toward good actions and policies. Deliberation occurs in the context of those who disagree, and the voices of those who have an interest at stake or will suffer consequences are an integral part of that deliberation. It is in a public process guided by the Holy Spirit that Christians come to discern what action they should take when dealing with complicated issues.”

*(ELCA Social Statement: Church in Society. (1991)*



## The “normative source of faith”

In the ELCA Constitution and Social Statements, it is stated that scripture informs and tests the decisions and actions of the faithful. Consider these texts:

- **Leviticus 19:33-34**... Regard for the “stranger”
- **Matthew 4:19** and **John 21:15-25**... Follow me
- **Matthew 22: 34-40**... Love your neighbor as yourself
- **Galatians 5:22-23**... Fruits of the Spirit

## Study Questions

1. As a Christian and as a citizen, what values do you hold as most important? (Use descriptive, single words to identify your values.) Is there a difference between your Christian values and the values you hold as a citizen?
2. As Christians prepare to vote, to what extent should their faith values influence the way they vote? How does this apply to you, as you prepare to vote?
3. While the Apostle Paul identifies the “fruits of the Spirit,” which clearly speak to a believer’s behavior, should Christians use these “fruits” to evaluate a political candidate who may or may not embrace the Christian heritage?
4. We have considered a few portions of scripture that speak to how followers of Jesus can be guided in their vocations to seek justice. Are there other stories or teachings of Jesus that specifically guide you in seeking justice? Share those stories.
5. Listed above are the American voter’s most critical issues. As a follower of Jesus, what issue(s) in this list seem to you to be “under-valued?” Is there anything missing in the list?
6. Are there other critical questions that we should discuss as Christian citizens?

**ACCORDING TO RECENT RESEARCH BY THE PEW RESOURCE CENTER (AUGUST, 2020), THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN THE 2020 ELECTION ARE AS FOLLOWS (IN RANK ORDER):**

- **ECONOMY**
- **HEALTH CARE**
- **SUPREME COURT APPOINTMENTS**
- **CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**
- **VIOLENT CRIME**
- **FOREIGN POLICY**
- **GUN POLICY**
- **RACIAL AND ETHNIC EQUALITY**
- **IMMIGRATION**
- **ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**
- **CLIMATE CHANGE**
- **ABORTION**

**THE RELATIVE RANKING OF THESE ISSUES DIFFERS REMARKABLY BY WHERE YOU COME FROM, AND HOW YOU WERE RAISED AND EDUCATED.**

Now, considering the upcoming presidential election, what is your thought about how would Jesus vote?