

**THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S**  
EPISCOPAL CALL TO  
POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY



**COGIC** COUNTS  
YOUR *Voice* • YOUR *Vote*

[WWW.COGIC.ORG](http://WWW.COGIC.ORG)  
[WWW.VOTE.ORG](http://WWW.VOTE.ORG)

# *Presiding Bishop's Absentee Ballot Initiative Clergy Toolkit*

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*Dear Leader,*

I am writing to you with a sense of urgency.

The election is less than 100 days away. Voter suppression measures are sweeping the nation. Few organizations are making determined efforts to register disenfranchised voters.

In this decisive moment in history, through the Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative, COGIC congregations are leading a nationwide, strategic campaign that raises awareness about the importance of building solidarity and gaining political power through voting, we need to register all constituents who are eligible to vote in our congregations and our communities, so that we may VOTE in record numbers this year.

*How will we implement such a massive project?* We are excited to introduce a tool called **Vote.org**. Through our partnership with Vote.org, we have a solution to allow our collective voices to be heard. The driving purpose of Vote.org is to connect voters, organize information and pertinent voter content and to ensure voters can check their registration status, identify voting locations, and determine times for early voting and absentee ballot submissions. We are committed and determined to help you in our simple yet powerful mission: register to **VOTE** and **Reclaim Our Collective** Strength.

Thank you for joining the initiative. I am confident that with all of us working together we will prove that we will not be silenced, our votes will count, and by gaining political power, we will move in the right direction for our families.

For more information please contact us at: Thank you for your heartfelt determination to serve God and God's people.

In Peace and Solidarity,

**Bishop Talbert W. Swan, II**

Assistant General Secretary

Director, Social Justice Ministry

*Chair, Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative*



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## *Context*

We all know the liberative story in the book of Exodus - Moses speaks God-breathed truth to pharaoh: "*Let my people go!*" After Moses tells Pharaoh to free the slaves, Moses didn't give up. He didn't negotiate. Moses settles for nothing less than full liberation for his people.

Fast forward to today. Just as pharaoh didn't want to let the slaves go, there are modern-day pharaohs who want to suppress the rights of others to vote.

In 2012, more African Americans and Latinos voted in the election than ever before. During the 12 years since that election, the 1965 Voting Rights Act was nullified by the Supreme Court and in 38 states, some interest groups and legislators have passed or attempted to pass voter suppression measures to make it more difficult for Black and Brown voters, young voters and senior voters to participate in the democratic process. The enormous amount of money and time that some interest groups' and legislators' have spent in their attempt to silence us has exposed the truth - our votes really do count. And in the 2024 election, we have the opportunity to say WE WILL register to vote, WE WILL not be intimidated, and WE WILL turn out in record numbers for the November election, and WE WILL vote in person, by mail, or by absentee ballot.

### **Let's work together!**

- *Voter Registration Weekend*

In an act of solidarity, COGIC congregations across the nation are registering ALL eligible voters in their church. This will mean that some people will re-register to vote; however there is no consequence of re-registering to vote, re-registering to vote is not fraudulent. By re-registering to vote we are telling those who are determined to deny our vote, that we are even more determined to register and VOTE. Join us in registering your entire congregation quickly, reverently and in order! The Vote.org platform will provide us the tools that we need to unify and reinforce our strength in every step of the voting process.

- *Volunteer to Register VOTERS*

We are going to contact members at home or wherever they may be throughout the community to register voters. Vote.org technology will allow us to accomplish this goal more efficiently and effectively

- *Protect Our VOTE*

Protect the vote on election day! Clergy and other leaders are needed to stand outside polling places, wearing clerical attire as poll workers - to serve as trusted leaders who are dedicated to and trained in protecting people from voter intimidation.



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## *Sample Jurisdictional Letter*

Greetings,

This is Bishop \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ jurisdiction,

I am writing to encourage your participation and commitment in a matter of great urgency and importance.

We are now less than 100 days away from one of the most important voting seasons in our recent history. Considering the significance of this event, our Presiding Bishop - Bishop J. Drew Sheard, through the COGIC Counts Initiative, is urging our congregations to be aware of the power of our votes. We must build solidarity and solidify our political power at the polls. To accomplish this task, we must register every eligible constituent in our congregations and communities. Our goal is to have 250,000+ registered COGIC voters at polls this November.

