



The Council for Health &  
Human Service Ministries  
United Church of Christ

# Be a Voice: Faith-based Advocacy for the 2020 Election

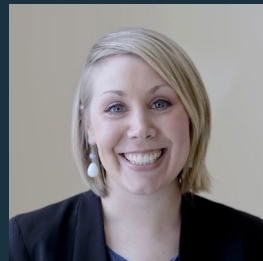
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Presented  
by:



Sandy  
Sorenson,  
MDiv



Rev. Elyse  
Berry,  
DMin



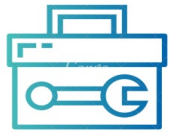
Essence  
Ellis,  
BA

*2020 CHHSM 82nd Annual Gathering: Justice and Grace –Together*

# Objectives



- Discuss how our Christian faith calls us to be political



- Introduce the *Be a Voice* advocacy toolkit and how it connects to CHHSM's mission, vision, and values



- Illustrate the toolkit's use of narrative through a story about reproductive health care



- Facilitate small and large group sharing on stories from your own work and organizations that relate to the *Be a Voice* issues



- Discuss the importance of voting and protecting voting rights

# How Our Christian Faith Calls us to be Political



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With Sandy Sorenson, MDiv  
Director, UCC Justice and Witness  
Ministries

*Toward Tomorrow – Together We Learn, Together We Flourish*

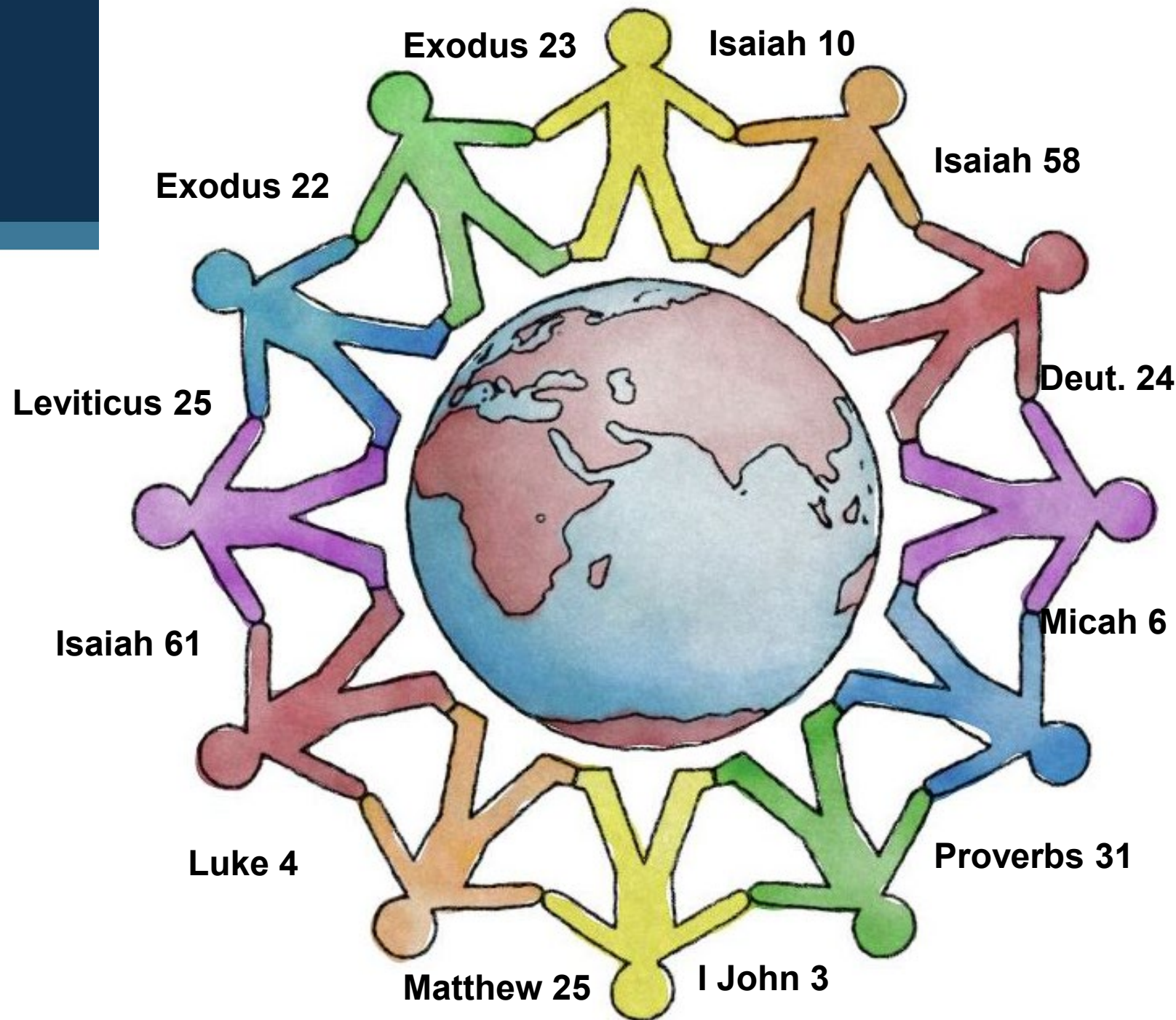
## “

“For people of faith, public policy is never merely politics, merely economics. It is one way we try to plow the biblical vision of shalom into the soil of our history.”



# Beyond Partisanship

## A Biblical Vision of Right Relationship



# Our Unique Role

As people of faith, we bring the gift and responsibility of holding true to a vision of right relationship that transcends any singular political party, ideology or platform.



# What Makes Advocacy Effective?



- Accurate information, insights, resources



- Stories of those most impacted by public policy



- Give decision makers information they can use  
– a key statistic, story, sound bite that communicates policy impact on their constituents



- Effective advocacy is about building relationships with decision makers and their staff members.



# What is the most effective form of communication to legislators?



- Constituent visits (in-district and Washington)



- Individualized handwritten letters



- Individualized emails



- Phone calls



- Social media



- Form letters/emails





# Media Advocacy

- Be a source for news/comments
- Op-eds and letters to the editor
- Magnify your voice through social media



# Advocacy through Social Media Examples



Twitter:

- Domestic violence impacts women in my community. They need our support. @SenSmith pls support an inclusive Violence Against Women Act. #VAWA



Facebook:

