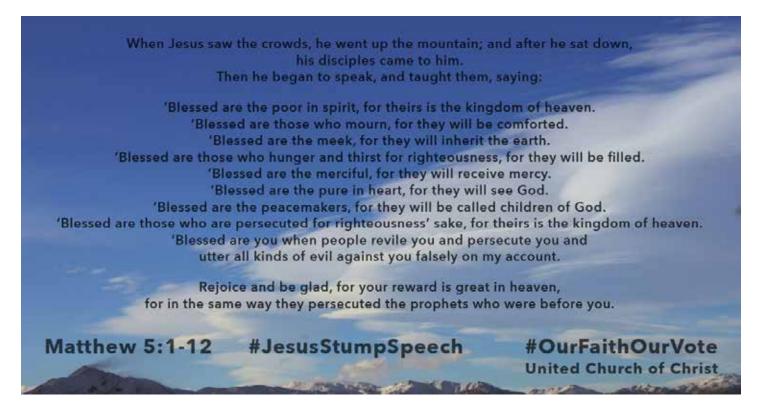
# Jesus' Stump Speech

An Election Year Reflection Guide on the Beatitudes for People of the United Church of Christ and Beyond

The following is a guide designed to create a conversation between our faith and our study of the Beatitudes in the context of the American political climate in 2016. Over the course of the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention, July 17 - 29, the text and images on the following pages will be published on the United Church of Christ's Facebook page to invite faithful dialogue with people of faith.

For each day, you will find a scripture that calls out a question or two for discussion, a prayer for spiritual engagement, and a connection to the United Church of Christ's #OurFaithOurVote campaign, which is designed to engage the faith community in elections. It is important for faith communities to engage in nonpartisan voter education and empowerment programs that help us reflect on our collective life and work to uplift the common good through the political process.

Feel free to either print out and use these resources day to day in your communities, or lift them from this .pdf (right click and "save") to post them daily on your community Facebook pages.



CONVERSATION: What would your Stump Speech for calling others to live in the way of Jesus be?

ACTION: We'll have actions throughout to connect our faith to our vote! Order free copies of the UCC Our Faith Our Vote toolkit.

PRAYER: Gracious God, today give us the moral courage to live in public as people of hope and love, offering hope and love to those who have none. Amen.



Writer Anne Lamott says "The opposite of faith is not doubt: It is certainty." How might a need for certainty indicate a kind of spiritual impoverishment?

Jesus is saying that "less of us and more of God" helps us to leave our spiritual poverty and claim the Kingdom of Heaven. What does this look like in your life as you strive to claim heaven here on earth?

ACTION: The voices of the disenfranchised must be heard in our democracy. Move from prayer and reflection to action by engaging your congregation in the Our Faith Our Vote campaign.

Check out our UCC Guidelines for Congregations and Clergy on Political Action.

PRAYER: Gracious God, give me faith, courage and strength today to live in your way and walk your path. Amen.



CONVERSATION: The mourning Jesus references is a "sorrow that flows out of tears that cleanse." This sorrow comes from a grieving of evil ways, words, deeds, and policies. Which of these do you mourn today? What would bring you comfort in your grief and sorrow?

ACTION: We can demonstrate our solidarity with those who suffer in our community by hearing their stories and honoring their experience. Make sure your congregation is a safe space for civil dialog during the election season. See our tips for <u>Being a Civil Voice in Uncivil Times</u>.

PRAYER: O God who knows our troubles today, be in the midst of the evil ways and deeds of our world, comfort us in our sorrow and help us to use our sorrow as motivation to change our world. Amen.

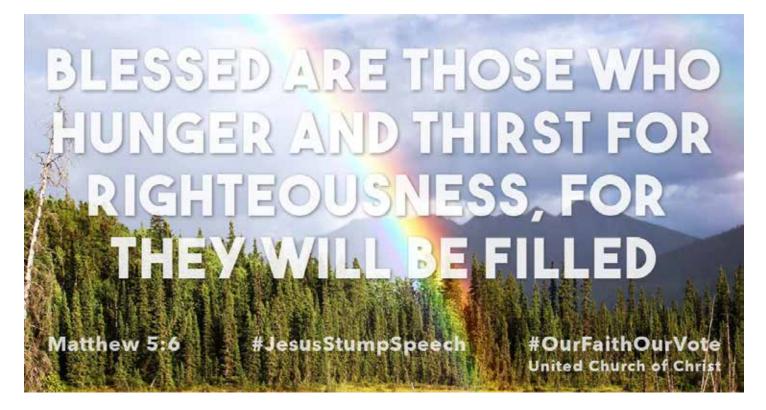


CONVERSATION: Jesus might define meekness as "power under control and power exercised for the benefit of all." Compare and contrast this view of meekness with how our culture might define a meek person.

Jesus is also saying that controlling power and exercising it for the benefit of all is a world conquering principle ("inherit the earth"). What might followers of Jesus do to change the way our world understands and uses power?

ACTION: Perhaps "meek" voices are needed more than ever in this election. Make sure every voice in your community is heard. Hold a voter registration drive with the following goal: <u>100% registered and</u> <u>100% voting</u>.

PRAYER: Jesus, help us, today, to value meekness and help us to use the power of our privilege to come to stand with those without it. Amen.



CONVERSATION: What does it feel like to be both physically and emotionally extraordinarily hungry and thirsty? How did you feel once that hunger or thirst was alleviated?

Righteousness is about desiring to restore right relationship to God and others. How hungry and thirsty are you for things to be put right in our world?

ACTION: As we hunger and struggle for a better world, we are aware that the decisions we make as a nation will impact not just us, but generations to come. The voices of young leaders need to be nurtured and heard in our democracy. Think about how you can <u>engage college students</u> in your community in the elections.

