

# GET OUT THE VOTE 2024

A TOOLKIT BY



# CONTENT

**Introduction** 1-2

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**Bible & Theology** 3-5

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**Hope of Healing** 6-10

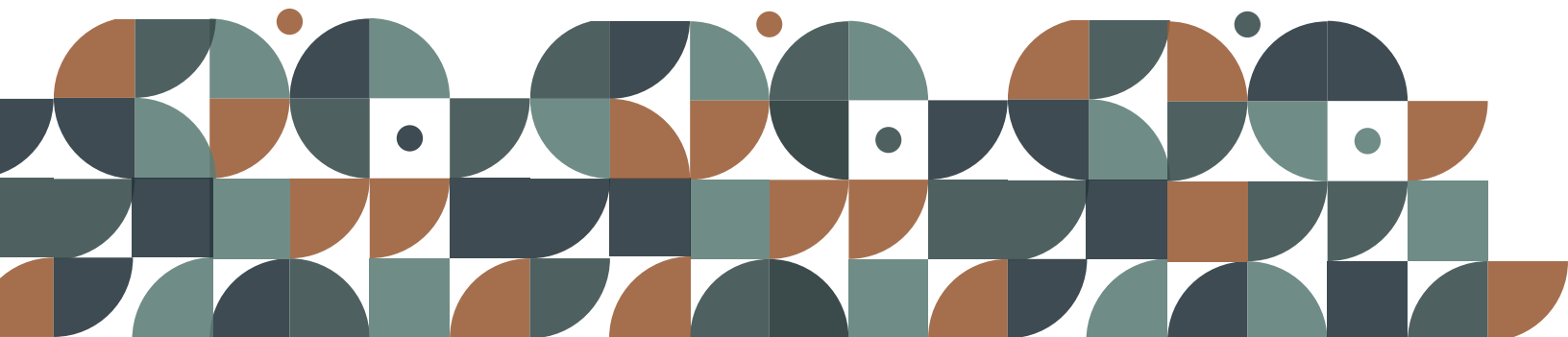
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**Active Citizenship** 11-18

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**Video Interviews** 19

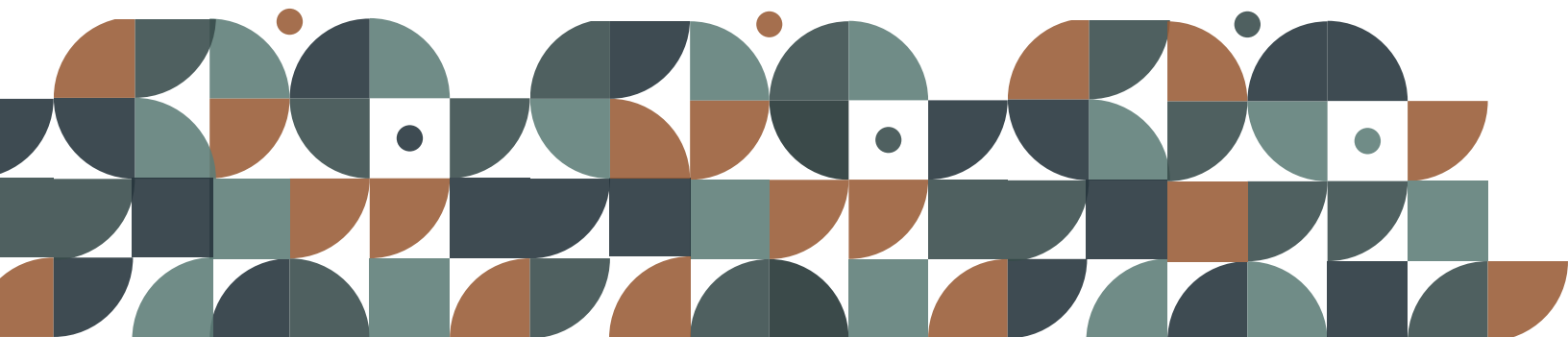
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# INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is for Asian Americans who identify with the Christian faith and want to get out the vote in their communities this year. On the one hand, Asian Americans are the fastest growing electorate in the United States. On the other, politicians and political candidates do not know how to engage with various Asian American communities. There are many reasons for this dynamic, whether it is because many Asian Americans are not registered with a party, lack of in-language resources, and/or the dynamics of migration experiences that impact our communities. Added to this dynamic is the complicated moment in which we live. We are in a moment where the political strategists eroded the core principles of separation of church and state such that Christian nationalism is on the rise.

