The Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team came together to respond to the presidential election in the method of Prayer, Study, and Action. To say the least, this election process has been tumultuous. As people of faith, grounded in a spirituality of nonviolence, we hope this three-part message will bring healing, insight, and just action.

**A Prayer for Understanding and Integrity in the Voting Process**

Oh God of Creation,

As citizens of a nation possessing and exerting tremendous power and influence -- both in the human community, and on the planet You so lovingly created -- help us to remember that our individual votes have tremendous consequences.

Help us to remember that we are casting our vote not only for ourselves, but for the billions of other beings in the world whose lives will be directly affected by our nation's election results.

May we be keenly mindful that the decisions made by the leaders we elect will affect so many:

- The afflicted children in Flint, Ramallah, Aleppo, and Abuja
- The migratory monarch, the African elephant, and the pollinating bee
- The towering canopies and deep underground roots of Your ancient forests, and the birds, insects, primates, and other animals that inhabit them
- The war-weary people of Honduras, Syria, and the Philippines, struggling against violence and corruption
- The pika, the polar bear, and the darting fish of Your coral reefs, whose habitats are rapidly vanishing
- The desperate refugees fleeing violence, now languishing in prisons of our making
- The unarmed people of color gunned down in the favelas of Rio, the streets of Cleveland and Baltimore, and the shantytowns of Johannesburg; and
- All others with whom we share Your planet.
Let us cast our votes with prayerful discernment, humility, compassion, and in witness to Your love for all creation.

And let us each do what we can to ensure that our Sisters and Brothers who are eligible to vote -- especially those lacking in power and access -- are encouraged and permitted to do so, absent interference, intimidation, threat, and violence.

In the name of Jesus, who cast His lot with the weak and the oppressed -
Amen.

Study the 'Signs of the Times' of this Election Season

While Presidential elections are often described as consequential, the Tuesday, November 8, 2016 election surely ranks as one of the most important of our time.

As members of Pax Christi USA, and of its anti-racism team (PCART), we approach the upcoming national election with the lens of PCUSA’s Vision Statement, in which we affirm that:

"guided by the spirituality of nonviolence, we advocate and provide leadership for disarmament, demilitarization and reconciliation with justice, inclusiveness, economic and interracial justice, human rights and care of creation."

The competing candidates’ views on these and other critical issues vary sharply, as evidenced by their differing positions regarding:

• The desirability of national policies designed to mitigate global climate change
• The appropriate role of government in improving the lives of the poor and elderly
• The role of diplomacy in international relations
• The proper function and beneficiaries of targeted tax policies
• The degree to which our immigrant nation will embrace new citizens from other lands
• The government’s role in redressing hunger and homelessness
• The composition of the judiciary
• The appropriateness of enhanced regulations governing financial institutions
• The future of the Affordable Care Act, Social Security, and other aspects of our nation’s social safety net
• The need for, and proper focus of, environmental conservation
• The need for widespread prison reform
• The proper response to the killings of unarmed Black citizens by police officers

The fact that the candidates espouse dramatically differing positions on these and other key issues is not itself unusual, in a national election. But what is notable this year is the intense heat of the political rhetoric, which is disturbingly abrasive, dismissive, divisive – and dangerous.
Equally disturbing are the many overt efforts in voting districts around the country to disenfranchise voters. The targets of these efforts continue to be largely people of color, and the poor. Yet, while the courts have recently overturned a number of those efforts, still, blatant actions to prevent individuals from exercising their right to vote persist.

We reject these efforts to divide us. As members of the Beloved Community, we accord equal respect to all, and recognize the imperative of empowering those among us who -- by virtue of race, class, or other social constructs -- have been repeatedly denied the opportunity to help determine the policies that impact their own lives. Those among us who have benefited by greater access to the halls of power, or to the workings of government, have a moral duty to share our access with our Sisters and Brothers who have been denied them.

The right to vote -- with each person having an equal right to cast a ballot – is the hallmark of a democracy. Our democracy plays a critical role in the protection of human rights, both here and abroad. Yes, as in past years, it is anticipated this year that concerted activity will take place in a number of election districts across the country to undermine that democracy, by actively discouraging, frightening, or even preventing voters from casting their ballots. These unscrupulous activities take many forms:

• Closing the polls early
• Failing to provide a sufficient number of working voting machines in low-income neighborhoods
• Trying to convince a would-be voter that he or she has gone to the wrong polling station
• Falsely claiming that someone is not properly registered to vote
• Failing to provide provisional ballots to mark, in the event a challenge to a voter’s legitimacy is later shown to be unfounded
• Spreading the rumor that the polling place will be heavily policed, which may frighten away voters
• Other tactics of intimidation and deterrence.

Preserve the Integrity of the November 8, 2016 National Elections

There are many specific ways that we as Pax Christi USA members can help our Sisters and Brothers exercise their own rights to vote.

Here are a few of them:

1. **Volunteer to be an on-site observer on Election Day.** One way of doing so is to sign up with "Election Protection," the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition. The mere presence of an on-site observer can operate as a strong deterrent to would-be poll disrupters, as well as a confidence-builder to voters who might otherwise be skittish or uncertain about the voting process.
2. **Provide transportation to the polls.** Organize a ride pool in your parish or worship community, or offer someone in need of transportation a ride to and from the polling place.

3. **Distribute and discuss information** in your parish or community, regarding the candidates’ views on key issues. *We offer election resources*, including the “Pope Francis Voter Guide” on our website. NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, offers [many election resources](#) too.

4. **Host a debate-watching party**, using the [resources and information on the website of the League of Women Voters](#).

5. On Election Day itself, do what you can help the process move smoothly. For example, if a long voting line appears, **provide chairs or water** to help sustain those waiting to vote.

6. Additionally, in order to protect millions of voters from future attempts at disenfranchisement, in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision weakening the protections of the Voting Rights Act, [urge your Congressional Representative to support legislation strengthening protections for the voting process](#).

Voting is not only a right, but an act that has moral, global consequences. Let us act prayerfully and firmly to ensure that the process, and its results, include --and work for --all.