

2020 Voting Guide from The Beloved Community – updated 8.26.20

“It is a Christian obligation to vote, and more than that, it is the church’s responsibility to help get souls to the polls.” - Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States

In a democracy, voting rights are fundamental to the dignity of every citizen, and the free practice of that right is necessary for the establishment of justice. We have an obligation through our Baptismal Covenant to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” General Convention policies lay out the importance of voting rights, opposing voter suppression, and ensuring that all U.S. citizens have the right to vote and to representation in Congress.

from [Vote Faithfully: Election Engagement Toolkit](#)

The Tennessee legislature makes the laws that govern voting. Counties administer the elections according to those laws. For the most part, you will be dealing with the election commission in your county.

First Step: Register to Vote

- ✓ Make sure you are registered to vote. Look up your status [here](#). The registration deadline for the November 3rd election is October 5. You may register [online](#) at the Secretary of State website or with your county. Find your county election commission [here](#).

Absentee Voting (Vote by Mail)

- ✓ The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique challenge to voting safely. Voting by mail (absentee voting) is the safest option. Anyone age 60 or over may request an absentee ballot. In addition, those with [underlying health conditions](#) may vote absentee. A physician’s statement is not required to check this box on the form.
- ✓ [Request your absentee ballot](#) now. Requests are being accepted until October 27 but DO NOT wait until then. There is no way that you will receive your ballot in time to return it by election day, November 3. Ballots will be mailed starting in mid-September. Requests are processed in the order in which they are received.
- ✓ Complete and sign your ballot. Mail it as soon as possible. One first-class stamp is sufficient. Deposit it in a USPS mailbox or at your local post office. Allow at least seven days for it to be delivered. [Track receipt of your ballot](#) at the election commission.
- ✓ Ballots must be received via postal mail by 7:00 pm on election day at your county on election day. Ballots that are postmarked November 3 but not received by the deadline are not counted. You cannot hand deliver your ballot; it must be received by postal mail. If you are concerned about your ballot not arriving on time, bring it to the main post office in your county. Election officials will pick up mail throughout the day on November 3.
- ✓ Newly registered voters must vote [in person](#) one time before they are eligible to request an absentee ballot OR they may present the appropriate identification in person at the election commission prior to requesting an absentee ballot.

- ✓ If you change your mind about voting by mail after requesting or receiving an absentee ballot, you may vote in person; you will cast a provisional ballot. Your vote will be counted once officials determine that they did not receive your absentee ballot.
- ✓ Complete information about absentee voting is at the [Secretary of State's website](#).

Early Voting - in Person

- ✓ Tennessee provides 14 days of early voting at a limited number of locations. You may vote at any early voting location in your county. The main advantage is the ability to choose the day and time that works best for your schedule.
- ✓ Wednesday, October 14 through Thursday, October 29 (excluding Sundays). Visit the [website for your county election commission](#) for hours and locations.
- ✓ You must show a photo ID at the polling place. [List of accepted ID](#).

Election Day - Vote in Person

- ✓ If you are unable to vote absentee or in person early voting, you must appear in person at your precinct location (assigned polling place) on the day of election. Polls are open from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. If you are inside the polling place – or in line – by 7:00 pm you will be allowed to vote.
- ✓ Photo ID is required. [List of accepted ID](#)

[COVID-Election Information](#) – Read about protocols implemented by your county election commission to safeguard against transmission of the coronavirus.

Important Dates

August 5	First day to request an absentee ballot
Mid-September	Absentee ballots mailed
October 5	Deadline to register to vote IN PERSON on election day – November 3
October 14-29	Early in-person voting in General Election, Mon-Sat (not Sun); check with your county election commission for locations and hours
October 27	Last day to request an absentee ballot for the General Election – but DO NOT WAIT THIS LONG
November 3	General Election - absentee ballots must be received by your county's election commission by the close of polls – 7:00 pm

There's an app for that! GoVoteTN

Easily access all the information you need at your fingertips! Check your registration, find out who represents you, locate your polling place, and more. Download to your mobile device from wherever you get your apps. It's super slick.

Who am I voting for?

President and Vice President of the United States, representatives from Tennessee to the U.S. Senate and House, and who you want to represent you in the Tennessee Senate and/or House of Representatives.

Your election commission will mail a sample ballot prior to the Early Voting period to all registered voters. Most county websites also provide a sample ballot.

Why Your Vote Matters – view a [short video](#) from the Secretary of State

The **Beloved Community Commission** was established by the Bishop of Tennessee as a task force in 2016 and became a commission in 2017. The Commission strives to:

- Work toward full inclusivity, both racially and ethnically, of the staff of the Diocese, elected lay and clergy leaders, clergy and bishops,
- Take the necessary steps in the healing of the wounds of our Church, it's members and our communities,
- Educate members about the effects of racism on people of color and white people and to convey the understanding that racism hurts everyone.

Learn more at the [Beloved Commission webpage](#) and sign up for our newsletter.