How will we implement such a momentous task? We are excited to introduce a tool called Vote.org. Through our partnership with Vote.org, we have created a solution to allow our collective voices to be heard. The driving purpose of Vote.org is to connect voters, organize information and pertinent voter content, and to ensure voters can check their registration status, identify voting locations, and determine times for early voting and absentee ballot submissions. We are committed and determined to help you in our simple yet powerful mission: register to vote, VOTE, and to Reclaim Our Collective Strength.

To assist you in meeting our collective goals, I would also like to encourage you to mark your calendars with the following important dates: COGIC Counts Weekend, September 20-22; Push to the Polls Week, October 21-26; COGIC Counts Final Push, November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

I want to personally thank you in advance for joining this initiative. I am standing confidently encouraged with you, in a spirit of unity, as we prove to a watching world that our votes, our voices, and our people matter. By this showing of unified political power, we are impacting the future of our families and our nation.

For more information contact us at: Thank you for your heartfelt determination to serve God and God's people.

Grace and Peace.



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## *Sample Bulletin Announcements*

### *Sample 1*

As we approach this crucial election on November 5<sup>th</sup> (*church name*) is joining Presiding Bishop J. Drew Sheard and the General Board in a voter engagement movement called: **The Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative**. Through the initiative, we will lead a nationwide, strategic campaign that raises awareness about the importance of African American people gaining political power through voting, we will register all members who are eligible to vote in our congregations and our surrounding communities, we will VOTE in record numbers this year, and we will vote either in person, by mail, or by absentee ballot. So in the upcoming days please be on the lookout for initiative bulletin announcements and actions, or visit [cogic.org](http://cogic.org)

### *Sample 2*

To demonstrate our determination to make our voice heard through our vote (*Date*) is Voter Registration Sunday. So (*Church Name*) along with other COGIC congregations across the nation are registering ALL members in our churches who are eligible to vote (Are you an U.S. citizen who is 18 years of age or older and not on parole? ***\*Please check your state's voter eligibility requirements concerning whether people who have committed a felony, or are on parole or on probation are eligible to vote\**** Then you are eligible to vote! We are even re-registering some people to vote- there is no consequence of re-registering to vote, re-registering to vote is not fraudulent. By re-registering to vote, we are telling those who are determined to deny our vote, that we are even more determined to register and VOTE. So please invite family, neighbors, friends, co-workers to (*Church Name*) next Sunday! Please visit [Vote.org](http://Vote.org) for voter registration and re-registration instructions.



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## Sample Bulletin Announcements (cont'd)

### *Sample3*

We are hosting a VOTE training for all who are interested in going into our community and registering our neighbors to vote. The training takes about an hour. Once you've received the training we will form teams and go to day care centers, recreation centers, libraries, hair salons, schools, barbershops, etc. to register voters!

WHEN: *(Day, Date)*

TIME:

LOCATION:

After service, please sign up for the training so we can make sure that we have enough materials for everyone. Please contact *(Name and Phone Number)* if you have questions. We look forward to seeing you soon!!

### *Sample4*

*(Day and Date)* we *(give names of any congregations and allies who are also helping to host the rally)* are hosting a VOTE Rally. This rally is to protest the voter suppression measures that have surged across the nation and to demonstrate our audacious determination to register voters and to turn out a record number of voters for the November 5th election.

WHEN: *(Day, Date)*

TIME:

LOCATION:

After service, please sign up for the rally so we can give you rally signs and you can let us know if you need transportation so we can save you a space on the church van. Please contact *(Name and Phone Number)* if you have questions. We look forward to seeing you soon!!





# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## Sample Media Advisory

*(Media Advisories are sent to the media prior to events)*

## Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative COGIC Counts Weekend

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

8/20/2024

Contact Information:

### **COGIC Counts Weekend!**

*Working Together to Register All Eligible Voters*

In 2012 more African American people voted than ever. During the past 12 years, in **38 states** specific interest groups and legislators have passed or attempted to pass voter suppression measures that make it more difficult for African American and Latino voters, young voters and senior voters to participate in the democratic process.

