



# CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS TOOLKIT *for* FREEDOM SUNDAY

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2014



ESTABLISHED 1971

A GUIDE *for* CHURCH LEADERS  
*to* STAND UP *for*  
*the* RIGHT *to* VOTE!

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August 8, 2014

Dear Clergy,

Since its formation in 1971 the Congressional Black Caucus has championed the rights, ideals, and advancement of underrepresented, minority communities in America. Over the years the CBC has become an influential voice in Washington that is often referred to as the "Conscience of Congress." As the Conscience of the Congress, the CBC has an essential and enduring role in ensuring our most important rights are protected. Voting is a fundamental right that African Americans have had to earn. As representatives of the people, it is our mission to encourage the participation of all eligible citizens as they exercise their right to vote in this year's mid-term election.

To fulfill our mission the CBC relies on the faith community to be the strong foundation for our leaders to stand upon. That is why we're calling on our faith communities to take up arms and participate in Freedom Sunday on September 21, 2014.

On Freedom Sunday, members of the CBC will join congregations across the country to participate in services emphasizing the importance of voter participation and voter turnout. Within the pages of this kit, you will find the tools you need to spread the word.

As people of great faith we must rally and prepare for the battle ahead. We have been told by the late Coretta Scott King, "Struggle is a never ending process. Freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it in every generation." At a time when the fundamental right to vote is being eroded and restricted across the country, your voice has never been more vital.

I hope you will join us in spreading this message.

Warm regards,

  
 Member of Congress

  
 Member of Congress





## CALL TO ACTION

**Bishop Vashti McKenzie**

Presiding Bishop, 10<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District - AME Church<sup>1</sup>  
(Presented during a July 28<sup>th</sup> conference call on Freedom Sunday)

I want you to imagine what it was like to be in a large army of soldiers. Among the grit and glitter of spears, shields, body armor, and swords, it would be easy for them to lose sight of the enemy, the target or goal.

The trumpet was used to inform the army which way to go; each note or sound of the trumpet would indicate instructions – advance or retreat. Each soldier would respond as instructed by the trumpet.

If above the noise of the battle the trumpet cannot be heard, the army would never engage the enemy or defend itself from attack. If the sound of the trumpet was unclear then the army would be confused about instructions – do we charge or retreat.

*"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"*

*1 Corinthians 14:8*

I'm excited about this call [to action] because in the days ahead we must give a certain sound so that the vast army of Black and Brown people will know that is it time to advance and never retreat from our right to register to vote, a right to vote and a right to raise our voice against the political injustices that are ravaging our communities.

A certain sound from our citadels of faith on Freedom Sunday in September with the [Congressional Black Caucus] . . .that says we must arm ourselves with information about the issues; arm ourselves with the correct information of how to register to vote; arm ourselves with the credentials needed to vote now until we can bring pressure to bare upon the voter suppression laws; arm ourselves with renewed fervor to never back down or back out voting on election day.

I cannot believe that my community will be intimidated by those who would shorten early voting, cut back Sunday voting, spread wrong information about voting days and times and/put in non-working or broken voting equipment to frustrate voters making them stand in long lines. Hear the word of the Lord:

*"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain;"*

Joel 2:1

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<sup>1</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District covers the state of Texas including over 300 churches.



The message here is to sound an alarm among God's people. Not an unclear sound, but a 'certain sound' that will rouse us to move forward, to action! A clear sound – vote as if your life depends upon it because it does.

Lets send a clear sound, a clear message – we're voting and we shall not be moved. (Like a tree planted by the waters as our ancestors sang – O Freedom; it's what our parents sang – We Shall Overcome, and we must sing – Wake Up Everybody, no more sleeping in bed no more backward thinking; a new song in this strange land).

Let's send a clear message – our sanctuaries again will become rally centers; our army will be trained again in non-violent action – because we know they will intimidate, threaten and provoke, but we will be the ones arrested and put in prison.

Let's send a clear message that we will cry aloud, spare not and will lift our voice and vote – send a clear message – a clear sound.

1. Be sure that everyone is registered to vote
2. Assist those who have transportation issues or are confused about what is required
3. Form early phone trees, door knockers on voting day.
4. Preach justice from the pulpit
5. Teach justice in Bible Studies and Sunday School

If we speak with one voice and make clear sound on Freedom Sunday (September 21<sup>st</sup>) from every church, sanctuary, temple and worship center, it sends a message that we are not asleep or apathetic. We are prepared for battle. We will arm ourselves and will be dangerous at the polls.



## CALL TO ACTION

### **“Keeping Democracy Alive From Generation To Generation”**

by Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Chair, Faith Partnerships and Pastor Emeritus, Olivet Baptist Institutional Church. Provided courtesy of Faith Partnerships.

“A Government of the people, by the people, and for the people” must be secured, protected, promoted and kept alive from generation to generation. Freedom, equality, quality education, affordable health care, equal employment opportunity, equal protection under the laws, are some of the basic requirements for a growing democracy. These rights must be guaranteed three hundred sixty-five days a year, every hour of the day.

