

Love Your Neighbor by Voting

We often use the phrase “Love Thy Neighbor” when discussing policy issues, especially around immigration; it is less common to associate this phrase with voting. When we bring our faith and moral compass to the ballot box, we vote for justice and dignity for all people.

Choosing Solidarity with Vulnerable Communities on Election Day

As people of faith, we are called to love our neighbor. There are many different ways to do that, and voting is probably not the first thing that comes to mind. But, if we are to be Spirit-filled voters in November, then we must understand voting as a fundamental way of expressing our love for our neighbors.

When we vote on Election Day, we cannot only consider our own self-interest or the success of the stock market. We must consider the hopes and the needs of our neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable. We must consider the needs of the worker who is uninsured, the mother who is undocumented, the friend who is experiencing homelessness, and all our neighbors who experience any form of oppression. If we vote with those members of our community in mind, then we will vote for the candidate whose policies will mend the gaps in our nation. On Election Day, we must vote for the most vulnerable in our nation because our faith demands us to prioritize their needs over those who have enough.

Others may criticize this stance as too liberal or being “politically correct,” but this is the faithful stance. Jesus chose to sit at the table with those who were marginalized instead of the powerful. When we cast our ballots, we are called to do the same.

Simply Love Thy Neighbor

By Tralonne Shorter

For faith-filled social justice advocates, the past four years have been like a never-ending roller coaster ride. The days leading up to President Trump’s inauguration were agonizing. Uncannily similar to the slow upward crank of a roller coaster caboose peaking skyward. We knew that what lay ahead was not going to be a thrilling joy ride. Rather, a jarring rapid descent into territory that so few were actually ready for. As we braced for impact we leaned on our virtues of faith, hope, and perseverance, and tried our best to show love for our neighbors.

Undoubtedly, the sharp twists and turns over the past four years have been brutal to endure. Our [Mend the Gap vision](#) for 2020 was suddenly under attack. Immediately, the Trump administration besieged us with rollbacks of civil and human rights protections targeting our neighbors: people of color, Muslims, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ individuals, and the poor. Every Trump administration budget has laid out a detailed blueprint of 10-15 years of work requirements and steep budget cuts to more than 83 vital human needs programs including Medicaid, SNAP, affordable housing and more. At the same time, President Trump gifted tax breaks to the ultra-wealthy by signing into law the \$1.2 trillion Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017, paid for at the expense of working families. Meanwhile costs for health care, transportation, childcare and housing continue to rise. Without permanent federal action

to increase to the minimum wage, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, and lower housing costs, many more families will be taxed into poverty for generations to come.

President Trump's attacks on our immigrant neighbors have been among the most inhumane and unrelenting of any U.S. president. His Department of Justice enacted the Zero Tolerance policy as a deterrence to families crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. This policy has separated over 5,400 children from their families since 2017. On President Trump's watch, babies and children were housed in detention centers, sexually and physically assaulted; malnourished and traumatized, pregnant mothers forced to deliver babies while handcuffed to walls; and many died. President Trump led crusades into "sanctuary cities" by mili-terrorizing our communities and filling jails with mostly non-violent individuals and year-long backlogs still awaiting adjudication. President Trump's unyielding desire to build a border wall led to the longest government shutdown in history, in which 800,000 federal workers went without pay for 39 days. Moreover, pending before the Supreme Court are proposals by President Trump to end DACA protections for 700,000 childhood immigrant arrivals and repeal the Affordable Care Act.

This is not a pro-life agenda. Instead, it's an anti-life agenda that is antithetical to our mission to carry out the Gospel. Jesus sacrificed his life so that we may have an abundant, eternal life. His challenge to us to "love thy neighbor as thyself" is similar. As we look ahead to the next four years, we have an opportunity to decide if we want to get off this roller coaster ride by electing someone who will mend the gaps in our country. There is so much riding on the outcome of the 2020 elections. As people of faith we must remain vigilant, fervent advocates for the Beloved Community. The time is now to answer the call that Jesus commanded of us. We have the power to elect a president and members of Congress who will prioritize the common good over self-interest. The choice is simple.

As I reflect on the state of our nation, this is my prayer:

Lord, our world needs you right now.

We are plagued by mounting afflictions; inconsolable sadness.

Corrupt forces promulgating lies, spurring dissension, feigning false hope.

Democracies hacked by self-interest.

Leaders dismantling families, locking up babies and mili-terrorizing our communities.

whites against Blacks, men against women, corporations against the common good.

Champions of "I" instead of "We."

Your Divine Love commanded us to a higher calling:

simply to love You and our neighbor as thyself.

What great virtues: love and sacrifice.

A mission too complicated for all but One.

Oh Lord, Our Creator, hear our plea: redeem us from our unchaste love for self that has turned us against Your virtuous sacrifice.

As we brace for impact of the 2020 elections amid this horrific pandemic,
may there be renewed inspiration to *love thy neighbor as thyself*.

May this time, we collectively prioritize voting for candidates who are committed to
 care for the sick, feed the hungry, help the less fortunate; welcome the stranger; do good,
 defend the widow and orphan, show mercy for the imprisoned; be humble, walk justly.

That's how we love thy neighbor.

Simply to Love.

Imagine that, a global call to love.

Tralonne Shorter is a Senior Government Relations Advocate at NETWORK.

We Pray

Holy God, hear our prayers.

We enter Holy Week wading through the disequilibrium of unknowing, the grief of friends and family lost and the terror that we could be next.

Righteous rage rises each day as primal screams greet televised propaganda telling us all is well when all is not well!

We see the sick and hungry and imprisoned, the immigrant, the naked and the thirsty waved off and told to fend for themselves.

We see our federal government investing in body-bags and refrigerator trucks for “the least of these”—not ventilators and hospital beds.

We are tempted to believe the kingdoms of men are too much for us — too much for you — God. But, the Resurrection... new life... breath... new bone... new muscle... a new way of being in the world... Resurrection is your promise.

If we do not believe in your power to raise the dead, then we have no faith at all.

God, gird us for the coming days. Set our faces toward the ballot box where your people might lift the only weapons we have in defense of the least of these—our votes.

Amen.

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Take Action

Choose an upcoming election that you will be voting in. It could be a primary or general election for a House or Senate seat, or the Presidential election. Choose two candidates in that race and compare their positions on each of NETWORK's [Mend the Gap issues](#) by visiting their website, watching interviews or debates, or by speaking to the candidate or someone from their campaign yourself.

Download NETWORK's DIY side by side at: www.networkadvocates.org/2020election/sidebyside.