

Hello! My name is Davis Senseman (they/them, she/her), and I am honored to be supporting the important work of [UU the Vote](#) by providing legal counsel regarding how congregations can engage in bold, effective electoral work fully within your rights and IRS status as 501c3 religious organizations.

I'm collaborating with the #UUTheVote team to provide comprehensive guidance around the issue throughout the campaign.

Here are four key questions that we've already heard from several congregational leaders:

Question 1: Can we openly preach, teach, or act about being opposed to war, or supporting the Green New Deal? Have these become partisan issues?

Response: YES YOU CAN. Unless you are persuading people to vote for/against a specific candidate, you are absolutely allowed to take a definitive stance on issues, including issues regarding actions of the current administration. Opposition to war, combating climate change, resisting oppression in all forms—these are foundational UU beliefs. They can and should be at the center of sermons and congregational work.

Question 2: Can we partner with an organization if they are not a 501(c)3?

Response: YES YOU CAN. Congregations can partner with c(4) organizations or unions to carry out charitable, nonpartisan activities consistent with the church's 501(c)3 status and mission. For UU congregations, that includes activities advocating for foundational UU beliefs.

Question 3: Can Individuals from the congregation (especially the minister) publicly endorse candidates?

Response: YES THEY CAN. So long as the individual is not speaking at an official church function, in an official church publication, or otherwise using the church's assets, and does not claim to speak as a representative of the church, they are free to endorse and speak publicly on behalf of any candidate.

Question 4: Can we ever host partisan activities in the congregation?

Response: YES YOU CAN, as long as the event is consistent with pre-existing space use policies (i.e. - you don't charge for space use and aren't charging the folks holding the partisan event, or you only allow groups invited by a member to use the building). Furthermore, your policies can include a requirement that any group using the space hold similar values to UU principles to avoid having to host groups whose partisan activities are contrary to UU beliefs.

The UU the Vote team is here for your questions and looks forward to helping all UU congregations engage in prophetic, nonpartisan work in support of our values in 2020. Join us at [our January 12 launch!](#)

K. Davis Senseman (they/them, she/her) is founder of Davis Law Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota.