

## **First and Center**

Pastor's Blog

March 3, 2020



Less than a month from now, you will be receiving a request from the U.S. Census Bureau to fill out the Census form sent out every ten years. The purpose is to count everyone who lives in this country. Note, the purpose is NOT to count every *citizen*, but every *person*. That's important. Undocumented folk, green card holders, everyone who lives on U.S. territory is counted.

You may think this is unimportant, but nothing could be further from the truth. These numbers determine how much money comes from the federal government to our cities and towns for highway projects, schools, and special programs. These numbers determine how many seats each state gets in the House of Representatives. These numbers are used by cities and towns to determine how schools are allocated, how many medical facilities are needed, etc.

This year, you can fill out the form online, on paper, or over the phone. Populations often undercounted include children under school age (every person in your household, even a newborn, must be counted), non-English speakers (you can get an online questionnaire in twelve languages), people living in poverty or without an address, African American, Latinx, Asian Americans, Indigenous people, religious minorities, and immigrants (who often fear that ICE will get this information. By law, it will not. And there is NO citizenship question.)

How will this work? Each address in the nation will receive a letter in the mail sometime in March inviting them to respond online with a unique ID code. A paper option will also be offered. Census workers will go door-to-door to those who have not responded by the end of June, and will make an attempt to contact those without an address (we have spoken to our census representative about coming to our Sunday dinner).

If you have questions, contact the Census Bureau at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov) or 1-800-354-7271. We know that in the mind and heart of God, everyone counts. Let's make sure that our local, state, and national governments know this, too!

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister