

ELECTION PREPAREDNESS STRATEGIES FOR HOUSES OF WORSHIP

10/26/20

We know this election season is a time of increasing anxiety. Religious leaders in Massachusetts are working with civic leaders to be prepared for safe and secure voting, the free exercise of first amendment rights, and safety for vulnerable communities. We are also planning for potential protests, if the current President wins or loses. We aim to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. We *hope* these preparations are unnecessary. And, we know that there have been increases in hate crimes against certain targeted communities, including Black churches, immigrants, women, Muslims, Jews and LGBTQIA peoples, as white supremacists have felt emboldened to act out. To ensure the safety of all people in the Commonwealth, and to prioritize the security of vulnerable communities, we recommend religious leaders across the state consider these recommendations:

1. ENCOURAGE EARLY VOTING:

As religious leaders are often trusted sources in our communities, use your authority to encourage your people to vote early. Early voting by mail is good, early voting in person is better. The deadline to request a mail-in ballot is Tues Oct 28. Early in-person voting helps minimize large crowds on Election Day Tuesday Nov 3. Find your early voting date and location on the MA Secretary of State's website [here](#) . Any questions, call 1-800-462-VOTE (8683). Every Massachusetts resident should be able to cast their ballot. If you experience trouble voting, [Common Cause's](#) non-partisan election protection hotline is 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683).

2. CREDIBLE COMMUNICATION:

We know that news moves quickly, and false rumors spread easily. Do not share information that you cannot verify from a trusted source. If there is a need for solidarity in body or in prayer, make sure that you are following the directions from trusted leaders. In the event that a particular community is targeted, do not step in unless you are asked to do so. Through the week prior and following the election, the [Massachusetts Council of Churches](#), [Black Ministerial Alliance](#), [Jewish Community Relations Council](#) and [Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center](#) will put out requests, if needs arise. Keep an eye on these social media accounts. If you have a need, contact one of these four organizations.

3. PLAN IN THE EVENT OF PROTEST:

We know that not all communities experience increased police presence as a sign of safety. We know that not all clergy are called to, or are able to, place their bodies in the streets if protests arise. We know not all protesters receive clergy presence as a sign of peace. And, we've seen that the visible presence of religious leadership can calm down tense and potentially violence escalation.

For those who are called to this work, we ask that you prepare yourself. [Training for clergy on de-escalation](#) will be offered online on **Friday October 30, 10-12pm**.

Pre-registration is required [here](#).

BE WISE AND BE CAREFUL

In the days ahead, use good judgement. Keep your eyes open. If you see something suspicious, each municipality generally has a police tip line (In Boston, call 1-800-494-TIPS). Keep your eyes open for anything that looks out of sorts. Report anything that's not right. If you serve a community that may be targeted, contact your local police department now to establish or re-establish a point of contact. Update your House of Worship's safety plans, if you have one.

This is the terrible reality of increasing anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, xenophobia, homophobic and misogynistic white supremacist violence; houses of worship are often targeted. If your house of worship experiences an incident of bias or hate, please also consider reporting to the [Anti-Defamation League](#).

We care more for bodies than buildings, and the desecration of sacred spaces is a real possibility.

We pray none of this preparation is necessary. We pray for peace and justice in this land. May this plague pass over,

[Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston & Boston Ten Point Coalition](#)

[Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center](#)

[Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston](#)

[Massachusetts Council of Churches](#)