

FAQ's: Faith Matters Voting Challenge and the Creation Care Voter Pledge

The following are ideas and suggestions for Green Team Leaders or other church leaders as you consider promoting the Creation Care Voter Pledge and participating in the Faith Matters Voting Challenge.

Why is the environment an important issue for people of faith?

As the climate crisis continues to accelerate, we know that the threats it poses multiply impacts for those with the fewest options placing them at the greatest risk. For people of faith, the climate crisis is a justice issue. Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org challenges us to think and to work together: ***“What’s the best thing an individual can do for the climate? Stop being an individual!”***

What difference does voting make?

Polling shows that awareness and concern about the climate crisis in the US is at an **all-time high** – 73% agree that the climate is warming and 62% believe that the changes in our climate are human-caused. Yet research from the Environmental Voter Project indicates that, even in recent nation-wide elections, over 15 million individually identified environmentalists stayed home on Election Day. Getting powerful environmental policies in place on a local, state, and national level may be as simple as getting more of our existing environmentalists to vote.

What is the Creation Care Voter Pledge?

The Creation Care Voter Pledge was developed by the national UCC’s Creation Justice Team in partnership with the Environmental Voter Project to encourage voter engagement because our vote gives voice to our values as people of faith. By signing the Pledge, one simply says that they *“pledge to be a consistent voter”* and *“always prioritize caring for God’s creation in how I vote.”* That pledge is passed on to the Environmental Voter Project (see below) who will send reminders of upcoming elections based upon the person’s voting address. Information on the number of members of an individual congregation will be passed back to the congregation leaders/organizers to track progress toward an individual church’s goal.

What is the Environmental Voter Project?

Environmental Voter Project is a non-partisan initiative whose mission is to get more environmentalists to vote in every election. Politicians listen to voters, so if we can dramatically increase the number of environmentalists who vote, then politicians will respond by providing us with the environmental leadership we demand. For more information on the Environmental Voter Project, check out www.environmentalvoter.org.

What happens when I sign the Creation Care Voter Pledge?

After you provide your name, voting address and contact information, you will receive two email acknowledgements of your Pledge:

First, from the Environmental Voter Project confirming that you will receive periodic reminders of upcoming elections. Reminding someone of their pledge to vote can dramatically increase that person’s likelihood of voting. The Environmental Voter Project does not endorse candidates or tell people how to vote.

Second, from the SNEUCC Environmental Ministries Team confirming your Pledge and inviting you to indicate your congregation (or your denomination or faith tradition, if you are not affiliated with an SNEUCC church). This allows us to report the number of pledgers to each congregation so that the church can track progress on participation. You can also use this form to opt into receiving information on the Conference’s environmental activities.

What if I already signed the Pledge in 2020?

Please sign it again and help us keep our database current! Signing the pledge again will also enable us to count your pledge in the [Faith Matters Voting Challenge](#) and report back regularly to your congregation with the number of those participating who are affiliated with your church. If you sign using the same email address as previously, the Environmental Voter Project will be able to weed out duplicates.

What is the Faith Matters Voting Challenge?

Our congregations are influencers in their communities. The Environmental Ministries Team of the Southern New England Conference challenges congregations to promote the Creation Care Voter Pledge and to engage in 3 other actions to increase voter turn-out in local, state and national elections. Participating congregations are asked to inspire a significant percentage of those worshipping with them to sign the pledge. Those pledgers will receive reminders to vote in every election from the Environmental Voter Project.

How does the Faith Matters Voting Challenge work?

The Challenge has two levels: First, individual congregations are asked to challenge a significant percentage of their members commit to being faithful and regular voters.

Second, we ask that congregations select three additional actions from the following categories: worship, video screenings/small group discussions, public witness, bell-ringing, social media, voter registration drives, candidate forums, advocacy on voter activation. You can find descriptions of these actions and resources in the links on the Challenge form. We also welcome alternative actions that would be more effective in your church and community. Just indicate your alternative action on the challenge form.

How do we sign up our congregation to join the Challenge?

Simply complete and submit the “[We Accept the Challenge](#)” form. First, select your church’s official name from the drop-down menu for churches in your state (CT, MA or RI). Consider setting a goal to generate greater participation and engagement. The person whose name is on the form will receive periodic updates of the number of people who have signed the SNEUCC Creation Care Voter Pledge.

Next, choose which 3 additional actions your congregation will work to accomplish. Please share your photos and stories around these actions with Karen Methot (methotk@sneucc.org) so that we can get the word out and inspire others! **Please only “Accept the Challenge” once.**

How do we set a goal for our church?

We encourage each congregation to consider setting a numerical goal for your congregation, but how you determine that number is up to each individual congregation. For example, “a percentage of those worshipping with you” may be based on virtual worship or average attendance or some other form of participation. Select a figure or percentage that reflects your congregation, but don’t be afraid to set a stretch goal or to raise your goal later on. We will update you on the results we receive so that you can track -- and report -- your progress toward your goal. Want to change your goal or have questions? Contact Karen Methot (methotk@sneucc.org) in the Conference Office.