- Today I marched for health care access at the state capitol. This is an issue of great importance for our community. @Representative Jones I hope you will join us in taking a stand to #ProtectOurCare.



# Know your power

People  
power



Narrative  
change

# ***Be a Voice Advocacy Toolkit***



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With Rev. Elyse Berry, DMin  
Associate for Advocacy & Leadership  
Development, CHHSM

*Toward Tomorrow – Together We Learn, Together We Flourish*



# Background: *why?*



The Council for Health &  
Human Service Ministries  

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United Church of Christ

A photograph showing the backs of three young women of diverse backgrounds hugging each other. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a green shirt. The woman in the middle has dark curly hair and is wearing a white shirt. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a pink and white striped shirt. They are all smiling and appear to be in a joyful embrace.

Together, We Create a **Just, Caring** and  
**Compassionate** World.

[Learn How »](#)

# Background: *why now?*

“In the area of advocacy, the Board decided it was time for us to “be a voice” on a wide range of issues that affect all our member agencies in one way or another...We are going to do this because we need to join the chorus of all the other organizations who are out there speaking to legislators and administrators on all levels of government. We are going to do this because this is why CHHSM exists. This is what makes an association like ours relevant today and sustainable in the future.”

- Mike Readinger, June 2019





# Background: *with whom?*



# The Advocacy Issues

**January-** Health Care for All

**February-** Affordable Housing & Homelessness

**March-** Reproductive Health Care

**April-** Children, Youth, and Families Services

**May-** Senior Services

**June-** Food Insecurity

**July-** Disability Services

**August-** Healthcare Access

**September-** Mental Health & Substance Use





# Where to Find It

## CHHSM Advocacy Center


- Advocacy Introduction
- Vol. 1: Healthcare for All
- Our Faith, Our Vote



Download as a PDF


### Introduction

The United Church of Christ's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) and Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) have partnered together to bring you this






# Be a Voice:

## A Faith-Based Advocacy Toolkit for Health & Human Services



This toolkit is co-authored by staff from the United Church of Christ's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries and Justice and Witness Ministries.