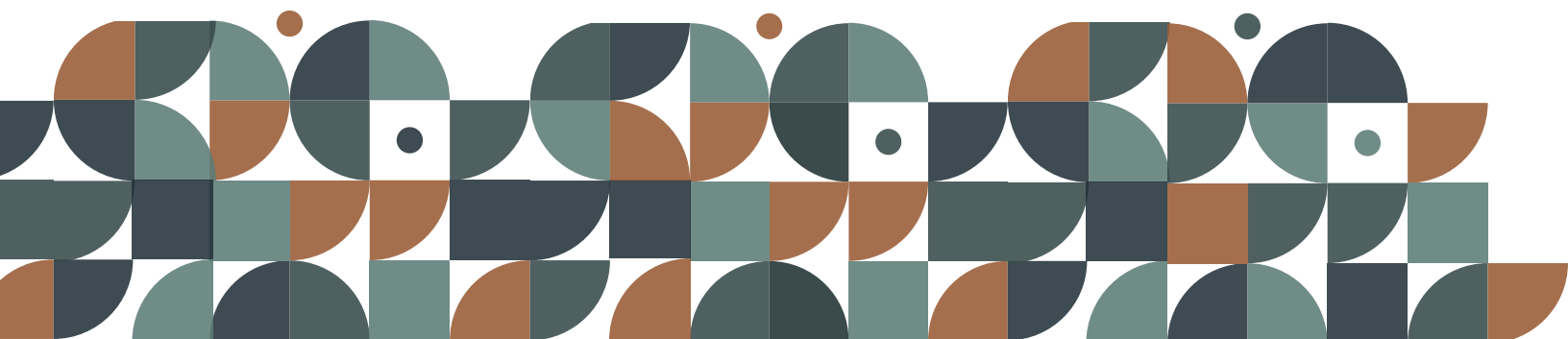
Where does this leave Asian American Christians? How do we understand the relationship between racial identity, faith, and politics? How do we honor our families and communities? How do we live faithfully in the midst of this changing context? How does our faith propel us towards the work of healing and justice? How do we cultivate the gifts of our communities to participate in the Beloved Community?



This toolkit seeks to provide some first steps for those seeking answers to these questions. We don't claim to have a comprehensive plan. We simply wanted to provide some initial steps for those who aren't sure where to begin, but know that our communities come with a wealth of experience and expertise in practicing justice and cultivating wholeness (just look to the testimonies of Christians from our motherlands!). This is a resource to begin conversations and practice faithfulness here in the United States this important election year. It is designed to use in parts or as a whole. We also know that different communities have different needs and contexts. We would love for you to adapt this to your needs. We are simply delighted that you are joining this collective work. Thank you for taking the time to activate your communities. We trust you will be transformed by the journey just as we are! Finally, thank you for your partnership in cultivating a peaceable society for all.

### Toolkit Outline

- **Bible & Theology:** This section covers some of the bible and theology questions we've heard from Asian American Christians over the years about the relationship between faith and politics.
- **Hope of Healing:** We know that we are inviting you and your communities into a brave space. This section contains resources on how to deepen conversations with your communities.
- **Active Citizenship:** This section focuses on some practical resources about how to engage with our electoral system.



# BIBLE & THEOLOGY

## from the Bible to ballot

### *Is Jesus political?*

As you consider the sermons, bible studies, and conversations you've had about your faith, how would you answer this question? What conversations and memories come to mind? The beauty of being created in God's image is that we all reflect different parts of who God is and may have different answers depending on our stories and experiences. The beauty of having different stories and perspectives is also what makes the response to this question complicated.

To answer this question, we need to consider how we understand politics. What is politics? When we think of politics, do we think of the news cycle and politicians? Or, do we think of specific issues? Politics has everything to do with how decisions are made so groups and communities can function together. Politics is simply what helps a society organize itself so different communities can exist together. Politics is not about right or wrong or good or bad. It simply provides the guidelines for how we can function together as a society.

Returning to the question, we also need to consider who Jesus is and what Jesus was about. What did Jesus care about? What did Jesus do? How did Jesus interact with society? Your answers to these questions will help you consider if Jesus was/is political!

In a democracy, we all have a part to play. In any society, those who are most impacted by policies are the ones who care the most about politics, though politics impacts all of us. If we believe that God loves the world and Jesus calls us to love our neighbor, then it's natural to consider the policies that impact our neighbors and our world!