In this decisive moment in history, COGIC congregations across the nation are working together on a voter engagement movement: **The Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative/**

Through the initiative, COGIC congregations will raise awareness about attempts to discourage African American voters and the importance of increasing the number of and protecting African American vote. Congregations will register African American voters throughout the state and African Americans will vote in record numbers in the November election.

*"Through the initiative, COGIC congregations are saying WE WILL not be silenced, we will vote in record numbers and our votes will count."*

**This weekend (number) COGIC congregations are registering to vote their entire congregations.** These spirited worship services will include powerful voter engagement messages and, during the last 15 minutes of service, all congregants who are eligible to vote will register to vote.

**What:** COGIC Counts Weekend

**When:** Sunday, September 20-22, 2024

###

# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## *Liturgical Support*

*"Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed,· save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise" Jeremiah 17:14*

Many of us have witnessed God perform miraculous healings of our loved ones or ourselves - healed from physical suffering, healed from a hardened heart, healed from depression. Many of us are also intimately connected with God's saving grace: Did God save you from a broken heart after the loss of a loved one? Did God save you from a violent relationship? If nothing else, did you know that God saved us from life separate from God? Yes, throughout time The Most High has demonstrated God's healing and saving nature. Just ask Miriam Job, Naaman and the many other recipients of God's healing/salvific power in the Bible. Just ask Jesus -Jesus who brought back to life Jairus' daughter and Lazarus, Jesus who healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus who healed the ten lepers, Jesus who healed people and unjust systems far and wide and saved humanity from sinking in sin. And as God calls us to personal health, wholeness and holiness, God calls our systems, structures, our ways of doing things day-to-day to be healthy, whole and holy. Through our votes, we will help build a land that demonstrates God's healing/saving power. Through our votes, we will help build God's Beloved Community. When we all register and VOTE and gain political power, we will elect leaders who help our families and communities. When we all register and VOTE and gain political power, your rights will be protected, our nation will be enabled to fulfill God's purposes, and we will continue giving God all of the glory, the honor and the praise.

*"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" Matthew 6.-33*

On the way to discovering and building the Kingdom of God here on earth, a land of equality and opportunity for all, we must use some imperfect tools to get us there. Registering to vote and voting are not perfect tools in actualizing God's Kingdom here on earth; however registering and voting are powerful tools that move us on toward the Beloved Community, our country's promise of "liberty and justice for all." So we uphold voting as vital in eradicating historical injustice and as a faithful demonstration of our allegiance to God and God's Kingdom.



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## Liturgical Support (cont'd)

### *Call to Worship*

LEADER: I was rightfully empowered in 1870 when black men - the children of slaves taken from their Motherland against their own will to build this very country - were guaranteed the right to vote in this country by the 15th Amendment.

PEOPLE: Lord, we've come so far we have the responsibility to fulfill our civic duty.

LEADER: Because of the commitment, blood, sweat, tears, and efforts of WE.B. DuBois, Fredrick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and other unnamed Black activists, especially those who were beaten and hung attempting to vote, I will secure my right.

PEOPLE: Silence is not an option. Our voice will be heard.

LEADER: Let us come together and be assured that victory is already ours - this battle is the Lord's!

PEOPLE: We will praise the name of Jesus and lift Him up in honor for all that He has done.

ALL: The Lord our God, the King of all kings, is present and the vote shall be unanimous that all of the world shouts hallelujah before Him!

### *Prayers*

A5 we head into another heated election season, let us pray:

- God's will be done
- God's discernment and wisdom for the people, that we will see Truth
- God's people to desire and demand godly leaders
- God will cancel corruption and suppression with God-led work by The people
- Godly and righteous leadership to rise up
- God's protection over the candidates, their loved ones, and their conventions
- God's protection over all people, everywhere
- On election day, voting machines and officials that protect each vote

O God, Your plans are firm, faithful and forever. The purposes of your heart prevail through all the generations. Let Your mighty, perfect will be done in the elections this fall. Psalm 33:11

# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## Liturgical Support (cont'd)

### *Prayers*

Most High God, we look to You for protection and safe keeping, especially during the days leading up to this fall's elections. Keep the leaders, the voters and the media safe from every kind of hurt, harm or danger, O God, and deliver us from any evil plots that have been arranged. Let no weapon that is formed against our people prosper. -Psalm 32:7, Isaiah 54:17

