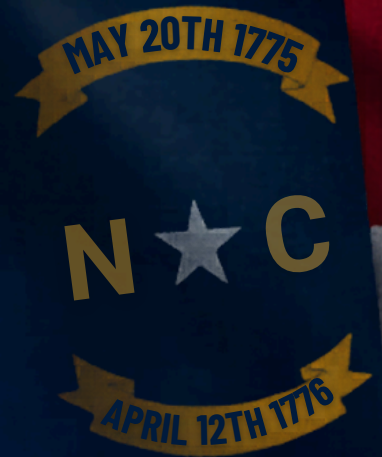




North Carolina
Council of Churches

STRENGTH IN UNITY. PEACE THROUGH JUSTICE.

FAITHFUL VOTER GUIDE



LEADING WITH LOVE,
NOT FEAR.



LOVE
OUR NEIGHBORS



SEEK
JUSTICE



SHAPE
THE COMMON GOOD

FAITH IN ACTION. LOVE IN PUBLIC LIFE.



2026 FAITH VOTER GUIDE

Leading with Love

Lead with love • Build relationships • Advocate with compassion

A Guide Shaped by Faith, Fueled by Love

Every four years, vast amounts of time and energy are marshalled for election education and voter mobilization. To that end, we spent valuable time in the summer of 2024 exposing the heresy of Christian nationalism, a malevolent force masquerading as Christianity. It perpetrates hatred toward immigrants, women, LGBTQ people, and other vulnerable groups when scripture is replete with God's call to protect the vulnerable. It denigrates public education, one of the pillars of a democratic society necessary for an informed electorate. It promotes wage inequality and unfair tax codes that harm workers while the Bible repeatedly tells us not to abuse laborers. I could go on . . .

Now in 2026 the pieces are in place for some of their most drastic dogmas to become policy at both the state and federal levels, led by an executive branch elected by just over half of the voters in our country. It's important to remember that the popular vote margin in the 2024 presidential election was only 2.2 million out of 152.3 million votes cast, a percentage difference of only one and a half. It was close.

Much of history turns on small margins that require God's people to work against the odds. Jesus lived and taught under a government not unlike the one we have now —“rulers” who amass wealth at the expense of workers and religious charlatans who trade Gospel imperatives for personal power. This is our time, time for God's people to enact the Great Commandment. The circumstances under which we enact this truth may change, but the work remains the same: love God and love our neighbors. We invite you to join us in this radical love.



***My
command is
this:***

*Love each
other as I have
loved you.*

John 15:12



7 SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

FAITHFUL ENGAGEMENT FOR A MORE UNITED FUTURE

This guide is organized around seven spheres of influence that permeate our cultural landscape and influence many of the policies we value. Those spheres can be viewed through prophetic possibility or by oppressive restraint. How we see them will determine the policies we pursue and the kind of world we inhabit. We believe when public policy is refracted through the lens of faith, we can create flourishing communities.

For this to occur, we need some biblically based certainties, such as:

- + Loving our neighbors is the clarion call for God's people.
- + Grace is available to everyone.
- + Restitution moves us closer to justice than retribution.
- + We are made for joy.

What we believe shapes what we do; what we do informs what we believe. This voter guide is meant to do both. It offers information capable of inspiring us to act in response to the call of the Gospel, believing that when we act in ways that reflect this faith claim, we will see justice come to life.



AS PEOPLE OF FAITH, WE ARE CALLED NOT TO DOMINATE PUBLIC LIFE, BUT TO PARTICIPATE IN IT WITH COMPASSION, INTEGRITY, AND A DEEP COMMITMENT TO THE DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE.



OUR GOAL IS NOT TO TELL YOU WHAT TO THINK – BUT TO HELP YOU ENGAGE FAITHFULLY, THINK CRITICALLY, AND ACT JUSTLY IN THE WORLD AROUND YOU.



BECAUSE OUR FAITH DOES NOT CALL US TO LEAD THROUGH FEAR OR CONTROL. IT CALLS US TO LEAD WITH LOVE.

FAMILY

Family is any community where people give and receive care, across generations and beyond biology.

“Where you go, I will go. Where you die, I will die. Your people shall be my people and your God my God.”

RUTH 1:16

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Every circle of care is sacred. God has never confined family to bloodlines, legal definitions, or social expectations. Again and again, Scripture reveals a God who creates kinship where the world sees strangers and belonging where the world draws boundaries. The measure of a family is not conformity but covenant—not who looks alike, but who loves, sacrifices, and shows up for one another.

Ruth's vow was not rooted in biology but in faithful commitment. Throughout Scripture, people become family through shared hope, mutual care, and enduring promise.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

Family must be defined, policed, and defended against those who don't fit the mold. Love is conditional. Belonging must be earned.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

Every circle of care is holy. We expand the table, we do not shrink it. No child, no elder, no chosen kin is outside the reach of God's love.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To build a society where every family has the resources, stability, safety, and dignity needed to flourish.

To reject policies that treat some families as more worthy than others.

To support caregivers, protect children, honor elders, strengthen communities, and ensure that all people have access to housing, healthcare, education, and economic security.

Questions for Discernment

- Who is included in this candidate's vision of belonging, and who is left outside the circle?
- How would this candidate's leadership affect children, elders, caregivers, and families facing hardship?
- Does this candidate appeal primarily to fear and division, or to compassion, responsibility, and our shared commitment to one another?

EDUCATION

Education equips people to understand the world and transform it toward greater justice and freedom.

"Buy the truth and do not sell it — wisdom, instruction, and insight as well."

Proverbs 23:23

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Scripture treats truth not as something disposable or optional, but as something to be pursued with devotion and integrity. Throughout the biblical story, learning and understanding are sacred tasks. The book of Proverbs calls us to seek wisdom above wealth. Jesus teaches through stories, questions, and formation, inviting people into deeper understanding of God and neighbor.

Education, in this light, is not only preparation for work, it is preparation for faithful living. It is how we learn to see one another clearly, live justly, and participate in the healing of the world.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

Control the curriculum. Ban the books. Silence the history. A people who cannot name their wounds cannot resist their repetition.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

Every child is worthy of deep investment, encouragement, and opportunity. We are called to cultivate curiosity, wisdom, critical thinking, and moral imagination.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To recognize education not as a private privilege, but as a shared responsibility for the flourishing of society.

To remove systemic barriers that limit opportunity and to invest where need is greatest.

To ensure that every student has access to high-quality education, well-supported teachers, and safe, resourced learning environments.

Questions for Discernment

- Does this candidate demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that every child has access to quality education and opportunity?
- How would this candidate's leadership affect students and schools that are under-resourced or struggling?

GOVERNMENT

Government is a shared trust, where power must serve the common good and protect the dignity of all.

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Throughout Scripture, rulers and leaders (politicians of the day) are held accountable for how they treat the people entrusted to their care. The prophets consistently challenge those leaders who abuse power, neglect the vulnerable, or place their own interests above the common good.

Biblical justice is not merely punishment for wrongdoing. It is the active work of creating communities where people can live with dignity, security, and hope. Authority is a trust, not a possession. Leadership is measured not by power accumulated but by lives served.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

America is a Christian nation to be reclaimed. Democracy is expendable when righteousness is the goal. Suppress the votes that threaten the vision.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

Every voter carries the image of God – imago Dei. To suppress a voice is to suppress the divine. Democracy is a spiritual practice of shared dignity.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To hold leaders accountable to the people they serve.

To protect democratic institutions, voting rights, and the rule of law.

To ensure that policies reflect the dignity and worth of all people, especially those most vulnerable to harm.

To encourage civic participation, honest dialogue, and shared responsibility for the well-being of our communities.

Questions for Discernment

- Does this candidate demonstrate integrity, humility, and a commitment to serving the common good?
- How does this candidate use power, to serve others, or primarily to benefit themselves or their allies?
- How would this candidate's leadership affect those with the least power, voice, or access?

MEDIA

Media shapes how communities see reality and what futures they can imagine together.

"Speak truth to one another, render judgments that are true and make for peace."

Zechariah 8:16

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Truth-telling is not merely a journalistic value; it is a spiritual practice. Throughout Scripture, prophets, poets, and disciples are called to speak truth even when it is costly. The Ninth Commandment (Exodus 20:16) warns against bearing false witness because lies damage relationships, communities, and the common good.

Jesus declared, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Truth is not simply information to possess. It is a pathway toward justice, reconciliation, and freedom.

Every movement for justice has depended on people willing to tell the truth about suffering, oppression, and hope when others preferred silence.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

Control the narrative. Spread confusion. Dismiss inconvenient facts. Keep communities isolated from one another. A fearful society is easier to manipulate than an informed and compassionate one.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

You shall not bear false witness. Truth-telling is not just journalism, it is a commandment. The light of an honest story cannot be overcome by darkness.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To support truthful, ethical, and accountable communication.

To ensure that diverse voices and experiences are heard.

To challenge disinformation, propaganda, and the deliberate spread of falsehood.

To cultivate media literacy, critical thinking, and a commitment to truth in public life.

Questions for Discernment

- Does this candidate demonstrate honesty, transparency, and respect for the truth—even when it is inconvenient?
- How does this candidate communicate about people with whom they disagree—with accuracy and dignity, or through fear and misinformation?
- Does this candidate strengthen public trust through truthful leadership, or contribute to confusion, division, and distrust?

BUSINESS

The economy must serve people and the planet –
not the other way around.

*"Woe to those who
make unjust laws, to
those who issue
oppressive decrees,
to deprive the poor
of their rights."*

Isaiah 10:1–2

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Throughout Scripture, God consistently sides with workers, debtors, the poor, and those crushed by systems of exploitation. The prophets condemn economic practices made possible by corrupt leaders that enrich the powerful while harming the vulnerable. Jesus speaks more about wealth than almost any other subject because economic life is deeply spiritual: it reveals what we value, whom we serve, and how we treat one another.

The biblical vision of Jubilee imagines an economy where debts are forgiven, land is restored, workers rested, and no one is trapped in debt or exploitation. Scripture insists that another way of living together is possible – one rooted not in greed or scarcity, but in justice, stewardship, and shared flourishing.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

Wealth is proof of virtue, and poverty is personal failure. Workers should accept whatever conditions they are given. Economic success matters more than human dignity or environmental responsibility.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

Jesus was always on the side of the worker, the debtor, the one crushed by the system. We are called to build economic systems that allow all people to live, work, rest, and flourish with dignity.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To support fair wages, safe working conditions, and the right of workers to be treated with dignity and respect.

To confront systems that trap people in cycles of poverty, debt, or exploitation.

To measure economic success not only by profit, but by the well-being of people, communities, and the earth itself.

Questions for Discernment

- How would this candidate's economic vision affect workers, families, and those struggling to meet basic needs?
- Does this candidate prioritize human dignity and shared flourishing, or primarily the accumulation of wealth and power?
- How does this candidate address economic inequality, worker protections, and stewardship of creation?

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Art helps people tell the truth, heal what words cannot reach, and envision what has not yet existed.

"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth."

Psalm 96:1

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Scripture begins with a Creator who brings beauty and order from chaos. Throughout the biblical story, songs, poetry, parables, paintings, and sacred rituals help people remember who they are and whose they are.

The Psalms give voice to joy and grief. The prophets use poetry to challenge injustice. Jesus teaches through stories that open people's imaginations to God's kingdom.

Across history, oppressed communities have used art to proclaim hope before freedom arrived. Spirituals, stories, murals, and other creative expressions have preserved truth, challenged injustice, and inspired change. The prophetic imagination of the oppressed has always been more powerful than the fear of the oppressor.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

Silence difficult stories. Erase uncomfortable histories. Treat art as unnecessary or dangerous. A people without their story is a people without their power.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

The spirituals sung in bondage carried the theology of freedom. Beauty is how the oppressed say: we are more than this. Art is a form of resurrection.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To preserve and tell the full truth of our shared history.

To honor the diversity of cultures and traditions as reflections of the vast creativity of God.

To support artists, educators, storytellers, musicians, and cultural institutions that enrich community life.

Questions for Discernment

- Does this candidate value the arts, cultural expression, and honest engagement with history?
- How does this candidate respond to stories, perspectives, and voices that challenge their assumptions or worldview?
- Does this candidate's vision encourage creativity, truth-telling, and cultural flourishing, or fear, censorship, and exclusion?