## ***How does Christian faith contribute to democracy?***

We live in a country that believes in freedom and democracy. A democracy gives every person the opportunity to participate and enjoy freedom in their responsibilities. A safeguard embedded into this country is the separation of church and state to ensure religious freedom for all people. This democratic privilege is complicated when held alongside other freedoms afforded to us in the U.S.

A reality for many Asian American Christian communities is that Christianity is a minority religion in many of our motherlands. However, Christians are currently the majority and the U.S. privileges Christians. This complicates our understanding and relationship between our racial, faith, and political identities.

Different Christian theologies have different approaches to faith and politics, but it's important to understand the stories and histories that shape our understanding. Our family stories (more in the next section) and relationship to the government and politics impact the questions we ask of the bible and in our faith! For example, the church was

a major part of the support and dissolution of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Faith matters in politics and politics impacts our faith. Theologian Allan Boesak wrote reflections on this dynamic in his book, [Dare We Speak of Hope](#). In the U.S., Baptists saw the [bible as the foundation](#) of their commitment to soul liberty, the understanding that all people have the right to interpret the bible for themselves and a responsibility to interpret it faithfully. In other words, faith cannot and should not be forced.

You don't need to be a theologian or pastor to answer these questions or consider the implications of faith and politics. It begins with curiosity and learning. Consider, what is communicated when we display the U.S. flag in church sanctuaries? [Can and should churches engage with politics?](#) How does our faith experience as Asian American Christians contribute to our involvement with our world and love of neighbor? We hope you will share your learning and insight with your communities as we join God's work of peace, healing, and justice in this world together.



## ***God and Caesar: what's your choice?***

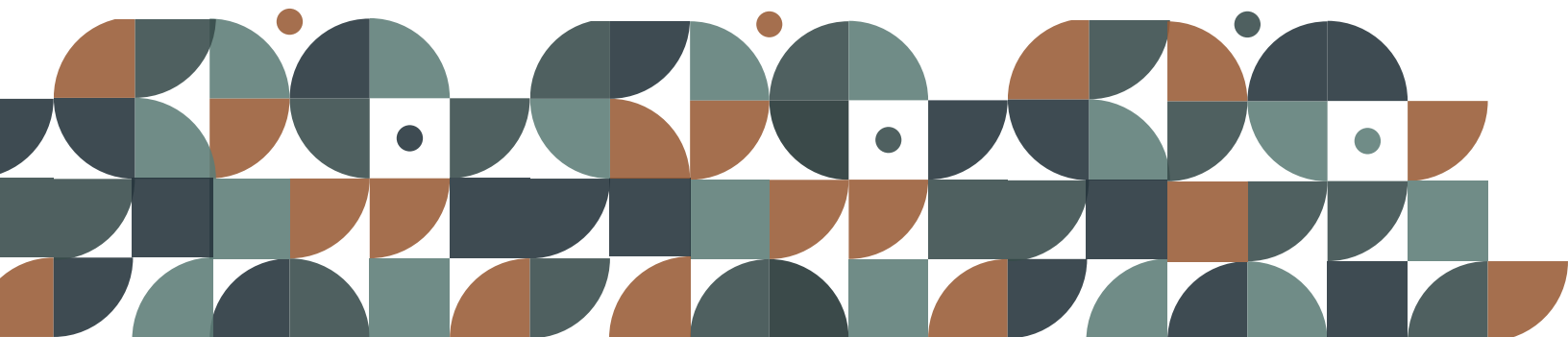
If you're looking for a place to start, here's an exercise to practice personally or in a group!

### **Read Matthew 22:21 and Mark 12:17.**

Reflection Questions:

1. Describe similarities and differences between the two passages. What question is Jesus responding to?
2. What in your opinion do Christians owe to God and what do they owe to Caesar (or our government)? Are these in conflict? Why or why not?
3. Have a look at the following list and discuss how they relate to giving to either God or Ceasar or both:
  - a. Reading the Bible
  - b. Voting
  - c. Praying for the president, governor, mayor, etc.
  - d. Serving on the PTA
  - e. Attending a political rally
  - f. Reading and following the Ten Commandments
  - g. Sharing the Gospel with others or being a witness for Christ
  - h. Learning about political candidates and their views
4. How many of these went in the "God" column, in the "Ceasar" column, or both?