 Introduction

The United Church of Christ's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) and Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) have partnered together to bring you this advocacy toolkit for the November 2020 election. The advocacy issues raised here stem from the variety of services CHHSM organizations provide across the country. They were also topics CHHSM's board voted on to guide the organization in how to [be a voice](#) for social justice. Each month from January-September 2020, a new advocacy issue will be added to the toolkit:

January- Health Care for All	June- Food Insecurity
February- Affordable Housing & Homelessness	July- Disability Services
March- Reproductive Healthcare	August- Healthcare Access
April- Children, Youth, and Families Services	September- Mental Health & Substance Use
May- Senior Services	

We recognize that this is not an all-inclusive list of the many advocacy areas within health and human services, yet we hope it will provide insight into the range of efforts important to the UCC.

 A Note on Health Equity

Addressing these advocacy issues one at a time gives each topic the focused attention it needs. However, we understand these issues and others like them (ie: climate change and immigration reform) to intersect with and impact one another. We feel it is important to note that the services we are advocating for are connected to systemic problems and to the context in which they occur.

To this point, research shows that differences in community health can be traced to unequal economic and social conditions. Health inequities are rooted in past and current unjust policies. Yet as such, they can be changed. Creating health equity requires widening our understanding of health to include how a variety of factors, known as [social determinants of health](#), impact one's wellbeing and are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources. Examples include:

• Race	• Experience of discrimination	• Age
• Ethnicity	• Disability	• Environment
• Income	• Employment and working conditions	• Sexual orientation & gender identity
• Class	• Gender	• Sense of social inclusion
• Neighborhood	• Education	• Political empowerment.
• Housing		

Thus, for example, where you live, the quality of the education you receive, and experiences of racism can all contribute to your quality of health. This toolkit is written with the vision of health equity in mind- a vision which improves systemic conditions so that all people have the opportunity to attain their full health potential and where no one is kept from achieving this because of their social position or other socially determined circumstance.

To learn more about the UCC's stance and resources on health equity, please visit [https://www.ucc.org/justice\\_health\\_health-equity\\_index](https://www.ucc.org/justice_health_health-equity_index).

# Content



- Topic



- Story



- Background



- Current Context



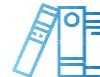
- A Faith-based Response



- Questions for Candidates



- Social Media Samples



- More Information



- CHHSM Organizations



- Where to Find Us

# A Faith-based Response

## Health Care For All: Website Version

### A Faith-Based Response

For more than thirty-five years the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has advocated for health care as a right and a priority for all people. The Christian scriptures and tradition understand

that addressing the general welfare of the nation includes giving particular attention to people experiencing poverty or sickness. For their sake and for the common good, we must continue to make progress toward a U.S. healthcare system that is inclusive, equitable, affordable, accountable, and accessible for all. [General Synod 29](#) adopted a two-fold policy statement which asked UCC members to support the passage of legislation to provide health care for all and to address the implications of health disparities and inequities through study and discussion. We have [endorsed](#) the Medicare for All Act which would provide every person in the United States with full health coverage.

## Affordable Housing & Homelessness: PDF Version



### A Faith-Based Response

Since its inception, the United Church of Christ has been committed to economic justice, and in 2014 the [UCC Economic Justice Movement](#) was created to strengthen this work. The UCC measures the economy against one fundamental truth: the earth and all that is in it belong to God (Ps. 24:1). God has blessed us with abundance and God's vision for every one of God's people, all 7 billion of us, is to live in the fullness of life. God intends for us to fully share God's gifts (Exodus 16: 16-18), and there is enough for all our needs if we share resources. Still, too many people today are in poverty, and the rising economic inequality further thwarts opportunities to better one's life and creates an unjust society.

The General Synod has spoken repeatedly on issues of economic justice, particularly naming the essential need for safe and affordable housing. For example, [General Synod 29](#) called on the denomination to support robust funding under HUD for quality affordable housing and for the continuation and strengthening of the low-income housing tax credit program. [General Synod 14](#) urged UCC members to become actively involved in ministries with people experiencing homelessness and to support efforts to lobby for federal, state, and local action in this matter.



# Social Media Examples

## Health Care for All

### Patients over Profit.

As a community of faith,  
the United Church of Christ  
supports universal health care.

