



National  
Council of  
Churches

# VOTER EMPOWERMENT 2022

**A CHURCH-BASED ACTION PLAN**



<https://bit.ly/voterempower>

# INTRODUCTION

“Do not fear, for I am with you,  
Do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”  
Isaiah 41:10 NRSVue



The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) joins with our member denominations to affirm that each vote is precious, just as each person is a precious child of God. Voting is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have to create a more perfect union. The right to vote is the way we determine the future for our families, communities, and country. We are stronger as a nation when more people participate in our democracy.

However, we are faced with many challenges as voting laws have changed in 35 states. Polling places have changed. Voter ID procedures have changed. Many voters have been removed from the voter rolls. Members of our churches may not be aware of the changes. In addition, crucial protections that would have been provided by the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act were never passed by the U.S. Senate.

In the face of such unprecedented challenges, the NCC is working in partnership with Faiths United to Save Democracy to encourage faith leaders to fill-in the gaps and help prepare all people of faith to exercise their civic responsibility by voting safely and fairly. Local congregations can provide valuable resources and reliable information to help their members wade through these barriers to vote.

The NCC is an ally of the voter campaigns created by several of our denominations and we are now inviting additional churches to join the **NCC Voter Empowerment 2022** campaign and take action on the local church level **each month until Election Day**. Churches can play a pivotal role in encouraging each voter to create a plan to vote and make their voice heard.

**Use the hashtag #VoteReady.**



***Excerpt from the NCC Statement “Voting Rights Are Human Rights” made on January 17, 2022:***

“But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Amos 5:24 NRSV

The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA adopted a Human Rights Policy Statement in 1963, setting forth general principles related to the inherent worth, rights and responsibilities of all persons. The statement recognizes:

“The right to full participation of the person in political and civic life, including the opportunity: to vote by secret ballot...the right to vote is a basic human right.”

The NCC was also actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, including having our leaders march with the late civil rights icons Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Congressman John Lewis across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. We must remain vigilant and resolute to make sure the right to vote is protected.

Our faith compels us.

The 1963 statement also set forth our belief as Christians that “human beings are made in the image of God, that every person is of intrinsic worth before God, and that every individual has a right to the fullest possible opportunities for the development of life abundant and eternal. Denial of rights and freedoms that inhere in an individual’s worth before God are not simply a crime against humanity; they are a sin against God” (1963 Statement, using inclusive language.)

Throughout the years and at pivotal moments in history we have reaffirmed these beliefs and statement. This time is no different. We believe that the Church, other faith partners, and civil and human rights advocates must take a stand as the beloved community, articulated by Dr. King:

“An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” (Dr. King, Jr, Letter from a Birmingham Jail)

Our conscience compels us.

When rights of one are denied, we are all impacted. We must stand together to ensure the full acceptance and citizenship for all in our society, guaranteeing and protecting each person’s human rights on an equal basis. The right to vote is the very center and core of a fair and free democracy. To deny access to the vote is to deny the very humanity and sacredness of those denied.

Full Statement: <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/voting-rights-are-human-rights/>

# VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACTIONS FOR 2022

- **PLAN YOUR CHURCH CAMPAIGN:** Organize a voter engagement coordinator and/or team of volunteers to actively provide accurate voting logistical information, help get proper identification, and assist with transportation to the polls.
- **EDUCATE ON CHECK-UP SUNDAYS:** Teach on the issues that impact your members. Share basic voting information and highlight changes up to Election Day. Make sure all eligible voters in your congregation are registered to vote. Understand what your house of worship can legally do in elections.
- **PREACH AND PRAY ON CHECK-UP SUNDAYS:** Preach messages on justice, righteousness, and civic responsibility and pray for free, fair, and safe elections.
- **ENGAGE LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON CHECK-IN WEDNESDAYS:** Provide members with social media messages to share on their personal accounts and through their networks to encourage voter turnout. Encourage your younger members to vote.
- **HOLD EXPUNGEMENT CLINICS:** Work with local, county and state organizations to host expungement clinics so that eligible returning citizens can regain their right to vote.
- **HOST CANDIDATE & ISSUE FORUMS:** Invite candidates for local and state elections to share their views in a candidate forum or host an issue briefing about a ballot initiative or an important issue impacting your community. Invite candidates and experts to discuss the issue for the congregation and invite the surrounding community to participate.
- **HOST TURNOUT SUNDAY SERVICE ON NOVEMBER 6:** Prepare your House of Worship to get out and vote.
- **STOP BY POLLING PLACES:** Have faith leaders visit the polling sites of your members to show support and make sure voting rights are upheld. Faith leaders can also encourage voters standing in line to vote outside of polling places. Check local and state laws, many of which have changed since the last election, to find out what's permissible.

# CHECK-UP SUNDAYS

**EVERY 2nd SUNDAY  
UNTIL TURNOUT SUNDAY**

**JULY 10, 2022**

**THEME: CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION**

**GET FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO CHECK OR REGISTER / CHECK YOUR HOUSEHOLD TO BE SURE EVERYONE IS REGISTERED AND VOTING / CHECK WITH SENIORS RESIDING IN SENIOR COMMUNITIES**



## **Sample Bulletin Announcement:**

Intro #1 This year, we will be participating with other faith communities across the nation to prepare for the upcoming elections. We, as people of faith, simply cannot afford to stay home as not voting can endanger the economic and spiritual vitality of our communities.

Intro #2 We have the power to vote for leaders who will support life-sustaining programs for underserved Americans such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, lower prescription drug costs, police/community relations, criminal justice reform, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps).

Main announcement:

This month **CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION / GET FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO CHECK OR REGISTER / BE SURE YOUR HOUSEHOLD IS REGISTERED AND VOTING.** 17 million U.S. voters were purged from the voting rolls between 2016 and 2018. Check your voting status, register, or re-register.

This Sunday visit VOTE.ORG <https://www.vote.org/> or <https://www.turnoutsunday.com/> to

- Check your voting registration status or
- Register or re-register, if necessary.
- Make sure 5 friends, family members and co-workers are registered to vote.

Sign up to join our voter engagement team and volunteer to help educate and register others to vote. Contact our Voter Engagement Team Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_ (phone number/email) for more information on joining our Voter Engagement Team.

Additional information for inclusion:

- If you are a formerly incarcerated person (returning citizen), check with your local elections office to know your rights – especially if you were convicted of a felony and have fully served and completed your sentence and are no longer on probation or parole. If you want your rights restored, visit [www.restoreyourvote.org](http://www.restoreyourvote.org)
- If you are in the military - [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)



**CHECK-UP SUNDAYS**  
**EVERY 2nd SUNDAY**  
**UNTIL TURNOUT SUNDAY**

**AUGUST 14, 2022**  
**THEME: CHECK VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS**

Background information: 35 states have laws requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification at the polls. The remaining 15 states and the District of Columbia use other methods to verify the identity of voters. Many states have enacted tougher voter identification requirements that require specific ID's. Low-income and marginalized citizens, students, and seniors are less likely to possess these forms of identification.

Churches can help alleviate confusion and make sure their congregants and community are #VoteReady by spreading the word early in the summer about what kind of ID is required to vote in their communities. Additional support might be necessary and churches can provide these services, such as internet access, help filling out the appropriate forms, providing a ride and/or accompanying them to the office issuing the ID, or even financial assistance to pay the fees.

To research your state's Voter ID Requirements, visit the Faiths United to Save Democracy website: <https://www.turnoutsunday.com/>.

**Sample Bulletin Announcement:**

Exercise your power, protect your right to vote, and do your civic duty by checking the voter ID requirements. In \_\_\_\_\_, you are required/not required to have ID to vote. (Include specifics for your church's jurisdiction in the announcement.)

Contact our Voter Engagement Team Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone number/email) if you need help to obtain proper identification, such as internet access, assistance filling out the appropriate forms, a ride to the proper place to obtain an ID, or financial assistance to pay the fees for the ID. \_\_\_\_\_ Church is dedicated to making sure all our members can vote. #VoteReady

# CHECK-UP SUNDAYS

## EVERY 2nd SUNDAY

## UNTIL TURNOUT SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 11, 2022 –  
THEME: MAKE YOUR VOTING PLAN



Background information: Encourage members to check the polling location, voting dates, and voting hours, then make a personal plan to vote.

Find local information at sources such as VOTE.ORG (<https://www.vote.org/>) on how to:

- Vote by mail
- Find early voting locations
- Locate a polling place or ballot dropbox.

