How can people of faith help?
Our help is especially important for getting the word out to our neighbors living in our traditionally hard-to-count communities. Some of the Pennsylvanians who are most likely to be missed in our Census count include children, immigrants, and people of color. Rural households and residents experiencing economic hardship or homelessness are also likely to be missed. Our population count determines the federal support Pennsylvanians receive for the next ten years for education, healthcare, housing, food security, roads, and more.

Here are some specific ideas for what your congregation can do:

- Address the importance of the Census in the context of worship—sermons, homilies, prayers, etc.
- Hold educational forums for your congregation and community
- Reach out as a congregation to hard to count populations and stress how important it is that they respond
- Provide assistance in responding to the Census to vulnerable populations that you serve—the homeless, the hungry, LGBTQ persons, seniors, children and youth, poor and low-income—by providing the mechanism for response or guiding them to places where they can respond

The ways you can help are only limited by your imagination!

Learn more and find resources for education and assistance:

- Pennsylvania Census 2020: https://www.pa.gov/Census/
- Faith in Public Life: https://www.faithinpubliclife.org/Census
- Pennsylvania Council of Churches: https://www.pachurchesadvocacy.org/resources/2020-Census-resources/ (if you can’t find what you need, contact s.strauss@pachurches.org)

Shape Your Future—Everyone Counts in Pennsylvania!

The Census is a constitutionally mandated count of all people residing in the US. It is meant to count all people regardless of race, faith tradition, immigration status or economic status, and occurs every 10 years.

Why is the Census important?
The U.S. Constitution requires a Census of all residents in the entire country every 10 years. The Census counts every person living in the U.S. once (and only once) in the right place. You are counted based on where you are living on April 1, 2020.

Everyone Counts
You might be living in an apartment, house, group housing situation (like a dorm or nursing home). You might be experiencing homelessness. Regardless of your living situation, you count as a Pennsylvanian. It also doesn’t matter what your citizenship status is, how old you are, or your gender. If you live here, you matter to Pennsylvania and the Census.

Fair Representation
Neighborhoods change over time. The Census makes note of these demographic changes and reports the statistics. This information is then used to determine how many seats each state gets in the U.S. House of Representatives. Pennsylvania currently has 18 Congressional representatives. We used to have 19 but lost a seat after the 2010 Census.

Additionally, state officials use the statistics produced by the decennial Census to redraw U.S. congressional and state legislative districts.

Federal Spending & Programs
Census data are used to decide how $675 billion in federal public funding is spent every year. Pennsylvania gets $26.8 billion annually through our 16 largest federally-funded programs. That’s about $2,000 per Pennsylvanian each year.

These numbers may change based on our 2020 Census data. Federal funding supports many important programs and services for Pennsylvanians, including in healthcare, food security, education, transportation, housing, community development, support for families, and more.
So why is the Census important to people of faith?

Dignity!

- We believe that all people, regardless of race, religion, or immigration status, are made in God’s image. Our God-given dignity demands recognition.
- What we declare when we answer the Census is that we are here, and we are part of “we the people” and we refuse to be excluded.
- Fear not is the most often repeated phrase in Hebrew and Christian scripture—repeated 365 times. Do not be afraid to state your presence.

Community!

- You count in this country. Your work and your contribution to the common good and common ground, moves beyond the walls of where we worship.
- Your voice matters. Your communities, your schools, your children need you to be counted to receive the right economic apportionment.
- We must work together and do everything in our power to make sure that everyone in our local communities are counted so we all can get the resources we deserve.

Democracy!

- By completing the Census and encouraging our communities do so, we claim our rightful representation and fulfill our responsibility to our neighbors and future generations.
- As spiritual and moral people, to participate in our democracy is to be counted.

We ALL count in the eyes of God—let’s ALL count in the eyes of our government!

Information you need to know

Historically, these communities have been undercounted:

- African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans
- Households with low incomes
- Immigrants and individuals with low English-language proficiency
- Renters
- Residents who live in non-traditional housing
- Rural residents
- Highly mobile residents, such as farmworkers
- Very young children aged 0-4

How & When to Respond

Every household can respond to the 2020 Census online, by mail, or by phone. Responding to the Census should take only a few minutes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 95% of households will receive their Census invitation in the mail and the remaining 5% will get their Census invitation delivered by a Census taker working for the bureau. These invitations will give you information about the ways you can answer the Census. Less than 1% of households will be counted in-person by a Census taker.

Census Day is April 1, 2020

Mark your calendar. April 1, 2020 is National Census Day. By this date, every home will have received their invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. When you respond to the Census, you tell the U.S. Census Bureau where you are living as of April 1, 2020.

As good neighbors and community members, we want everyone to be counted in the Census. Many of us likely have friends, family, coworkers, and others in our communities who don’t know about the importance of the 2020 Census. Help us spread awareness in your community. Text PACOUNTS to 898211 on your mobile phone to receive text message updates about the 2020 Census in either English or Spanish. Standard data rates may apply.