#BeAVoiceCHHSM #HealthcareForAll



### Let us pray, for health equity,

that all may share in abundant life  
by creating just conditions in which  
people live, work, grow, learn, and age.  
God, grant us the courage to dismantle  
the systems that prevent access to  
and environments for health and  
wholeness. Amplify our cry with yours  
to be a voice for health care for all.

Amen.

#BeAVoiceCHHSM #HealthcareForAll



**"Of all the forms of  
inequality, injustice in  
health is the most  
shocking and  
inhuman."**

-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#BeAVoiceCHHSM #HealthcareForAll

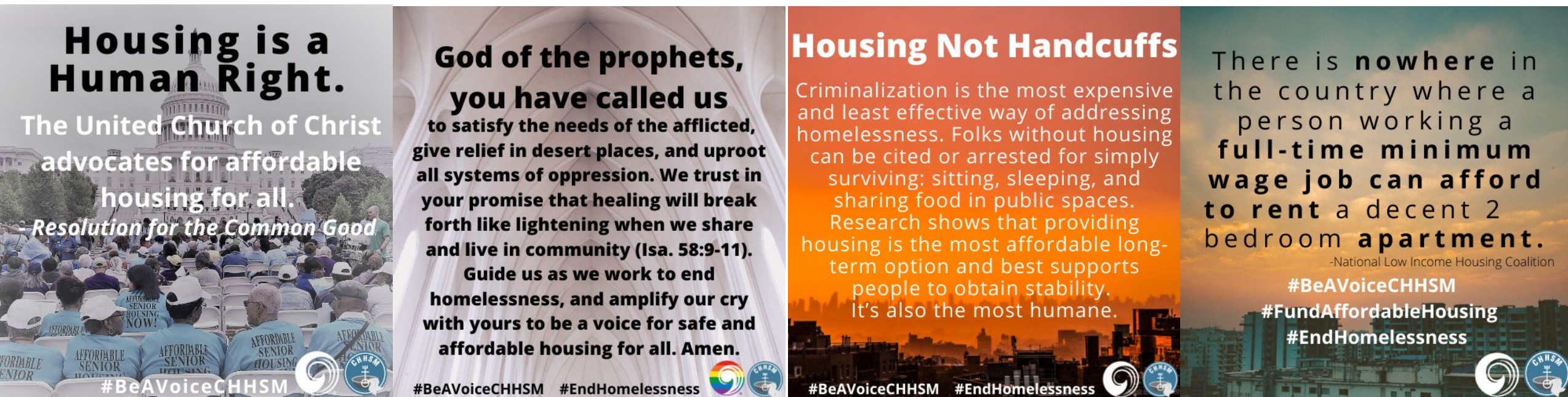


#BeAVoiceCHHSM #HealthCareForAll



# Social Media Examples

## Homelessness & Affordable Housing



#BeAVoiceCHHSM #EndHomelessness #FundAffordableHousing

# Starting with Stories

“

**I do not know what I would do without the Salam Clinic,”**

says M.R., a patient at one of the free health clinics run in partnership by local congregations, Deaconess Nurse Ministry, and physicians from the Islamic Foundation of St. Louis, MO.



“

**Being in this program allowed me the time to move from being that ‘troubled child’ to a self-sufficient adult with people who cared about**

**me,”** says J.T who took part in a permanent supportive housing program at Back Bay Mission.



# *Reproductive Justice in Action*



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With Essence Ellis, BA  
Yale Divinity Seminarian and  
Rev. Jerry Paul CHHSM Scholar

*Toward Tomorrow – Together We Learn, Together We Flourish*



# What is *your* story?

- Health Care for All
- Affordable Housing & Homelessness
- Reproductive Health Care
- Children, Youth, & Families Services
- Senior Services
- Food Insecurity
- Disability Services
- Health Care Access
- Mental Health & Substance Use





# Call to Action: Vote!



# Please join us!

# #BeAVoiceCHHSM

Sign-up for our monthly newsletter, **Diakonie**, and get **Advocacy Alerts** as well as notice of when new toolkit content is available.



Find us online at:



**[chhsm.org/advocacy](http://chhsm.org/advocacy)**



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**[https://twitter.com/justice\\_ucc](https://twitter.com/justice_ucc)**



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# Thank you for coming!

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## #BeAVoiceCHHSM

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