



# CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

## Presidential Candidate Videos Study Guide

God's concern for hungry and poor people is a central theme of the Bible. And across all Christian traditions, responding to people in need is seen as a central responsibility of believers. Churches themselves engage in many ministries that provide assistance and opportunities to their members and neighbors in need. Most Christian leaders agree that our government has an important role to play as well.

Over 100 Christian leaders – heads of denominations, presidents of seminaries, heads of national organizations and agencies – have asked all 2016 presidential candidates to say what they would do to “offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.”

**The letter to the candidates, sent by the Circle of Protection, is on page 5. You may want to invite your group to scan the list of signers to see if they recognize any names or organizations.**

*"What would you do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world?"*

*– Letter to presidential candidates*

In response, many of the leading candidates have produced short videos describing their approach to hunger and poverty.

### **Psalm 72 – A Point of Reference**

The letter to the candidates provides some biblical context:

God told Samuel, as he was choosing a national leader from among Jesse's offspring, to look at their hearts (1 Samuel 16). We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfill the mandate to those who govern to "give deliverance to the needy" (Psalm 72).

Psalm 72 provides helpful perspective on the role of a government leader in relation to poverty. The Psalm is David's prayer for his son as Solomon is made king of Israel. Describing the ideal leader, he says:

. . . he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. (vs. 12-13)

There are, of course, many differences between the biblical Kingdom of Israel and the democratic government of the United States, but David's prayer reflects his understanding of God's expectations of a true national leader: that the leader will reflect God's own justice and compassion toward those living in poverty.

**Invite your group to read Psalm 72, substituting *the president for the king* and *he*. Do David's words seem to be an appropriate prayer for our president? Is it fair to ask presidential candidates what they would do to "give deliverance to the needy?"**

## **The Realities of Hunger and Poverty**

While widespread and impacting millions of people in the U.S. and over a billion people worldwide, hunger and poverty are rarely discussed by candidates for office. Pollsters and advisers tell candidates that the American people do not want to hear about these issues. This lack of attention was the motivating factor behind the Circle of Protection's effort to ask candidates to create these videos.

Many Americans are unfamiliar with the extent of suffering from hunger and poverty in their own country and globally. Similarly, they may be surprised by the substantial progress that has been made against global hunger and poverty over the past several decades.

**On page 7, you will find statistics about hunger and poverty. Ask your group to scan them and share any surprises they may discover. Are there statistics that seem particularly relevant in this election season?**

## **About the Videos**

*The videos are available for viewing at [www.circleofprotection.us/candidate-videos](http://www.circleofprotection.us/candidate-videos). They can also be found on the Circle of Protection YouTube channel. For those wanting to download the files to a computer for viewing, they can be found at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/19yt39v3251yuql/AAB19mjGFfBJBGXeZREXEwiJa?dl=0>.*

Each candidate was asked to send a three-minute video outlining what he or she would do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.

The three *ands* in this request are important. The intention was to have candidates address:

- Both help (safety net programs) *and* opportunity (ways to move out of poverty)
- Both hunger *and* poverty (related issues, but often requiring different responses)
- Both the domestic *and* global needs (since God's concern is for all people)

As your group views the videos, they will notice that the candidates have taken very different approaches in addressing the issues. Some have "touched all the bases," and others have focused on a particular facet of the request.

**You may want to ask the group to discuss what it means that some candidates completely ignored the request to address hunger and poverty beyond the United States.**

The videos also have very different styles. If asked, we suggested that our desired format was to have the candidate directly speaking to the camera, without other speakers or additional video footage. This, however, was not a requirement, so some videos are more highly produced, so to speak, than others.

The Circle of Protection pledged that it would not evaluate the candidates' policy proposals or endorse any candidate. The videos allow the candidates to speak for themselves. We do encourage those who watch them, however, to decide which best reflects biblical values.

### **Discussing the Videos**

Each of the candidates' videos is 3 to 4 minutes in length. You may want to plan to view 2 or 3 videos during one session, allowing members of your group to compare and contrast the candidates' approaches.

Consider using some of the following questions to guide the group's discussion:

1. What facts about poverty does the candidate address?
  - a. Do these facts seem to be in line with the statistics on hunger and poverty (see page 7 for a brief statistical overview)?
  - b. Do they ring true to your experience?
2. The psalmist declares, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path."
  - a. What faith values seem to be guiding the candidate's direction?
  - b. How does the candidate's attitude toward poverty compare with those expressed in Psalm 72?
3. What roles does the candidate see for the church and the government in addressing hunger and poverty?
  - a. What are the policy solutions that the candidate proposes?
4. What do you think the impact of the candidate's proposals would be on people living in poverty. . .
  - a. in your local community?
  - b. in our global community?

### **What Would You Do?**

A group desiring to dig deeper into this issue could challenge each of its members to say what he or she would do, if elected president, to “offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.” Members could write a single-page statement – or they could use their smart phones to record a three-minute video of their own. Comparing and contrasting these statements with the candidates’ videos could provoke lively discussion.