RELIGION

Spiritual life calls people into deeper love of God, neighbor, self, and all of creation.



"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

James 1:27

WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES

Faith is measured not by dominance, certainty, or religious status, but by how we treat those who are vulnerable. The prophets remind us that worship without justice is empty, and Jesus teaches that love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable.

Christian history contains both examples of faith used to oppress and faith used to liberate. The same tradition that was invoked to defend injustice also inspired Harriet Tubman, the freedom songs of the Civil Rights Movement, the struggle against apartheid, liberation theology, and countless acts of mercy and resistance. The faith itself is not the problem. The distortion of faith into a tool of domination is.

WHAT FEAR TELLS US

One faith tradition should rule them all. Religious freedom means the majority imposing its vision on everyone. Other beliefs are threats to be defeated.

WHAT LOVE REVEALS

True religion is caring for the orphan and the widow. It is humility before God, not dominion over neighbor. Love calls us to witness boldly to our convictions while respecting the humanity and freedom of others.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

To protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all people.

To build communities rooted in humility, compassion, justice, and mutual respect.

To stand with those harmed in the name of faith and to tell the truth about those harms.

Questions for Discernment

- Does this candidate respect religious freedom and human dignity for people of all faiths and beliefs?
- How does this candidate speak about those who are different from them, with humility and respect, or with fear and exclusion?
- Does this candidate's vision of public life promote justice, compassion, and the flourishing of all people, especially those most vulnerable?

VOTING AND BEYOND

Ways to Act — Vote and More

REFLECT ● PARTICIPATE ● ORGANIZE ● LEAD

Voting in North Carolina

In the fall of 2026, North Carolinians will have opportunities to make their voices heard and help shape the future of our communities. Make a plan. Help others do the same.

ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 3, 2026

EARLY VOTING

October 15 - October 31, 2026

VOTE BY MAIL (ABSENTEE)

Absentee ballot request deadline October 20
Absentee ballot return deadline November 3

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

You must be registered in advance or use same-day registration during early voting.

FIND VOTER INFORMATION:

ncsbe.gov

Find your polling place, check your registration, and view sample ballots.

THE ACTION LADDER

START HERE

- Pray and reflect
- Learn about local issues
- Have conversations with family and friends
- Discuss concerns in your congregation

GO DEEPER

- Attend city council meetings
- Attend school board meetings
- Contact elected officials
- Join local advocacy efforts

LEAD

- Organize educational events
- Mobilize voters
- Partner with community organizations
- Encourage faithful civic engagement



“Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18

LIVING OUR FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE

Voting is not the end of faithful citizenship. It is one way we participate in building communities marked by justice, compassion, and the common good.

Throughout scripture, God calls people not only to believe, but to act—to see justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Whether through voting, advocacy, service, or relationship-building, each of us has a role to play in shaping a more just and loving world.

May this guide inspire reflection, conversation and action as we seek to lead with love in public life.



Acknowledgements

This guide was developed by the staff of the North Carolina Council of Churches. We are grateful to the faith communities, partner organizations, and advocates across North Carolina whose leadership and commitment to building a more just and compassionate society continue to inspire this work.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Jennifer Copeland

Executive Director (Retiring)

For her visionary leadership, faithful witness, and unwavering commitment to justice, democracy, and the common good.

Her legacy of love and ecumenical partnership will continue to inspire and guide us in the years ahead.



About the North Carolina Council of Churches

The North Carolina Council of Churches represents 27 distinct judicatories from 19 denominations. We have a proven record of moving ahead of the curve on the social issues of its day even when our position was not popular among the churches or the culture. With each new enterprise, the Council frequently finds itself out in front of where society and the church eventually end up.

Denomination Members

African Methodist Episcopal Church · African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church · Alliance of Baptists · General Baptist · Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) · Church of the Brethren · Christian Methodist Episcopal Church · Episcopal Church · Evangelical Lutheran Church in America · Mennonite Church (USA) · Metropolitan Community Churches · Moravian Church in America · Presbyterian Church (USA) · Reformed Church in America · Reformed Churches of God in Christ International · Religious Society of Friends · United Church of Christ · United Methodist Church · Unity Fellowship Church Movement



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Lead with love. Build relationships. Advocate with compassion.