

*I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.
Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.*

Deuteronomy 30:19

July

Stewards of Responsible Freedom:

Saying Yes and Saying No



We are created in God's image. As a covenant people we are given freedom, as individuals and communities, to choose life or death, blessings or curses. "Tough decisions and persistent effort are required of those who seek lives that are whole and holy. We must learn the practice of saying no to that which crowds God out and yes to a way of life that makes space for God."¹ Jesus calls us from

certain behaviors, but always offers an alternative: "Come, follow." A life-affirming "yes" is necessary to making an effective "no."²

Responsible exercise of freedom requires us to participate in generating good for all. We participate in making fundamental decisions regarding our national priorities, values and commitments, and how they will be expressed in public policy. We cannot ignore economic, social, and ecological realities that have led to greater abundance for some and scarcity for many others.³ We must learn to discern, choose and act in ways that bless all God's people.

As centers of hope and transformation, local churches will offer guidance and support for making faithful, life-affirming choices.

SUGGESTED LEADERS/PARTNERS:

Stewardship, Social Action/Mission and Christian Education ministries.

IDEAS FOR LEADERS:

(Resource Websites and links: www.ucc.org/stewardship, and www.ucc.org/justice/advocacy_resources)

- **Continue the sermon series** with “Stewards of Our Yes and No.”
- **Engage your community** in spiritual practices of testimony, community discernment, openness, honesty, and shaping communities through:
 - A “Spiritual Practice Sampler” (see January).
 - Sunday school classes, study groups or a retreat.
 - Practices for teens – “Choices” chapter in *Way to Live*.
- **Study** the “See – Judge – Act” model of action which joins understanding societal issues with Biblical reflection. Use the model to move from discernment to advocacy and back.
- **Talk about** the intersection between faith and civic responsibility with youth (see www.ucc.org/justice/our-faith-our-vote).
- **Offer instruction** in group discernment to your church governing body and committees at the start of each new church year.
- **Study and consider** consensus as a model for reaching decisions as a group.
- **Engage in advocacy** using UCC resources that help churches discern positions on public policy issues with major impact (see www.ucc.org/justice).
- **Adopt a Safe Church Policy** concerning abuse prevention using the UCC Insurance Board’s sample policy as a starting point (see www.ucc.org/ministers/safe).
- **Schedule movie nights** on this theme at church or in homes.

“I should like to love my country and still love justice.”

Albert Camus

“My conscience I have from God and cannot give to Caesar.”

John Milton

1 From www.practicingourfaith.org/prct_saying.html

2 *Ibid.*

3 From www.ucc.org/justice/advocacy_resources/advocacy-basics.html