Additional resource: Tremper Longman III, [The Bible and the Ballot: Using Scripture in Political Discussions](#) (2020)



# HOPE OF HEALING

## conversations, family, & legacies

While it's important to encourage our communities to engage politically, our reasons for caring extend beyond this November's elections. We are thinking about our loved ones and our communities - what the future holds for our families, and the post-migration narratives our generation is shaping now and what that means for our familial and communal legacies.

As followers of Jesus, it may be disheartening to be surrounded by the polarizing political landscape. As followers of Jesus, our vision is long term and we want to remind ourselves that the hope of a brighter future in the U.S. is connected to our engagement now which will bear fruit beyond election cycles - engagement around our own personal growth and awareness, in ongoing meaningful relational connections, and within our Asian American and Christian contexts.

These resources on the hope of healing are organized into three sections: the first part addresses our personal growth and awareness; the second part considers our relational selves and relationships; the last part offers reflections that situate us and our families in the larger context.

We invite you to consider possible challenges that Asian American Christians might experience which can hinder growth and healing. These challenges are suggested not to elicit self-judgment/critique, but to invite grace-filled reflection.

- Unresolved trauma that was experienced first hand or vicariously through family history
- Spiritual trauma from religious contexts that fostered unhealthy/abusive theologies
- Untreated symptoms of depression/anxiety with unclear cause
- Tendency toward maladaptive perfectionism
- Addictive behavior
- Trauma/stress related to racial identity (sinophobia, xenophobia, anti-Asian hate)





## **PERSONAL**

Any hope of improved relational or community life begins with us. The lifelong journey of intrapersonal growth takes courage, humility, and honesty. When we think about future generations, we imagine Asian American young people who know and feel God's love, which is understood all the more through knowing and loving our own selves.

It may have been hard to learn how to love ourselves given the complex intersections of family migration histories, racism/trauma, and certain theologies that perpetuate "denial of self" without also the embrace of self. In this season of caring and learning about socio-political realities "out there," we hope you will also attend to the lifelong process of developing self knowledge and love.

God created each of us with our own unique personalities, family histories, racial/ethnic identities, etc. to be part of this point of time in history. What are the gifts, traits and abilities God has given you that are celebration-worthy? What are the areas of growth God invites you to courageously draw near and examine?

Here are some resources you can look into for the sort of personal growth that is helpful for you in this season of life.

### ***Resources for Knowing and Loving Ourselves***

- Mental health and well-being (book): [Where I Belong](#) (Lee & Yoon, 2024)
- Understanding our character strengths (free assessment): [VIA character strengths survey](#)
- Personality inventories (remember that these are predictive or diagnostic. Best way to use personality assessments is to allow the "results" to offer self-insight but not to put yourself or others into a fixed box)
  - [Hexaco Personality Inventory](#)
  - [Cattell's 16 Personality Factors](#)

## RELATIONAL

The relationships in our lives have the capacity to bring the greatest joy and fulfillment as well as contribute to the greatest loss, grief, and pain. Though some of us may not have been shown models of intentional relationship building (outside of whatever practices of discipleship we have been exposed to), it is never too late to learn and put in the effort to grow and hope for healing in our relationships.

For many legitimate reasons (brain's survival mode, what's modeled to us by family/media/politics, theological upbringing), we learn and take on binary ways of thinking: people, things, and ideas are either right or wrong, good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. There are of course many aspects of life where this may be true. In relationships however, it is rarely the case (exception being where abusive behavior is clearly wrong). Many of us are witnessing the world becoming more polarized and it is very hard not to get swept up in us vs. them posturing. This can make it especially hard to stay in meaningful relationship with the people we care about the most as well as the neighbors we are called to love.

We humbly suggest that there are ways we can increase our relational capacity and skills. We want to highlight three areas of focus and offer resources below: developing relational knowledge, communication skills, and communities of support.

- It is important to increase our relational knowledge in areas such as understanding different personalities, how we get activated by certain behaviors/ideas, recognizing relational patterns
- We implicitly learn how to communicate from the models in our lives, primarily the families in which we grew up. These communication styles might work until they don't. It is vital to learn communication skills such as active listening, and ways to respond that do not contribute to emotional activation.
- While we may have relationships or spaces where we are actively working through differences of opinion or hoping for healing, it is also important to have relationships and communities where there is a shared sense of connection and the capacity to be ourselves and to rest.



