



**A CALL TO ACTION TO FAITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
IN THE 2020 US CENSUS**

PREPARED BY

**REVEREND ROBERT E. BIEKMAN &
REVEREND BEVERLY DUKES
UNITED VOICES FOR CHILDREN**



Count ALL The Kids

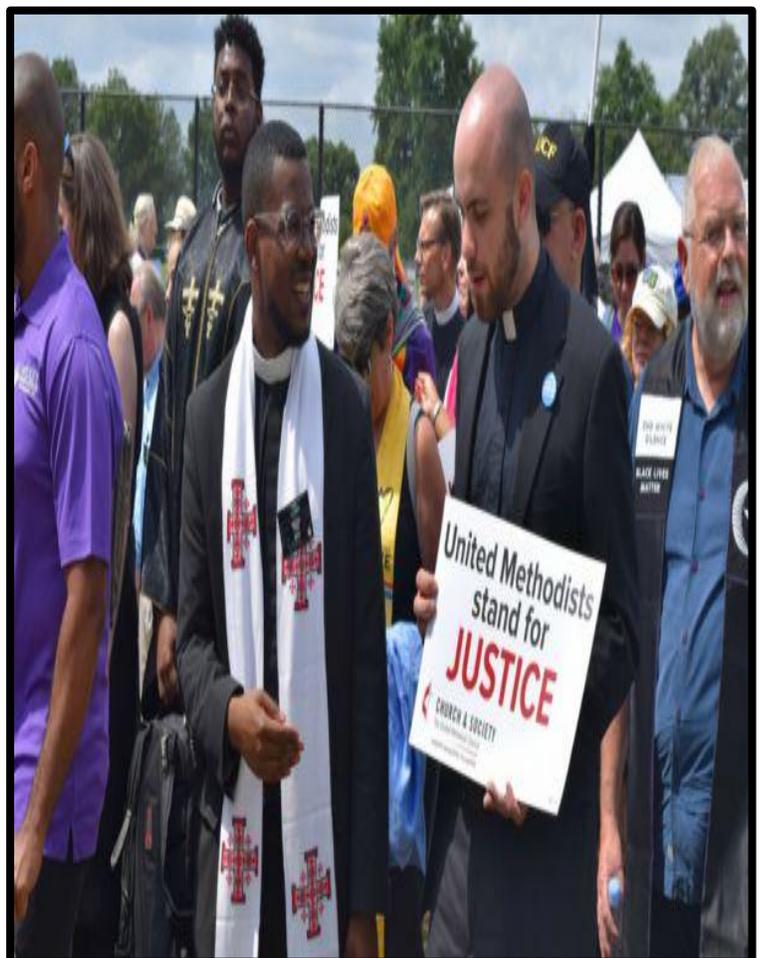
Introduction

Every ten years the United States census collects statistical data concerning its economy and population. The information collected affects how federal funds and resources are allocated to local governments and communities. The census is acutely critical for distressed communities where high incidences of poverty exists. Federal funds distributed using census data affect economic development, infrastructure, education, medical, and other critical issues.

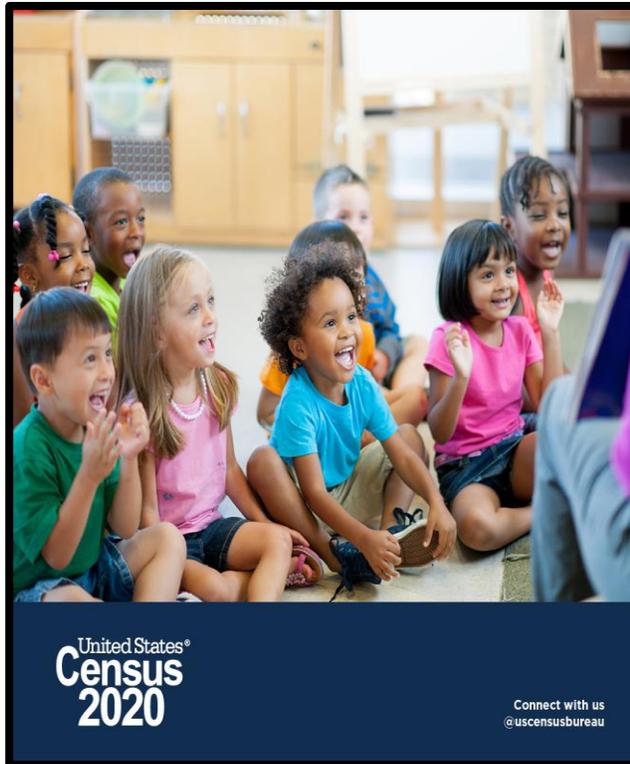
In 2020, faith communities have the opportunity and responsibility to support local communities in completing the census. By assisting educating and empowering communities in the completion of the 2020 US Census, faith communities are safeguarding the well-being of children's lives. This call to action highlights why completing the 2020 census is important from a theological, biblical, sociological perspective and actions faith communities can take to ensure we **“COUNT ALL THE KIDS.”**

