

First United Methodist's Green Team says: Vote for candidates who will protect and heal the planet!

What is the most significant action you can take this month to fight climate change?

Vote!

Only with fierce and intelligent leaders determined to change our planet's reliance on fossil fuels will we avert a climate catastrophe. The change must be immediate. The leadership must come at every level.

This November, members of First United Methodist Church have an opportunity to vote in a [municipal election](#). On the ballot: Missoula mayor, six members of the City Council, three Municipal Court judges and proposed local-option excise taxes on both recreational and medical marijuana sales in Missoula County.

That same day – Nov. 2 – will find voters nationwide casting ballots for an abundance of local, state and national offices. Every race – from City Hall to the halls of Congress – represents a critical vote in our collective effort to slow, then stop the march of global warming.

Missoula voters must mark their ballots for candidates who will place a priority on sharply reducing the use of fossil fuels (and products made from fossil fuels, aka plastics). We need leaders who will cast a wide net in the search for solutions and act with urgency, as every year that passes leaves the planet in greater peril. We need action.

If we had the political will, Missoula could vastly expand public transportation, and rooftop solar power, and the availability/use of electric vehicles. We could establish an affordable, accessible,

honest citywide recycling program. We could integrate all of the above – solar energy, public transportation and recycling, along with diverse and affordable housing AND open spaces – into every new development.

And don't doubt the potential influence of local leaders and an active, involved citizenry on statewide climate action. When NorthWestern Energy ultimately asks the Public Service Commission for permission to charge ratepayers for the cost of its new natural gas-fired power plant in Laurel, Missoula's elected leaders must be there to object. They must recruit other cities and organizations to do the same. They must insist that ratepayers only be charged for clean, renewable sources of electricity – not for plants that continue to burn non-renewable, planet-suffocating fossil fuels.

But we've got to vote for candidates who have the courage to take bold action. Now. Not in five or 10 or 20 years. Today. Then – and this is just as critical – we've got to stand up for the integrity of our local and national electoral systems, the very foundation of American democracy. When the myth-tellers begin spinning their yarns about "stolen elections," we cannot simply sit back and shake our heads in dismay. We've got to stand up, arm in arm, and speak the truth.

Do you have questions about Missoula's Nov. 2 election? Contact Missoula County Elections today: by phone at 406-258-4751; by email at electioninfo@missoulacounty.us; in person at the Elections Center, 140 N. Russell St.; or online at the [county's election website](#).