## **Resources for Improving Relationships**

### Relational Knowledge

- Navigating our own personal triggers (article). [Navigating personal triggers when we sit with “the other”: lessons from Asian American family therapists.](#)
- Understanding power dynamics in relationships (book). [Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space, and Influence.](#) (Morse, 2008).
- [Understanding family dynamics when it comes to hard conversation.](#)

### Communication Skills

- [Active Listening guide](#)
- [Helpful tips for talking about politics with family](#)

### Communities of Support

- [Mental health resources and IG accounts](#)
- [How to Build a Support System](#)

### Other

- [Parents Are Human](#)

## **CONTEXTUAL**

It is not uncommon for Asian American Christians to have missed out in knowing about who we and our families are in context. U.S. education systems have left out Asian American histories, and the post-migration life is often about survival and buying into model minority stereotypes and hopes for our families. This makes it challenging to respond to God’s invitation to remember God’s faithfulness across generations if we do not know the narratives of our families and our peoples.

We may also be fearful of exploring our histories and context because there are generational impacts of trauma and pain. Without this knowledge and integration into who we are however, we do not have full access to who God knows and sees us to be. When we have a

fuller understanding of where we have come from and where we are situated (family history, racial/gender/religious context, sociopolitical implications, Christian church histories), our capacity to love and have empathy for ourselves and others expands.

It may be helpful to remember that all of us have biases that are shaped by our context. Our political and theological perspectives are informed by our backgrounds, the states and communities in which we live, our life experiences, our educational context, workplace, relationships with various communities, and more. It is important to think beyond our loved ones' differences of perspectives, and have the humility to be curious about how and why they were shaped.

All of this hope of healing takes place across our lifetimes, but we hope that no matter where we are on our journey of healing, we will each take one step of courage forward.

### ***Resources for Understanding our Context***

Asian American history

- Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Asian American Histories of the United States* (Penguin, 2022)
- Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (Simon & Schuster, 2016)
- Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, 2013)

Researching your denomination's relationship with race/Asian Americans

- UMC example

Learning your family's migration history (reaching out to relatives or researching in archives/other research)

- How do our migration stories impact our understanding and engagement with the U.S.'s historical and political timeline?
- Map out your family's migration story with the U.S.'s historical and political timeline
- What is the U.S.'s relationship with our motherland?

# ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

## our agency & responsibility

### ***Understanding democracy: how does democracy work & why vote?***

The “We Can Be Heroes: Voting and Beyond” exhibit in the Wing Luke Museum, an AANHPI art and history museum in Seattle, from June 14, 2024, to January 20, 2025, explains our role well:

Voting is how We the People decide many things about our lives. Local elections matter. Voters, also called an electorate, decide who controls the education of our children, our young siblings, our nieces, and nephews. Voters decide how quickly an ambulance can get a person to an emergency room. Voters decide if our city or town is welcoming to immigrants and refugees or not.

In a country that promised one voice, one vote and no taxation without representation, we, the electorate, will decide if these promises are kept. Since the United States has become polarized at every level of government, the saying every vote counts has never been more true. Many recent elections have been won by as few as a couple dozen votes.

This election season (2024) feels like a test of American democracy. What we need to know and understand is that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) have the power to shift policies in our communities. As a part of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community coalitions, our collective power can decide if democracy fades away like a dream or becomes the immovable bedrock that so many of our ancestors and elders died for, that we have fought and continue to fight for, and that our children and coming generations deserve. Our numbers can shift how we all experience life in these United States.



Voting is certainly a key part of participation in democracy. However, we acknowledge that there are many ways to participate beyond voting. While status enables voting, all residents have agency and impact on our laws and policies.

**Reflection Questions for individuals or groups:**

1. What does democracy mean to you? How has democracy impacted your family's migration story?
2. What does voting mean to you? How have you and your communities experienced the impact of voting in the United States?
3. What are the issues that most impact your communities? What issues do you want to see on your ballot? This is best considered on local levels, though state and federal policies often make the news headlines. For more on how to get involved, see the next section!
4. How would you like to see the voting process improve?

***What's our role in maintaining and safeguarding democracy?***

*Local Involvement*

As noted earlier, all residents have a part to play in safeguarding our democracy regardless of status. Getting involved on the local level is one of the most practical and tangible ways to care for your community and learn about our governing systems. Cities and counties have different boards and commissions that resource our communities. These bodies also serve as a liaison between elected officials and our communities, providing insight to influence policy.

