

June 20, 2016



Dear Friends,

Election season is upon us. Even a cursory glance at political ads tells us that November 8 is coming fast and passions are already high, positions are entrenched and the issues are even more important than the last time we voted for president.

When faced with times like these, it is tempting for congregations to become partisan politically or even to provide a platform for aspiring politicians to get messages out. Congregations run the risk of losing their 501(c)3 status when they engage in political activities by endorsing particular politicians or political parties or making specific recommendations on whom people should not vote for.

That said, congregations should and must speak out and question candidates on moral topics that represent important pieces of faithful living. From our attitude toward life and choice, to our position on poverty and social programs and the place of government in our society, these are important questions for us to wrestle with and to educate people about in our churches so they can vote their conscience.

In order for us to consider the moral issues involved in voting, the Peace with Justice Committee of the Council is sponsoring **“The Moral Responsibility of Voting.”** It will be an interfaith panel of faith leaders in our area who will be discussing what their faith says about voting and civic participation, what their faith might say about the common good, and what their faith might say about how to treat people who have a different understanding of the common good than what their faith professes.

The seminar will be held at Catholic Charities Community Room located at 232 Main Street in Binghamton. The date will be September 14. Registration will be held at 6:15 and the program will begin at 6:30 and last until 8:30 PM. Light refreshments will be provided. Those who will participate include Rev. Greg Johnson, Rev. Tim Taugher, Rabbi Barbara Goldman-Wartell, and Ehtisham Siddiqui, President of the Islamic Organization of the Southern Tier. We will have voting guides, voter registration cards and other resources to help your congregation during this year’s voting season.

So I invite you to engage your people in the issues of faithful living in Broome County, New York. I hope that you have exciting conversations about faith and life. May these conversations propel you to serve your community in love.

Peace and towels,

Rev. Dr. Joseph Sellepack