



**OUR MISSION: TO HONOR GOD BY DISMANTLING SYSTEMIC RACISM TO
CREATE PATHWAYS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL ALABAMIANS.**

MARCH 2023

FAITH REFLECTION

Joseph. Paul. Jeremiah. Jehoiachin. Peter. What do all these characters from the Bible have in common? They were all prisoners. Being freed from prison is a common theme in scripture. Jesus, quoting Amos, said part of his mission was to proclaim release to the captives. We talk about salvation in these terms as well – being set free and receiving a new life.

But what if release isn't release? What if release really only means a prison of paperwork, fines, fees, and work restrictions? That's what we've created in Alabama for people who leave prison and return to society: a paper prison. Fake freedom.

Imagine that after you've served your time in Alabama's overcrowded prisons, you get out and face a changed world. "Social media" is new to you. Cell phones now have screens. Most banking is done online. You feel like a fish out of water.

And you can't vote. Sure, politicians say that they have "given" you back your right (as if it was theirs to take in the first place), but the reality is that you aren't finished with prison until you complete your paperwork and pay back thousands of dollars in fines, court fees, and restitution. And where are you going to find this money when employers won't even look at you?

This is just one more way Alabama politicians create a "pay to play" system in our state. Rich folks (if they couldn't avoid prison in the first place) can get their rights back quickly. Poor folks may never do so.

The statewide campaign for Faith in Action Alabama is a Voter Rights Restoration bill that has a chance of passing this year. Sponsored by Linda Coleman-Madison, this bill would remove some obstacles to voting for formerly incarcerated Alabamians. Last year the bill only lacked being passed by the entire state House of Representatives, so with our collective effort we could get it passed this year!

If you would like to be part of this historic event that will improve the lives of thousands of people, please join us for our state legislative sessions! The links are [above/below] (from Rev. David Barnhart, Birmingham).



UPCOMING ACTIONS

[Click here to register for our State Legislative Day on April 19!](#)

Every Wednesday from March 15 through April 26, a small group of people at the state capital to keep our physical presence there.

VOTER ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

Soon we'll launch our year-round Voter Engagement work.

Most voters don't pay attention to our local elections until they are right on top of us. But we want to start now with community outreach and voter education.

In 2024, most of the attention will be focused on the presidential election. But we know that the elections that make the most difference are the ones close to home: district attorneys, judges, school board members, county commissioners, mayors, and state legislators. This is where we can have the most impact and change people's lives for good!

Do you know who your local elected leaders are? [You can find out by clicking this link and entering your zip code!](#)

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CLERGY CONVERGENCE

On March 8 over 50 Faith in Action Alabama Clergy Leaders from across the state came to the Alabama State House to call on legislators to pass House Bill 96 & Senate Bill 21, which seek to remove some obstacles to voting faced by formerly incarcerated Alabamians.



VICTIMS OF CRIME ACTION

Faith in Action Alabama alongside local advocates joined with mothers who have lost children to gun violence to demand the Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission (ACVCC) disperse urgently needed funds to families and victims in hardship.

The ACVCC's Interim Executive Director, Kim Martin, met with us in the lobby, listened to the mothers' concerns, and stated she would immediately assemble separate teams to hear and address the claimants' issues.

Faith in Action Alabama wants to thank the mothers for their courage and sacrifice to travel to Montgomery and confront the Commission. We also thank our community partners for supporting and joining us in advocating on the families' behalf.

Muaath Al-Khattab, Montgomery Hub Community Organizer
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HUNTSVILLE HUB

Hub Community Organizer:

LaGarrette Crawford
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Diversion With Dignity (DWD) Campaign –

“Diversion” is a way to keep people with substance use or mental health problems out of prison.

People who enter a diversion program may receive counseling or training. BUT such programs are “pay to play,” meaning that they only work for people who can afford them. DWD is about making diversion programs more fair and connecting them to community outreach.

Peacemaker Campaign – our current focus is on creating a community roundtable and steering committee to make sure Huntsville’s community violence intervention program reflects the wisdom and insights of the communities it affects.

School Board Involvement – Alabama’s Child Literacy Act goes into effect in the 2023-24 school year, and it will require us to show up and make our voices heard at local meetings.

CLICK HERE READ MORE ABOUT THE CHILD LITERACY ACT.

MONTGOMERY HUB

Hub Community Organizer:

Muaath Al-Khattab
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Supporting voter rights restoration – Our Montgomery Hub hosted the Clergy Convergence on the state legislature on March 8. Our focus is House Bill 96, which will restore voting rights to returning citizens. We’ll have a physical presence every Wednesday at the state house to lobby our legislators. Contact Muaath to get involved!

Community Safety & Peacemaker Campaign-

We've been advocating for our Hospital-Linked Violence Interruption Campaign (HVIC). Money was allotted for this from Federal COVID relief funds, but we are holding our leaders accountable to make sure they follow through. We're also developing our CVRT (Community Victims Response Team). This team advocates on behalf of victims to make sure the state Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission follows through, and that delays and denials without explanation don't keep happening. Finally, since October of 2022, every Monday evening we've been doing community engagement with our night walks, where our mission is to listen, learn, and love.

BIRMINGHAM HUB

Hub Community Organizer & Voter Rights Restoration Campaign Organizer:

JaiGregory Clarke
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Peacemaker Campaign – In addition to our community roundtable, we are looking for volunteers to expand our hospital-based Violence Interrupters and Victims of Crime Act team.

Please reach out if you would like to get involved!

Voter Rights Restoration – We recently went into the Jefferson County jail to register people to vote and got 40 applications! We continue to partner with Greater Birmingham Ministries and the League of Women Voters to register people to vote.

Developing BUY (Birmingham United Youth) – The next generation of organizers is ready! We’re in the process of educating young adults about community organizing, teaching them the skills to do grassroots organizing in their own communities.

CLICK HERE READ MORE ABOUT VOTER RIGHTS RESTORATION.

MOBILE HUB

Hub Community Organizer:

Pastor Marvin Lue, Jr.
marvin@fiaal.org

Peacemaker Campaign -We're re-engaging the community after the pandemic with night walks and congregational teams. We've seen first-hand how communities without strong resident presence are most affected by gun violence, so connecting and engaging is key to interrupting the cycle of violence.

Public Defender's Office – Our Mobile hub was instrumental in getting a public defender in Mobile County in 2019, and we continue to engage with Mr. Art Powell to make sure every citizen has access to legal representation.

Engaging the Community – We continue to inject new life, new leadership and new ideas into the community and train leaders in our monthly hub meetings.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT
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