### **Praying for Those Living in Poverty – and for the Candidates**

Loving God, you created the world in love and called us to be stewards of all that you have made. Help us to be good stewards who make your will done on earth as it is in heaven. We know that you sent us your Son that we might have life and have it abundantly. Although you have graciously given us all that we need to survive, our mismanagement and poor stewardship of your bountiful creation has allowed poverty to continue to exist both in our own nation and across the world. Grant us both the will and the wisdom to work together to be good stewards who use your resources as intended – to produce abundant life for all people. Amen.

Sovereign God, Paul tells us that those who rule are your servants for our good. We pray for the men and women who are running for the office of president. May they truly seek your will and the good of all people. Give them your compassion and justice. And guide us, blessed as we are with the freedom to elect our own leaders, to choose a president who will bring deliverance and hope to those who live in poverty. In the name of Jesus our deliverer, amen.



# CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

Dear [Candidate]

Thank you for your willingness to stand for election to the office of president of the United States. The calling to public service is a sacred vocation. We hold you, and all of the candidates for nomination and election, in our prayers.

As national leaders from all the major branches of Christianity, we care deeply about many issues facing our country, but ending hunger and poverty is a top priority of our work together. We are praying for a president who will make ending hunger and poverty a top priority of his or her administration. Are you that leader?

We are making a simple request of each candidate and will publicly pursue your positive response:

**Please produce a three-minute video telling the American people what you would do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.**

It is our intention to distribute candidates' videos broadly among our churches and to the public, as we did with similar videos produced by Governor Romney and President Obama in 2012. The Circle of Protection will not publicly evaluate your policy positions or endorse any candidate. Our goal is simply to make ending hunger and poverty part of our nation's election-year dialog.

God told Samuel, as he was choosing a national leader from among Jesse's offspring, to look at their hearts (1 Samuel 16). We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfil the mandate to those who govern to "give deliverance to the needy" (Psalm 72).

Your campaign may discuss this invitation with the Rev. Gary Cook by contacting him at [gcook@circleofprotection.us](mailto:gcook@circleofprotection.us). We ask that you reply within two months from the date you declare your candidacy.

Thank you again for your public service. May God bless and guide you in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Moderator,  
Mennonite Church USA

Dr. Paul Alexander, Co-President,  
Evangelicals for Social Action

Leith Anderson, President, National  
Association of Evangelicals

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Executive  
Director of Ecumenical Office,  
Armenian Orthodox Church

Marv Baldwin, Executive Director,  
Foods Resource Bank

Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, Sr.,  
President/CEO, Global Alliance  
Interfaith Networks (G.A.I.N.)

M. Craig Barnes, President, Princeton

Theological Seminary

James H. Barnes, President, Bethel  
Seminary of Bethel University

Stephan Bauman, President and CEO,  
World Relief

Dr. A.D. Beacham, Jr., General  
Superintendent and Presiding Bishop,  
International Pentecostal Holiness  
Church

David L. Beckley, President, Rust  
College

David Beckmann, President, Bread for  
the World

Geoffrey Black, General Minister and  
President, United Church of Christ

Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr., Presiding  
Bishop, Church of God in Christ

Rev. Deborah C. Blue, Executive  
Minister, Evangelical Covenant Church  
Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston,  
Executive Director, Disciples Center for  
Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)

Tony Campolo, Founder, Evangelical  
Association for the Promotion of  
Education and the Red Letter Christian

Galen Carey, Vice President of  
Government Relations, National  
Association of Evangelicals

Patrick Carolan, Executive Director,  
Franciscan Action Network

John L. Carr, Director, Initiative on  
Catholic Social Thought and Public  
Life, Georgetown University

Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General  
Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor  
Conference

Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian  
Community Development Association  
(CCDA)

Shane Claiborne, Founder, The Simple  
Way

Dr. Gary Cook, President, Dallas  
Baptist University

Rev. Martin B. Copenhaver, President,  
Andover Newton Theological School

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|---|---|---|--|
| T. Scott Daniels, Dean, Azusa Pacific Seminary  | Richard B. Hays, Dean, Duke University Divinity School  | President-Elect, Catholic Charities USA   | Michael G. Scales, President, Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary  |
| Rev. Dr. Thomas R. De Vries, General Secretary, Reformed Church in America                          | Mitch Hescox, President, Evangelical Environmental Network  | Reverend Dr. David F. McAllister-Wilson, President, Wesley Theological Seminary                                 | Stephen F. Schneck, Ph.D., Director, Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of                            |
| Wendy J. Deichmann, President, United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio                          | Dennis P. Hollinger, President, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary   | John McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service   | Dr. Jake Schrum, President, Emory and Henry College  |
| Pat Donahoo, Executive Director, Disciples Women, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)            | Virginia Holmstrom, Executive Director, American Baptist Women's Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA | James McDonald, President, San Francisco Theological Seminary   | Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.  |
| Hal Donaldson, President, Convoy of Hope, Inc.  | Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland: A Church Distributed   | Julius T. Medenblik, President, Calvin Theological Seminary   | Dr. Ronald J. Sider, Senior Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy, Palmer Seminary at Eastern University |
| Robert Duffett, President, Eastern University   | Dale T. Irvin, President, New York Theological Seminary   | Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean, Boston University School of Theology  | Art Simon, President Emeritus, Bread for the World   |
| Daniel J. Earheart-Brown, President, Memphis Theological Seminary                                   | Edison O. Jackson, Ed. D., President, Bethune-Cookman University  | Dr. Shirley Mullen, President, Houghton College   | Richard Stearns, President, World Vision United States   |
| Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America                        | Susan Jackson-Dowd, Executive Director, Presbyterian Women  | Rich Nathan, Senior Pastor, Vineyard Columbus   | Gregory Sterling, Dean, Yale University Divinity School  |
| Gary L. Edmonds, President/CEO, Food for the Hungry   | The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church                 | Stanley J. Noffsinger, General Secretary, Church of the Brethren  | Rev. Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA   |
| Jason Fileta, Director, Micah Challenge USA   | Commissioner David E. Jeffrey, National Commander, The Salvation Army                                       | Randall O'Brien, Th.D., President, Carson-Newman University   | Dr. Carla Sunberg, President, Nazarene Theological Seminary  |
| Dr. Gaddis J. Faulcon, Interim President, Shaw University   | Sr. Carol Keehan, SC, President and CEO, Catholic Health Association  | Robert Parham, Executive Director, Baptist Ethics Center  | Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, President of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns, United Methodist Church        |
| Mark Francis, President, Catholic Theological Union   | Bishop David Kendall, Bishop, Free Methodist Church USA   | Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)                              | Steve Timmermans, Executive Director, Christian Reformed Church in North America   |
| Art Gay, Minister at Large, Evangelical Initiatives International                                   | Very Rev. Timothy P Kesicki, S.J., President, Jesuit Conference   | Richard E. Pates, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Des Moines  | Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert, Jr., President, National Baptist Church of America, Inc.   |
| Sheila K. Gilbert, National President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Council of the United States | Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, President, Claremont School of Theology   | Suzii Paynter, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship  | Javier Viera, Dean, Drew University Theological School   |
| Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Lott Carey Convention                    | Mark Labberton, President, Fuller Theological Seminary  | Roy L. Peterson, President, American Bible Society  | Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners  |
| Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America                  | Marilyn Lariviere, National President, Church Women United, Inc.  | Riess Potterveld, President, Graduate Theological Union (An interreligious institution)                         | Gary Walter, President, Evangelical Covenant Church  |
| David Greenhaw, President, Eden Theological Seminary  | Eric LeCompte, Executive Director, Jubilee U.S.A. Network   | Soong-Chan Rah, Milton B. Engbretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism, North Park University | Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  |
| Charlotte Haberaecker, President and CEO, Lutheran Services in America                              | Dr. David Lose, President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia                                    | Bishop Lawrence Reddick III, Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church                                | Dr. Robert K. Welsh, President, Council on Christian Unity   |
| Kevin Hagan, President and CEO, Feed the Children   | Jan Love, Dean, Candler School of Theology of Emory University  | Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference                             | Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Facilitator, National African American Clergy Network   |
| Ambassador Tony Hall, Executive Director, Alliance to End Hunger                                    | Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church   | Andrew Ryskamp, Director, World Renew   | Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ   |
| Rev. Sekinah Hamlin, Director, Ecumenical Poverty Initiative  | Bishop Denis Madden, Auxiliary Bishop, Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore                                    | Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition   |  |
| Herman Harmelink, III, Ecumenical Officer, International Council of Community Churches              | Carlos Malave, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together in the USA                                   | Bishop Monroe Saunders, Presiding Bishop, United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic)                             |  |
|   | Sister Donna Markham, O.P., PhD,  |   |  |

# Poverty and Hunger Facts

## United States

Poverty (U.S. Census Bureau data for 2014):

- 46.7 million people (14.8 percent) were in poverty.
- 15.5 million (21.1 percent) children under the age of 18 were in poverty.
- 4.6 million (10 percent) seniors 65 and older were in poverty.

Hunger (USDA data for 2014):

- 1 in 7 U.S. households were food-insecure (unsure at some point how they would provide food for their next meal).
- More than 48 million people lived in food-insecure households.
- 15.3 million children (1 in 5) lived in food-insecure households.

## Worldwide

Poverty (World Bank data)

- In 2012, 12.7 percent of the world's population lived at or below \$1.90 a day. That's down from 37 percent in 1990 and 44 percent in 1981.
- This means that, in 2012, 896 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day, compared with 1.95 billion in 1990, and 1.99 billion in 1981.
- Despite progress, the poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 42%.

Hunger (World Food Programme data)

- 795 million people (about 1 in 9) in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy, active life.
- Asia is the continent with the most hungry people; sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence (1 in 4).
- Poor nutrition causes 45 percent of deaths in children under 5 (3.1 million each year).