O God, You are actively involved in every part of Your creation at every moment. Grant to all people in America a willingness to get involved in the upcoming elections, resisting complacency and angry protests through passivity. Let each one know the value of his or her vote, and let each one exercise this privilege with diligence and faith. -Amos 6:1

Most High God, we look to you to ensure fairness and justice in the balloting procedures as your people vote this fall. May the election be just and equitable, revealing the truth with clarity. Proverbs 1:3





# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## VOTER EDUCATION

### **TEACH: The Spiritual Mandate For Voting**

- Care for the “least of these”
- Stand up for the mistreated
- Protect the elderly and the disabled
- Meet needs of the vulnerable
- Help those with language barriers
- Give children and youth a hope and future
- Protect human dignity
- Advance the common good
- Ensure everyone can thrive
- Protect our freedom of worship

### **PREACH & TEACH: Civic Discipleship**

#### *Civic Discipleship Involves:*

- Building relationships with elected officials
- Educating the community about the issues that matter most
- Working to remove all voting barriers
- Creating relational motivation to participate in the elections
- Creating practical tips for exercising faith by protecting vulnerable voters

### **SHARE: What The Vote Achieved (2020 -2022 Elections)**

- Rural Broadband Internet Vouchers
- Child Tax Credits
- COVID Relief for Struggling Americans
- Payroll Protection Program (PPP)
- Reduced Insulin Cost-\$35/mo. for the Elderly
- Assistance to Minority Farmers
- Protection for Minority Maternal Health
- HBCU Support
- Small Business Support and more



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## VOTER EDUCATION

### **TEACH: The Danger of Not Voting**

We lose the opportunity to vote for leaders who care for the safety and well-being of all citizens.

Hate Crimes Increased (11 % in 2021) [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)

- Black: 14% Increase
- Jewish: 20% Increase
- Hispanic: 30% Increase
- Asians: 120% Increase

### **TEACH: What Not Voting Means**

- Not voting is voting against your own interests.
- Not voting is giving away your power to someone who votes against your interests.
- Not voting ensures that your concerns will not be addressed.

### **TEACH: Critical Issues At Stake in the 2024 Election**

- Voting Rights
- Affirmative Action
- Affordable Health Care
- Small Business Development
- Student Debt Relief
- Affordable Childcare
- Affordable Housing
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Fair Policing
- Immigration Laws
- Affordable College
- Education
- Religious Freedom
- Life/Quality of Life
- Civil Rights



# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## VOTER EDUCATION

### **LEARN: How To Prepare Your House of Worship**

**PREACH:** Messages on justice and righteousness.

**EDUCATE:** Teach the issues on the ballot impacting your members.

**REGISTER:** Make sure your congregation is fully registered.

**PRAY:** Pray now until election day 2024.

**CONDUCT:** Post on Social Media encouraging voter turnout.

**HOST:** Host Turnout Sunday Service (Sunday, November 3, 2024)

**PLAN:** Plan transportation for elderly & disabled members to vote.

**POST:** Post Polling Sites & changes up to Election Day

**WATCH:** Have your faith leaders visit polling sites of your members.

**ADOPT:** Adopt a precinct near you church.

**CANVAS:** Go door to door in your community to encourage voting

# Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

## IRS GUIDELINES

### IRS GUIDELINES FOR HOUSES OF WORSHIP

DO: Publish news stories about campaigns...the congregation must be kept informed as best as possible. Also, discuss candidates position 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; Apply regular rates.

DO: Use organization's vehicle to transport voter.

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

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.



## Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative

*Thank You*

We so appreciate your Spirit-filled and compassionate-driven work in registering COGIC and community members who are eligible to vote and strongly encouraging all God's people to VOTE. And we thank you for your God-led and passionate work against the efforts to silence our voices through voter suppression. We pray that we will continue to build the level of energy and actions up to and far beyond election day in November.

Again, if you have any questions, concerns, ideas, suggestions, etc. please feel free to contact us.

Bishop Talbert W. Swan, II ([tswan@cogic.org](mailto:tswan@cogic.org))

May we all continue to grow in God's Grace as we do ministry and serve others in solidarity at such a time as this.



**Bishop Talbert W. Swan, II**

Assistant General Secretary

Director, Social Justice Ministry

*Chairman, Presiding Bishop's COGIC Counts Initiative*



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