Different cities and counties have different ways of election into local boards and commissions. Some cities allow for self-nomination whereas others require elected officials to appoint for service. In some

cities, being a U.S. citizen is not a requirement, allowing broader participation by residents. If it seems intimidating to seek leadership in a board or commission, there are other ways to get involved. Board and commission meetings recordings or minutes are often found online and accessible for the public.

Most city councils and county council meetings are also open to the public. These are the meetings where decisions are made about funding, lawmaking, and policy implementation. With issues you care deeply about, you can look online for upcoming agendas to offer public comments. Paying attention to the topics of discussion and offering public comments are ways to engage the concerns of our local communities. If the notes or comments are difficult to understand, contact information is available for you to ask questions directly about your concerns.

For a deeper dive, reach out to local community organizations. Many Asian American organizations offer in-language resources and training to help you communicate your concerns to our elected officials and various committees. Finally, remember that elected officials are required to tally any comments made via email, phone calls, voicemails, and letters on any issue whether in favor or against. If you have a commute to work or school, save your local representatives' number on speed dial so you can leave a voicemail with your opinion. Your voice matters!

### **Reflection Questions**

1. What are the most pressing local issues in your community? What are the agenda items on your local board, commissions, and councils that take the most time?
2. What agenda items would you like to raise with your local community? Which body (e.g. board, commission, or council) is the most appropriate avenue for you to engage with this issue?
3. What are the opportunities for mutual partnership and engagement with your local communities?

## ***How can our Asian American faith communities play a part in safeguarding democracy amid difference?***

While Asian Americans are the fastest growing electorate, our communities are not monolithic. Our communities come from different migration narratives fraught with economic, political, and religious complexities. In the United States, there have been false narratives assuming that people of particular faith traditions must and should vote for a particular position on a policy issue or for a certain candidate. This thinking is destructive to our democracy.

One of the many gifts of Asian American communities is that we are diverse. This is evident in our collective advocacy for disaggregated data to better resource and engage our various communities. Additionally, Asian Americans are the most multi-religious racial group in the United States. With this, Asian American faith communities are arguably the most well-positioned community to offer the best of a healthy democracy through engagement in differences. Amplifying the various narratives and the diversity of Asian American faith communities is an asset for our democracy and current societal pulls towards echo chambers and binary conversations. For specifics about how Asian American Christian communities can engage, please refer to the section on Bible & Theology above!

### ***Suggested Engagements***

- Host an interfaith dialogue with local Asian American communities to better understand the diversity of Asian American faith communities
- Listen to an interfaith dialogue online or participate in person. Discuss the gifts of Asian American communities to interfaith dialogue in the United States.
- Host conversations that highlight different opinions and perspectives. Highlight the value of listening well and honoring our stories that inform our perspectives.



**Plan Your Vote**

**Check your voter registration or register to vote.**

With recent Supreme Court rulings and changes, it's important to double [check your voter registration](#). If you haven't already, be sure to register to vote. Different states have different requirements, but you can check your state requirements [here](#).

**Know your polling location or learn about early voting options.**

Consider whether or not your polling location changed since the last elections. Since election day is not a federal holiday, be sure to plan when and how you will vote. Otherwise, make plans to vote early. Some states have different requirements for mail-in voting options.

**Do your research.**

Research your candidates and their policy platforms. While it may be tedious, we recommend checking multiple sources and looking through different voter guides (see an example from APIAVote with in-language voter guides at the bottom of [this page](#)).

Faith communities are a natural place to help facilitate conversation and share the burden of research. Consider hosting a ballot party where you can research different items on your ballot in groups and share your findings. These types of gatherings allow us to promote healthy dialogue, different perspectives, and shape policies that impact our neighbors together!

**Engage your community.**

Share these [in-language resources](#) from [APIAVote](#) on how to vote with your communities.

**Encourage others to vote.**

Talk to people you know. Consider who is in your networks and community. This could mean your family members, people at work, your friends, etc. The people in your networks will have varying levels of voter engagement. Some will be very excited and very informed about the election and its issues. Others will not have as much information or interest. Encourage democratic engagement through curiosity. The purpose is not to convince people how to vote or who to vote for, but ask questions



to understand others' perspectives. You'd be surprised by what you learn about others and yourself through conversation.

If you're ambitious, you can reach out to people you know who are in swing states. Gerrymandering impacted many states between election cycles so it's important that people are prepared to vote in their state. Many of the following strategies can help with people who are both excited to vote and those who are not.

### **Share your voting plan.**

An effective and non-confrontational way to encourage voting and start conversations is to share your plans to vote. You don't have to share who or what you're voting for, only that you will, and that you want people to join you. Share when you plan to cast your ballot in person or at the drop box and ask if anyone would like to accompany you. Volunteer to give others a ride to the polling place or drop box when you go. You can also leverage social media in a way so that it reaches across your networks while also not being overly confrontational.

### **Share important logistical information.**

As mentioned above, voting requirements changed in different states between election cycles and gerrymandering impacts voting rights for all. Post reminders on social media about voter registration dates and methods. Encourage your networks to check their voter registration status. Show people how to find the nearest polling place or drop box. Finally, share various resources like voter guides, voter registration websites, etc. without telling people how they should vote!

### **Invite others to join you in some collective action.**

What Asian American gathering doesn't involve good food and community resourcing? Organize a ballot party where you and your friends discuss the propositions and candidates on the ballot. Research is more fun with others (and with food)! Take additional action by sending postcards to your friends or to swing voters reminding them to vote. Organizations like [Postcards to Swing States](#) will provide you with postcards and voter lists.

### Talk to others about why you vote.

After you've done some of the steps above, people may initiate conversations with you. Not all of these conversations will be cool and calm. It's easy to get emotional when encountering positions that may go against your values. Things can be additionally heated when you're speaking to family members. Here are some tips that might help these conversations go more smoothly.

- Be prepared to share your personal reasons for voting. Instead of taking a position that your stances are correct, talk about how issues will affect you and the people you care about.
- Ask good questions and be curious. Instead of correcting people, ask questions to understand why and how the person came to their conclusion.
- When presented with [misinformation](#), ask the other person if they'd like to fact check together.
- Listen and be empathetic. Remember the relationship you have with this person, and be respectful of the experiences they've had that shape their views. Affirm the other person when you find places of agreement.
- Avoid talking points and buzz words. Certain words like, "woke," "socialism," "patriotism," etc, may entrench you into political camps. Try to reframe issues without sounding like a political pundit. It'll be easier to find common ground if you focus on the aspirations you both have for your community and the country.
- Consider what you hope to accomplish with this conversation. Expecting another person to completely change their views may not be realistic. What do you hope to gain from this conversation? Do you want a broader understanding of an issue? Do you want to understand a loved one better? Do you want to find common ground?
- Know when to disengage. It's okay to walk away from a conversation that may cause more harm than good, especially with someone who you have an important relationship with.

## **Engaging Democracy Post-Election**

The election is done, but our engagement is not. What is next? How do we keep having conversations beyond elections? What are the important next steps?

### **Respond to the Election**

After initiating conversation before and during the elections, it helps to also create space to process the results and impact after election day. Gather in groups or have conversations with those you connected with to discuss your response. Some questions to consider are:

- What did you experience before, during, and after the elections? What are your current thoughts and feelings about the results?
- How will this impact you/our community?
- What are the immediate repercussions (are there any)? What might be the long-term repercussions?
- How can we respond to these potential repercussions as a community?

### **Taking Next Steps**

Love of neighbor is best expressed in our next steps after the elections. Work together to brainstorm next steps as a community. Some ideas include:

- Research next city council meetings, local elections, etc.
- Learn about the issues and policies that are being voted on in the local, state, and federal levels.
- Gather with your communities to consider how these issues and policies impact our communities.
- Collaborate with others to voice our communities' concerns and mobilize others to join.

In summary, gather, inform, organize, mobilize, and show up!

### **Leadership & Training**

Some cities and organizations provide civic leadership training. The city of Gardena in California provides a leadership academy that allows residents to sign up for over six sessions to learn about city departments. If you are not able to find a local city training or organization-sponsored training, contact a local city planner. City planners often have insight about how cities function and work. They often have insights about the latest issues concerning the city from a nonpartisan perspective.



# VIDEO INTERVIEWS

This toolkit is made available to the community due to a grant that Cross-Section received from the Asian Pacific American Religions Research Initiative (APARRI). **Cross-Section** is a Coalition for Asian American and Pacific Islander Churches (CAAPIC) forum on AAPI identity, faith and politics.

The grant helped fund the creation of a video series which you can view [here](#) or by using the QR code on this page. We invite you to share these videos and engage with them alongside this toolkit and your communities.

You may also make a donation to CAAPIC at the bottom of the webpage.