PRAYER: Gracious God, who fills us in every way, help us this day to hunger for rightness in our world and give us the courage to walk the path to rightness. Amen.



CONVERSATION: Mercy is treating people better than they deserve. Tell of a time you were merciful or someone showed you mercy.

Reconciling relationships require compassionate and kindly living. What places or relationships in the communities you inhabit are in need of some compassion and kindness? Why?

ACTION: If we are to be reconciled we need to understand the ways in which our communities are broken. Consider holding an <u>issue education forum</u> to help people connect the challenges they see in their community with the initiatives and candidates on the ballot.

PRAYER: God of all mercy, thank you for your compassion to me and, today, grow that compassion in me that I might show it to others. Amen.



CONVERSATION: If one pressed Jesus for a fuller explanation of this verse, how do you think he would describe those who are "pure in heart?"

How does being able "to see God" help us to engage with God's creation? Engage in right relationships with others? See our world as God sees it?

ACTION: The young people in your congregation can play an important role in your election organizing. Help empower your <u>youth and young adults</u> to be involved.

PRAYER: Creator God, help us, today, to see our world through your eyes and love it with your love. Amen.



CONVERSATION: It's said that those with privilege must give it up in order to be peacemakers. What would you need to give up in order to be a peacemaker? What can you do to be a peacemaker in your community?

ACTION: Voting is one of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to true security for every member of our community. Make sure your members know what's on their ballot this election season. Learn more about <u>ballot initiatives</u>.

PRAYER: Beloved Prince of Peace, convict me, today, of those things standing in the way of my peaceful actions in the world. Amen.



Matthew 5:10

#JesusStumpSpeech

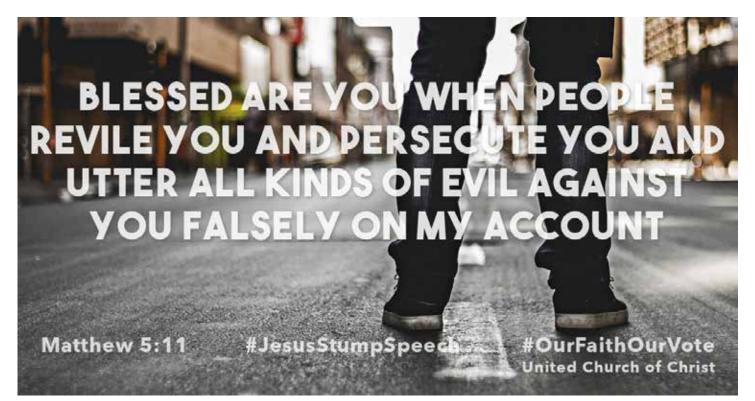
#OurFaithOurVote United Church of Christ

CONVERSATION: The first half of this verse could read, "Happy are the people who are harassed for trying to live in right relationship to God and others." Can you tell some stories of this happening to you or others you know?

What does the kingdom of heaven look like and why do you think Jesus said possessing it is a blessing?

ACTION: Stand in solidarity with those who are harassed and kept from casting their ballot. Learn more about <u>election protection efforts</u> and how you can be involved.

PRAYER: God of all gifts, help us to be thankful today for those who harass us for right living. Help us to remember it means we are going in the right direction. Amen.



CONVERSATION: Why are others hostile to those who try to live in the way of Jesus. How do you think Jesus' wants his disciples, in ancient times and today, to handle hostility?

ACTION: Voting is an act of love - a demonstration of love for our children, love for our community, and - yes - even love for our enemy. Start strategizing how you can get people in your community to the polls on Election Day. Come up with a <u>get-out-the-vote plan</u>.

PRAYER: Jesus, today help us to live out your words reminding us to love our enemies. Amen.

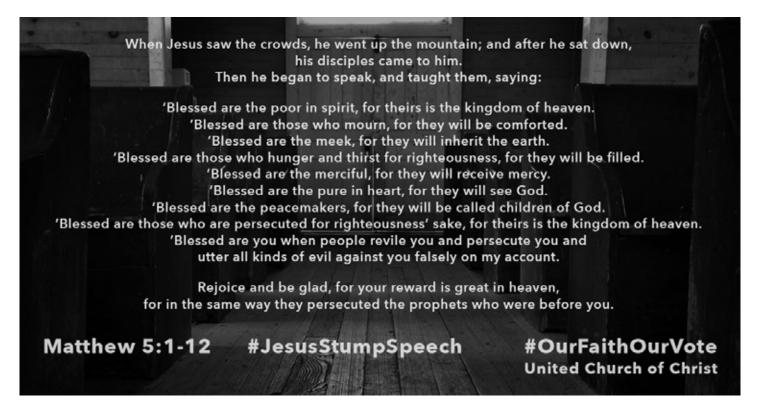


CONVERSATION: Jesus says "Take heart! People who follow God's way always get into trouble. But it's good trouble and should bring you irrepressible gladness." How are you able to rejoice and be glad in this when you get into trouble for God?

Describe the reward waiting for those who follow God's way into trouble?

ACTION: Celebrate! It is an honor and a privilege to vote. Let's make it fun again! Order <u>Our Faith Our</u> <u>Vote buttons</u> and stickers and have a pre-election celebration during fellowship hour.

PRAYER: God, who troubles the waters, bring me joy today as I walk down your path. Amen.



CONVERSATION: In the context of your culture, how would you describe the character/actions of one living into the ancient words of Jesus?

ACTION: As people of faith, we can play a unique role in this election cycle by offering a hope-filled vision of the future for all people. Help people in your pews connect their desire for righteousness with democratic participation. Host an <u>Our Faith Our Vote worship service</u> in the lead-up to Election Day.

PRAYER: Continue to remind me, O God, of Jesus' words to the disciples. Help me to live each day in your ways. Amen.