



## Trauma Informed Voting

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My best Zoom experiences are those when you forget about the platform itself (and those weird little boxes) because you're so engaged in the actual conversation. It's like you are actually in the same room together. This is the feeling I had recently speaking with leaders in the faith community about the power of the church to help organize lasting social change. On this Zoom call we talked about how **this is our moment** to be part of this bigger **movement for justice**. I love how the United Church of Christ isn't shy about mixing our faith with politics because we know that at the heart of the Gospel is Jesus' commitment to the spiritual, mental, and physical freedom and liberation of people wronged by unjust systems of oppression.

On this transcendent Zoom call where we got to Be The Church, I listened to the Rev. JJ Flag, a UCC minister serving as a campus chaplain and serving on the UCC Disabilities Ministries Board, who shared that it's important for churches who care about justice to do a "relationship audit." He believes that we can build a just world for all when we engage in meaningful relationships with people who are different from us. JJ asks, "What if each one of us in the church partnered with someone to make sure they were registered and had a plan for how to vote? And if they needed help getting to the polls, we could help each other?"

Also on the Zoom call was the Rev. Shernell Edney Stillely, a UCC minister serving as Associate Conference Minister in the New York Conference, and serving on the UCC Mental Health Network Board and on the UCC Board of Directors, who shared her belief that racial justice and mental health justice are interconnected. She says that we are seeing levels of trauma increase now because of the multiple pandemics, but that there has been trauma since the beginning for people traumatized by racism. When we prepare to vote, Shernell encourages us to pay attention to who is supporting and strengthening mental healthcare for all.

There weren't just UCC folks on the Zoom call talking about how to put our faith into action, we had an ecumenical partner join us as well. One of the joys of

serving in the UCC is our valued relationships with ecumenical partners. One of our partnerships is with the Interfaith Disabilities Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) where I met Lindsey Warburton. Lindsey is Co-Chair of IDAC, and is a member of the Episcopal Church where she serves in their DC office focusing on disability advocacy. In this election season, Lindsey reminds us that nearly 23% of the American electorate, over 35 million individuals, are people with disabilities. She encourages us to pay attention to what candidates are saying about quality, affordable healthcare for all.

Luckily, this dynamic and inspiring conversation was recorded to share with you and your congregation. Join me, JJ, Shernell, and Lindsey for this 30-minute video conversation by going to [“Our Faith, Our Vote: Disabilities Justice” webinar](#). While you are there, check out all the resources to share with your faith community as we prepare to go make a difference in the world. There are practical materials to use for Adult Education, youth ministry, or even as part of worship. Ask yourself how the Still Speaking God is calling you to be part of this movement in this moment.

Together, as JJ says, “in relationship with one another,” we can help each other get out the vote and support candidates advocating for disabilities and mental health justice for all. As followers of Jesus, we are empowered to build a world where all people are treated with dignity and respect, where Black Lives matter, and where all people with disabilities and mental health challenges are valued as important members of the Body of Christ.

[Our Faith Our Vote resource page](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Lund is the Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice for the United Church of Christ.

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