In addition to this information, other material to research and share in this month's bulletin announcement for Check-Up Sunday, include:

- Whether voters have the right to receive voting materials in their own language because English is not their first language. Contact the local elections office to find out and share the information.
- What accommodations are available for voters with mobility challenges. Many polling places still aren't easily accessible to voters with disabilities or persons with special needs, including reading ballots. Contact the local elections office for information about accessibility at your local polling places and share the information.
- If members need to vote by Absentee Ballot, what are the deadlines for the absentee application and the absentee ballot itself? Share the information including how to contact the local elections office for assistance. Plan to set aside time after worship services to review applications for absentee ballots and answer questions from members. Be sure to reach out to members living in senior citizens' housing and assisted living communities who may need help with voter registration and absentee ballots.
- Find out if your jurisdiction has early voting and encourage members to take advantage of this option. Find information at Vote Early Day: <https://voteearlyday.org/>

### Sample Bulletin Announcement:

Exercise your power and protect your right to vote by checking the polling station location, voting dates, and voting hours, then make a personal plan. If you require assistance reading a ballot or casting your ballot on Election Day because English is not your first language, you have mobility challenges, or you need to vote by Absentee Ballot, (provide details). Contact our Voter Engagement Team Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ at (phone number/email) if you need help in finding the specifics to vote. (Add early voting if applicable.)





## **CHECK-UP SUNDAYS** **EVERY 2nd SUNDAY** **UNTIL TURNOUT SUNDAY**

**OCTOBER 9, 2022**  
**THEME: BE PREPARED**

Make sure church members think about supplies to take to the polls such as snacks, water, a chair, or a voting buddy. Advise everyone to arrive early and know their rights. Have your church offer snack packs and/or allow members to borrow folding chairs to take to the polls. Reach out to members, especially seniors, to offer rides to the polls.

### **Sample Bulletin Announcement:**

Exercise your power, protect your right to vote, and do your civic duty by getting to the polls. Bring water. Bring snacks. Bring music. Bring a chair. Find a voting buddy. Arrive early. Know your rights. If you are in line to vote when the polls close, stay in the line! You have the right to cast your vote. Pick up a snack pack and a folding chair from the church office if you don't have one (provide details on how). Contact our Voter Engagement Team Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone number/email) if you need a ride to the polls or want help finding a voting buddy.

## **TURNOUT SUNDAY\***

**NOVEMBER 6, 2022**  
**THEME: VOTE THIS WEEK**

This is the Sunday to preach, pray, and go to the polls! Visit the Faiths United to Save Democracy website for additional information: <https://www.turnoutsunday.com/>

### **Sample Bulletin Announcement:**

This is it! Time to vote! Go to the polls prepared with snacks, water, and a chair. Contact our Voter Engagement Team Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ at (phone number/email) if you need a ride to the polls, need to borrow a folding chair, or want help finding a voting buddy. Be sure to pick up your snack pack as you leave today. #VoteReady #LetsGo



*\*Used with permission from Faiths United to Save Democracy*



# SCRIPTURE FOR PREACHING ON VOTING

**On Check-up Sundays preach messages on justice, righteousness, and civic responsibility.**

*Do not fear, for I am with you,  
Do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.* Isaiah 41:10 NRSVue

*But let justice roll down like water,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*  
Amos 5:24 NRSVue

*Woe to those who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, to make widows their spoil and to plunder orphans!* Isaiah 10.1-2 NRSVue

*Speak out, judge righteously,  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*  
Proverbs 31:9 NRSVue

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?* Micah 6:8 NRSVue

*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack, and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous; therefore judgment comes forth perverted.*  
Habakkuk 1:2-4 NRSVue

*For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?' 45Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'* Matthew 25:42-45 NRSVue

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* Luke 4:18 NRSVue

*So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; him you shall serve; to him you shall hold fast; and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen.*  
[Read full chapter.](#)" Deuteronomy 10:12-21, NRSVue

## **PRAYERS FOR VOTING**

**On Check-up Sundays pray for free, fair, and safe elections.**

**Sample prayer content:**

### **Prayer #1**

Loving God, we know that you can provide us with every blessing in abundance. As we vote, help us to be mindful of one another's needs and to direct our abundance so that we may care for all people.

Watch over this nation during the election so that every voter can safely exercise their right to vote.

Shepherd us to treat each other with respect during this election season so that we can put differences aside for the common good.

Guide us to vote in a way that reflects the values Christ taught us and remind us to love our neighbors so that all may thrive and live to their full potential. Show us the way to protect those who are poor, sick, children, the elderly and the most vulnerable among us.

Move us to vote with compassion for all who are struggling with inequity and fear.

Lead us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. Amen.

## **Prayer #2**

### A PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

Gracious and Blessed God:

We are thankful that you are a God of truth, justice and grace. We praise you for providing us with the model for justice, grace and mercy in your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray that you will eradicate all misery caused by injustice all over the world; that we will come to understand how to treat one another; that fairness will reign supreme in all that we do; that none of your creation will bear the scars of injustice caused by hunger, greed, lack of medical attention, apathy, racial, gender and class inequity; that the disabled and the infirmed will find peace, wholeness and compassion and that suffering will cease in a world where there is plenty. Bless us to hear again the overflowing call to justice as pronounced by Amos and that we will not only talk justice but walk a life of justice realizing (as Pascal said) that justice and power must be brought together so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just. It is in the name of Jesus the Christ, Savior of the world that we pray for justice. Amen.