When does the Challenge begin?

Right now! The results of local elections can affect many decisions that impact environmental concerns in your community. Your vote in every election builds grass-roots support for initiatives like net zero goals, which can begin to shift momentum on the state and national level. Most of all the habit of voting in every election gets the attention of those running for office on every level.

How do we decide to participate in the Challenge?

That depends on your congregation. We know that each congregation may have a different process for accepting this Challenge. Perhaps members of your Green Team or Church Council or Church Social Action team might take the pledge themselves and challenge others in the congregation to join them? We believe that many in your congregation might welcome this opportunity to let their voice be heard.

What are the keys for success?

There may be many:

- First, people tend to want to be part of a group and to follow natural leaders. Identify some of those leaders or influencers within your congregation and invite them to sign on early and to share their belief in the effectiveness of this process.
- Second, don't rely on a single message to get people to take action. You may want to plan for several ways of reaching people with multiple touches.
 - If you have an active church website, consider posting a link to the *Creation Care Voter Pledge* along with some background on the Challenge and/or updates on progress toward your goal.
 - If you are active on social media, consider sharing the link on your pages to the *Creation Care Voter Pledge*, encouraging your congregation to share their participation with their social media circles. You could also use Facebook and Twitter to provide updates on your goal.
 - If you have an electronic newsletter, you can include the link to the *Creation Care Voter Pledge*.
 - Of course, you can also use "snail mail" and print newsletters to publicize the challenge.
 - Your Green Team might consider some targeted emails or phone calls to individual members, encouraging their support for the *Creation Care Voter Pledge*.
- Third, be creative: Every congregation is different. Use approaches which have worked well in the past, but don't hesitate to try new ones.
- Fourth, don't forget that people want to help meet a goal: Think about periodic progress reports such as the "thermometer chart" for progress on the church's financial pledges.
- Lastly, think about how different people may receive, process and act on information differently. Some may need prodding and a personal request. Social media works for some, but not all. Young people, who are not yet eligible to vote, can be effective in prodding their elders! People of different ages may use and respond to information differently, but all are voters and every vote counts.
- Your Green Team might consider some targeted emails or phone calls to individual members, encouraging their support for the *Creation Care Voter Pledge*.

Can participation in the Challenge be credited as a task toward recognition as a Green Congregation?

Yes, absolutely, and at any level of the Green Congregation Challenge. Any and all programs which encourage civic engagement to address climate change and environmental justice issues are whole-heartedly supported. Tell us more about your congregation's work in this area and we'll share it with others.

What if our congregation does not join the Faith Matters Voting Challenge?

We strongly urge you to encourage people to sign the [Creation Care Voter Pledge](#) anyway. They will receive reminders of pending elections from the EVP regardless of whether the church itself has joined the Challenge.

Who is the Environmental Ministries team and how do I contact them?

The Environmental Ministries Team is one of the Justice & Witness Task Teams of the Southern New England UCC Conference. This team's primary interests are issues related to climate change and environmental justice. We recognize that immediate action is needed to address and slow global warming in order to protect God's creation and the habitability of "Our Common Home". We also recognize that the burdens of air and water pollution fall disproportionately on lower income communities and communities of color as a result of long-term systemic practices, and that we need broad structural changes to correct those. The Team consists of volunteers with experience, expertise, and a passion to seek productive ways and actions, which we can take individually and collectively, which reflect the values of our Christian faith. We welcome opportunities to support you and your congregation. To contact the EM team, contact Karen Methot in the SNEUCC Conference Office (methodk@sneucc.org).

How does this Challenge fit with the UCC denomination's "Our Faith, Our Vote" campaign?

They complement one another. Both encourage voting as a way of expressing our values in civic engagement. The Creation Care Voter Pledge simply underscores the importance of being a "consistent voter" and of "always prioritizing caring for God's creation" in how we vote.

Are there additional resources?

Certainly! Links to resources on the Creation Care Voter Pledge and other actions that you and your congregation can take to promote voter engagement, as well as information on individual state voting procedures, and the UCC "Our Faith, Our Vote" are available [HERE](#).

What can I do to make a difference?

- Sign the [Creation Care Voter Pledge](#) and become a consistent and faithful (to your values) voter. Be an informed Climate Justice voter. Learn the issues and know where the candidates stand. Ask candidates to commit to positions and policies you believe in.
- Encourage your congregation to join the [Faith Matters Voting Challenge](#) and encourage others in your congregation to join you in signing the Creation Care Voter Pledge.
- Share the Pledge with your neighbors and friends outside of your home church. Even if not members of a UCC church, they are welcome to sign our Pledge. You can also encourage them to go to the Environmental Voter Project (www.environmentalvoter.org) and to sign their Pledge.

Questions? Ideas? If you have further questions or ideas you would like to share, please don't hesitate to contact the SNEUCC Environmental Ministries Team through [Karen Methot](#) (methodk@sneucc.org).