Election Preparation for Congregations:

Preparing in Case of Uncertainty, Misinformation, Intimidation, Violence, or Other Extraordinary Circumstances

In moments of public uncertainty, the church gathers around Word and Sacrament, joins in prayer, speaks with honesty and hope, equips people for faithful action, supports those who are most vulnerable, and nurtures relationships across difference.

Our role is not to defend any party, candidate, or preferred election outcome. Our public witness is nonpartisan and focuses on moral clarity regarding intimidation, racism, dehumanization, violence, and attacks on democratic participation.

As we prepare for national elections, congregations should consider what they would do in case of extraordinary circumstances such as uncertainty, misinformation, intimidation, or violence. We hope these preparations will never be needed. However, taking time to prepare can help you respond faithfully, calmly, and effectively if something does arise.

Trusted Messengers & Places of Community

Faith leaders and congregations hold an important position in communities and have a unique opportunity to respond in times of extraordinary circumstances:

- Faith leaders are trusted messengers in their congregations and communities.
- Congregations can be places of support and community during difficult times.
- Congregations can play a role in reducing panic and rumor-spreading.
- Relationships are built through congregations long before crises occur.
- Congregations may already have infrastructure, relationships, and experience caring for neighbors who are hurt, frightened, or confused.

Examples of Faithful Response in Difficult Times

Service	Meeting human needs, standing with people at risk, advocating for justice, and holding power accountable.
Disturbance	Refusing to remain silent when truth or human dignity is under attack, and naming idols, deception, and injustice.
Deliberation	Creating a setting of respect and care where people with different perspectives learn and reason together.
Reconciliation	Keeping open lines of communication and bringing people together without demanding false equivalence.

Theological Grounding

ELCA social teaching highlights beliefs in the God-given dignity of every person, commitment to truth-telling, emphasis on the common good, support for democratic participation, and faithful, nonpartisan citizenship.

This document was developed based on the resource A Congregational Guide for Election-Related Disruption, prepared by the Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Arizona and adapted by the Lutheran Office of Public Policy -- WI.

Action Steps & Preparation

Questions to Consider Before the Election

Reflect on the questions below and discuss them with a small team of leaders from your congregation:

- Who is the core response team for your congregation?
- Do you have quick access to contact information for partners such as: synod office, municipal clerk's office, emergency responders, ecumenical/interfaith partners, community organizations?
- In case of emergency, what is the process for authorizing: A building closure? A public statement? An emergency expenditure?
- What situation(s) would prompt:
  - Communication with the congregation?
  - Pastoral outreach or additional gathering opportunities?
  - Release of a public statement?
  - Immediate safety measures or emergency response?

The PAUSE Framework



Protect Life & Dignity
Call 911 in immediate danger. Do not confront armed, violent, or highly agitated people. Move people to safety.

Assess & Authenticate
Separate observation from rumor. Check date, location, original source, and responsible confirmation.

Understand Who Is Affected
Listen to the individuals and communities most exposed to intimidation or hatred.

Speak & Serve Faithfully
Use calm, accurate, nonpartisan language. Offer care, accompaniment, and practical help.

Engage for the Long Term
Document lessons, strengthen relationships, advocate for faithful processes, and repair harm.

Other Action Steps

- Consider planning for pastoral availability and/or listening space on November 4.
- Prepare a factual, compassionate holding statement that is easy to update.

> **Sample holding statement:**
> We are aware of reports concerning **[brief neutral description]**. We are checking information with **[responsible authority]**. Our immediate concern is the safety and dignity of **[people affected]**. We urge people not to share unverified claims. We will provide an update by **[time/channel]**.

Ask Yourself: Will this action or message increase understanding, protect a neighbor, and help people take a responsible next step?

Additional Resources & Contact information

PA Department of State: https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dos, 717-787-5280
Find your county elections office:
https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/contact-us/contact-your-election-officials
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA www.lutheranadvocacypa.org, 773-380-1700

The content is meant for informational and organizing purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice. Its authors are not legal experts. Laws, court rulings, and election procedures vary by state and locality and may change rapidly. Nothing here should be relied upon as a definitive statement of the law. If you encounter a legal issue on or around Election Day, contact a qualified election law attorney.