- Bishop Frank C. Cummings, Sr., Retired, African Methodist Episcopal Church

## **Prayer #3**

Eternal and Loving Christ, we know that every good and perfect gift comes from you; help us to use these gifts wisely and to your glory; help us to use our gifts for the benefit of the overlooked, over worked and underpaid; help us to speak truth to love and not with circular conversations that go no here; but speak that which is clear, concise and honest so as to inspire people who sit in shadowed places with fears and doubt intimidated by voter suppression and oppression.

Continue to light the flame of the work of justice seekers and justice supporters; strengthen the hands that serve, strength the hearts of those who serve the cause of voting rights that they may not grow weary when facing insurmountable need. Help us and them, to partner with you in this work, because we know we cannot do it alone, without your power or provision. Amen.

- Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, NCC Interim President/General Secretary

# CHECK-IN WEDNESDAYS



**SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR THE BROADER COMMUNITY  
TO ENGAGE YOUNGER VOTERS**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY IN JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND  
OCTOBER.**

Churches can share these social media posts with members and encourage them to share with their networks each Wednesday.

**SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES\***

USE THESE HASHTAGS: #VOTEREADY

#FAITHSUNITEDTOSAVEDEMOCRACY #NCCCUSA

- Not voting IS a vote against your own interests.
- Bad people are elected by good people who do not vote.
- Every person is created in the image of God and deserves to have their vote protected.
- Let's vote to keep the promise of affordable, quality health care for all Americans.
- Critical issues like criminal justice reform, voting rights, quality education, and affordable housing Medicare, Social Security, caregiving, and our financial security are all on the line in the next election.
- Police shootings of unarmed black and brown people will not end unless you vote.
- Americans of color STILL face oppression and discrimination. Voting says no to discrimination.
- It is time we are all treated EQUALLY. Discrimination belongs in HISTORY. VOTE!
- Let's secure a better future by voting.
- No one should serve a second sentence by permanently losing their right to vote!  
#restoreexfelonvotingrights
- 5.85 million Americans are denied the right to vote because of laws that prohibit voting by people with felony convictions. Give returning citizens a second sentence. Restore voting rights.
- Know the early voting dates for your state. Go to [www.iwillvote.com](http://www.iwillvote.com) to find out where and when you can vote.
- Issues like voting rights, Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, criminal justice reform, immigration, protection against police brutality, and life sustaining programs for low-income citizens will not be protected unless we all vote.

*\*Used with permission from Faiths United to Save Democracy Voter Toolkit*

# IRS GUIDE FOR HOUSES OF WORSHIP\*

## DO

DO: Publish news stories about campaigns...the congregation should be kept informed as best as possible. Also, discuss candidates' positions on issues with congregation.

DO: Rent out the faith organization facilities (e.g. kitchens, athletic facilities, community rooms) for political activities...regular rates MUST apply.

DO: Provide rentals of membership lists at regular rates.

DO: Allow candidates to make appearances at the organization's events/services.

DO: Distribute candidate campaign literature as an individual faith leader.

DO: Distribute candidate surveys and/or voting records of office holders.

DO: Publish political ads; as long as the regular rates are applied.

DO: Use organization's vehicle to transport people to vote.

DO: Lobby & Campaign for or against legislation as congregation or individual.

## DO NOT

DO NOT: Support or oppose the candidates on the congregation's behalf.

DO NOT: Use the congregation's funding to give financial contributions of any kind to the candidates/office holders.

DO NOT: Impose your opinions on the congregation.

DO NOT: Publish faith organization editorials that support or oppose candidates.

DO NOT: Publish political ads as a donation.

DO NOT: Display candidate's literature on organization's vehicle used to transport people to vote.

DO NOT: Distribute candidate campaign literature as a congregation.

\* *"Preaching Politics from the Pulpit", Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.*

*www.pewforum.org -IRS Publication 1828, Tax Guide for Churches and Religious*



## **National Council of Churches**

Get the Voter Empowerment Resource Guide:  
<https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/voter-empowerment/>



## **Faiths United to Save Democracy**

Get the Voter Toolkit in English and Spanish:  
Turn Out Sunday  
<https://www.turnoutsunday.com/>