A Theological Perspective

As people faith are called to hear the cries of the needy and stand for what is just and right. Some children and families are suffering due to lack of or inadequate resources in their communities. The suffering of children and families is unjust. By ensuring everyone is counted in your communities through the 2020 census, you are addressing some of the systemic issues that plague our society. Additionally, through advocacy you are protecting the presence and future lives of God's beloved children.



Count ALL The Kids

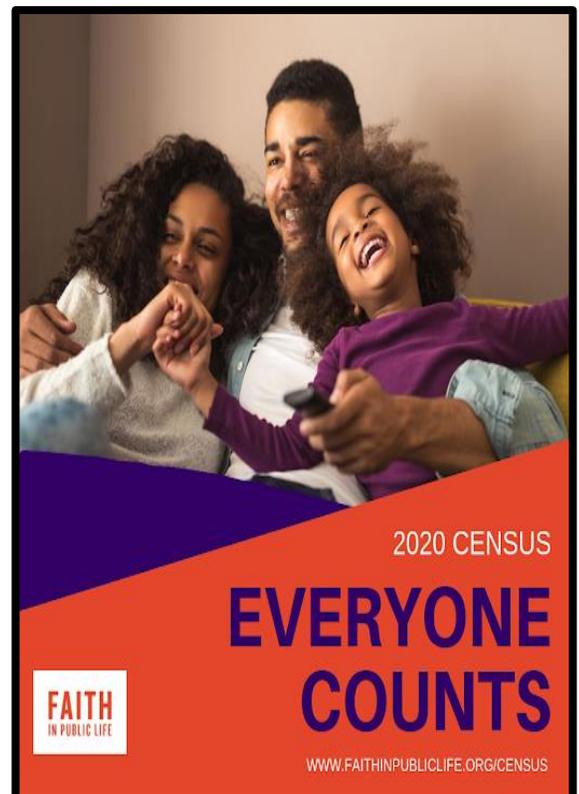


According to the 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions, ¶161.B

“We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect and fidelity,” and affirms that children are “acknowledged to be full human being in their own right, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations” and that “children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well-being as do adults, and these rights we affirm as theirs regardless of actions or inactions of their parents or guardians.”¹

A Biblical Perspective

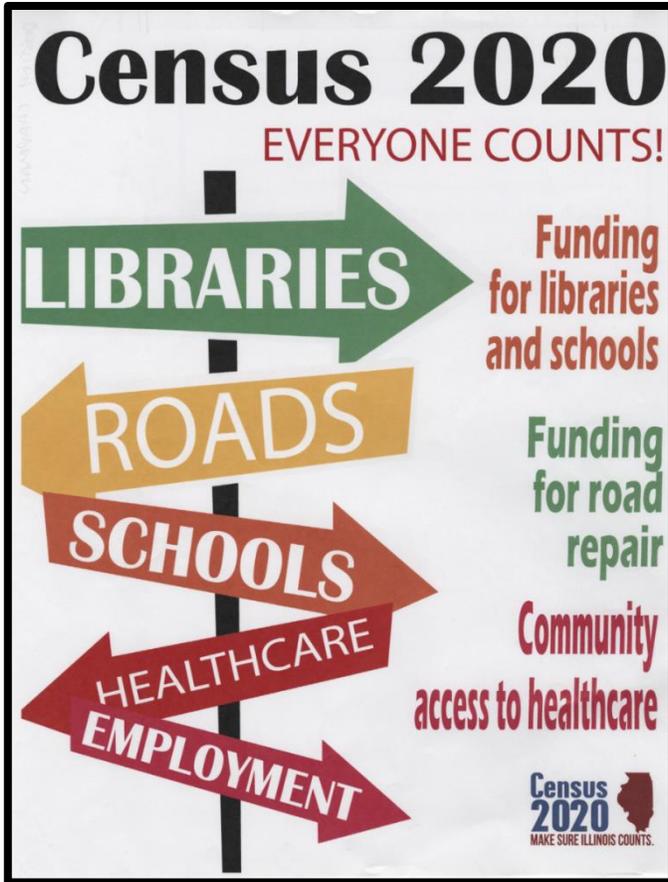
The Bible affirms God’s deep love for humanity. Biblical texts provide evidence of God consistently reaching out to humankind. The Gospel of John chapter 3 is a reminder of God’s unconditional love for humanity. John 3:16 reads, *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”²* As God loves all of us, we are called to love all that God loves which includes all of God’s children. By advocating for full participation in the US 2020 census, you are expressing God’s love to humanity by securing every person, every family, every child has the resources they need to survive in our world today.



¹ Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2016 (Nashville Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016) 106.

² John 3:16 NIV

Count ALL The Kids



In an article titled, “The Importance of the U.S. Census to Me”, Raul Alegría, United Methodist, Church and Society board member explains,

“Why is (the census) it important to me that all persons are counted in the U.S. Census? In the gospel of Mark, Jesus outlined the greatest commandments. The second of these commandments, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ (Mk 12:31) connects to the noble vision of our Founders to ensure all persons are cared for in the United States. God gives each of us that responsibility to love and care for yourself and love and care for your neighbor. By being counted, you are making sure that your community has representation and resources that it needs in the future.”³

The Apostle Paul provides yet another Biblical perspective on the rights of citizens. Throughout the Acts of The Apostle Paul repeatedly

claims his Roman citizenship and the rights he should be afforded as a citizen of the state. After suffering the indignity of a public flogging, in Acts 16:37, Paul says, *“They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens.”⁴* Paul exercises his right of citizenship; his citizenship in both heaven and earth.

A Sociological Perspective

In the United States, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has impacted black and brown communities more severely than all others. The reality is that many of the underlying causes of this disparity can be connected to the pre-existing conditions caused by lack of funding for programming and infrastructure that is apportioned as a direct result of census response. In theory resources go to communities where the most people and greatest need exists. If people are not counted, for whatever reason the resources received are adversely impacted.

³ Susan Henry-Crowe, “Building Tomorrow with a Faithful Census Today” accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/building-tomorrow-with-a-faithful-census-today-1010>

⁴ Acts 16:37 NIV

Count ALL The Kids

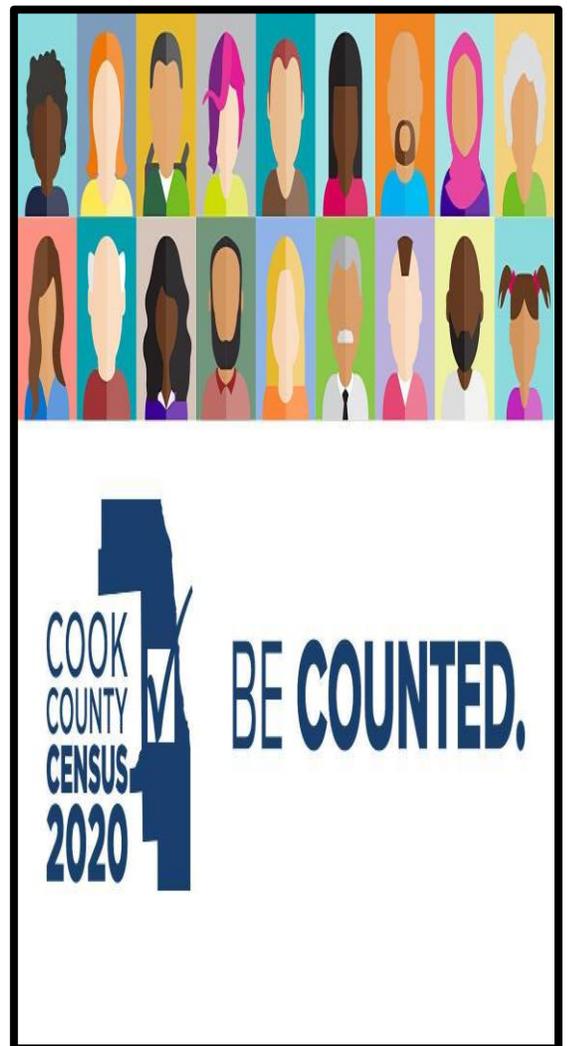
The preamble to [The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights](https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/) states, “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”⁵ A basic human right is that every person has the right to live into their full potential with dignity. Unfortunately, systems of injustice have wreaked havoc on many of these already distressed communities. In these communities, our most vulnerable families experience higher incidences of poverty and crime. Additionally, when resources are scarce or unavailable this directly impacts the health and overall welfare of God's children. We are called to be good stewards over God's creation which includes federal funds.

Through the 2020 US Census, local communities have the potential to receive funding for a myriad of projects including those addressing environmental justice issues such as wastewater projects, clean air programs and hazardous waste management programs. These initiatives improve the quality of life for all children.

The 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions states, “Our covenant with God calls us to steward, protect and defend God's creation. The psalmist proclaims, “The earth is the Lord's and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1) reaffirming our charge to care for creation as a trustee of God's handiwork (Genesis 1:28). We are to delight in and praise God for the abundance and diversity of creation (Psalm 148 and honor God's covenant established with all living creatures (Genesis 9:9)”⁶

In *The Search for Common Ground*, theologian Howard Thurman writes,

“...It becomes clear that if there are any citizens within the state who by definition, stated or implied, are denied freedom of access to the resources of community as established within the state, such persons are assailed at the very foundation of their sense of belonging...The term ‘second class citizen’ is often used to describe such a status...such persons are ‘outsiders’ living in the midst ‘insiders’ required to honor the same demands of sovereignty but denied the basic rewards of sovereignty.”⁷



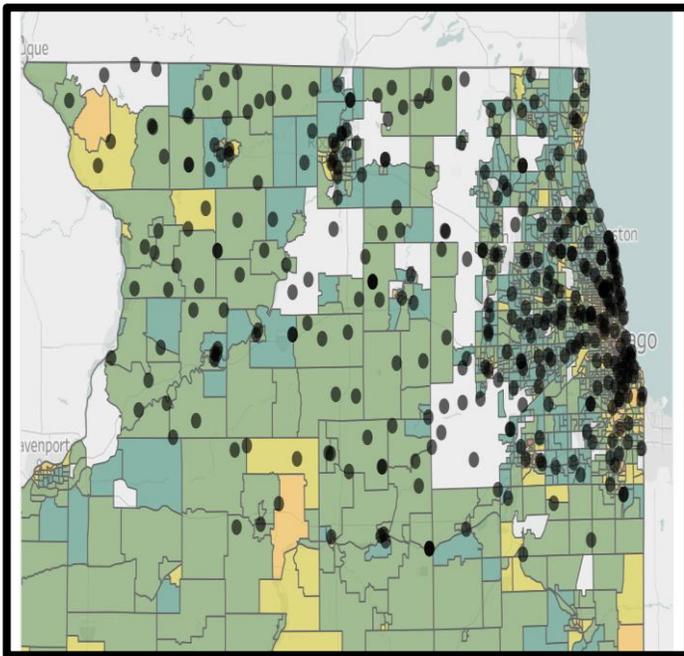
⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁶ 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions, 67-73. resolution number

⁷ Thurman, Howard. *The Search for Common Ground*. Richmond: Friends United Press, 1986

Count ALL The Kids

How Is Your Community Doing? Census Return Rates



This interactive map which highlights the 2020 Census. When you click on this map, you will be directed to the Northern Illinois 2020 Census Map which will provide you with specific information regarding the 2020 US Census response rate in your church communities.

This information may be used to develop an action plan for your faith community.

What are Some Possible Next Steps?

What can Individuals do?	What can your congregation/faith community do?
Pray for your community & congregation	Pray Publicly
Complete the 2020 census for yourself	Conduct a Bible Study, develop a sermon/sermon series
Connect with local US Census Bureau representatives	Host a Census educational event (UVC can help with this)
Find out the census response rate in your community.	Combine existing outreach ministries with census completion
Use your social media platform to promote and explain the importance of the 2020 census	Contact with local schools and provide promotional material regarding the 2020 census to be disseminated to parents and caretakers
Encourage friends and family to host a watch party on social media to promote the participation and completion of the 2020 census	Distribute 2020 census promotional material to residents throughout your community

Conclusion

We each have the ability to respond to this call to action and advocate for children. The 2020 Census ensures all God's beloved children get equal opportunities through the allocation of resources especially in distressed communities. Through collective and focused effort we have the ability to increase the response rate for people living in your community. Let's work to increase the response rate for the 2020 US Census making certain those most in need receive resources needed to live into their potential.