The most fundamental requirement for a living democracy is the right to vote. This right must be protected and guaranteed for all citizens, all the time, in every state, district, county and precinct. If one person is denied for a single moment, his or her right to vote, democracy is threatened and the individual experience carries irreparable harm. The denial of the right to vote does not have to come by way of a hooded Klansman with guns and dynamite. It can be a legislator, a judge, a Secretary of State, a Governor, a Board of Elections official, a precinct worker or anyone setting up impediments, restraints and road blocks to free access to the ballot.

We face today, in the USA, scores of roadblocks to free ballot access. This is perpetrated through well planned means and schemes designed to reduce voter participation. These schemes are prevalent throughout more than half the states in our nation. There is literally, an invasion of injustice, purges and impediments designed to disenfranchise millions. This is a dangerous threat, yea an attack against democracy throughout our land.

We must meet these vicious, unjust, unholy, unrighteous, undemocratic policies and practices with united nonviolent courageous action. There are three specific responses that are needed now and in the future: First, voter registration must become a daily program before and after every election. If we do not register a minimum of two to three voters for every voter purged or denied, we are losing ground.

Secondly, voter education is a lifetime necessity. We must be able to answer the questions: Who can vote? When? Where? How? What are the issues? How do they affect my community? Who are the candidates? What is partisan? What is nonpartisan? What are the rules? What are the congressional districts? What is a primary? What is a runoff? What is a caucus? What are my duties and responsibilities? Where do I go for relief and redress when an injustice is perpetrated? How do I register? What must I do when there is a change of address, district, region or state? Who can vote an absentee ballot? What is early voting?



Some knowledge of our voting rights history should be taught. We should know how we were counted as African Americans during slavery, reconstruction, post-reconstruction and today. We should have a citizenship education perspective on the Constitution, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution and Woman's Suffrage.

We need to understand the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, the Voting Rights Bill of 1965 and related legislation. This should be a part of our public, private, day school and college curriculum. This should be a part of church school and religious education. Voter education is a cradle to grave process for every generation. Remember, we can lose the right to vote during, before and after elections.

Lastly, voter participation is as necessary as inhaling and exhaling. It is the lungs, brains and heartbeat of democracy. Those who do not vote, vote against themselves. They vote against their children, their loved ones and future generations. Nonvoters are volunteer slaves! To be denied our voting rights, is slavery imposed by others. To refuse to vote, is self-imposed slavery. Our nation has a growing population in both categories. Our democracy is threatened by voter suppression and voter apathy. We face in the twenty-first century an ugly slavery by a new name.

We are facing an expanding "Map of Shame." This "Map" includes, but is not limited to, states where voter suppression legislation has been introduced and/or enacted: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and the list continues to grow. If enforcement of this "Map of Shame" continues over the next decade, multi-millions of our citizens will be disenfranchised and a new era of American Apartheid will be enforced.

This is our challenge, this is our call: "...to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19





## **WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN 2014**

On September 21, 2014, faith leaders from across the country will launch a national voter education and participation campaign called **FREEDOM SUNDAY**. This will be a coordinated effort between the Faith Groups, Religious denominations and Congressional Black Caucus in an attempt to encourage the African American community to vote in the 2014 mid-term elections. Traditionally Black voters are much less apt to vote than White voters during mid-term elections. The average share of the Black vote with President Obama on the ballot is 30.1 percent. However, in 2006 and in 2010 the average share of the Black vote was only 25.3 percent. Black voters will play a huge role in determining the outcome in gubernatorial, state assemblies, and local government, but also who controls the Senate in 2014. Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, and North Carolina are widely considered to be the most pivotal when it comes to maintaining progressive leadership that will continue to support legislation that addresses the critical needs of our communities,

If those in Congress who seek to turn back the clock on the social safety gain control of the upper chamber in Congress, many of the domestic programs that support the African American community will be at risk. These programs include:

- 1. The Affordable Care Act**
- 2. Head Start Program**
- 3. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps)**
- 4. Medicare**
- 5. Medicaid**
- 6. Social Security**
- 7. Judicial Nominations**
- 8. Voting Rights**
- 9. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**
- 10. Pell Grants**
- 11. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**
- 12. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**
- 13. Women Infants and Children Program (WIC)**
- 14. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**
- 15. Child Care Tax Credit**

Some in congress have made it abundantly clear that many of the domestic programs that support the African American community will either be significantly cut or eliminated. The loss of these programs will have a devastating effect on poor and middle income African Americans. The stakes could not be higher; every African American voter who chooses to stay home is a vote for those who would deny our community fundamental rights and services. To not vote is to not count. The African American vote will be the key to securing many of the domestic priorities that our community holds dear.



## FREEDOM SUNDAYS MOVEMENT

On **Freedom Sunday**, September 21, 2014, the Black Church will partner with members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) across the country to participate in services that will emphasize the importance of voter education, registration, and participation by Black Americans in the 2014 mid-term elections. Faith Leaders will again proclaim, explain and educate their members to claim their legacy of advocacy and activism in the election process. Our hope is that congregants will be energized with a clear understanding of what's at stake in this election by sharing the ramifications on the African American community. CBC and key Faith leaders have collaborated to provide in this Toolkit, talking points as well as sample sermon in an effort to coordinate one message, **"every vote counts"**. The African American community cannot afford to sit on the sidelines while others determine their fate. Faith leaders, with the support of the CBC, will issue a Call to Action for the faith community on Freedom Sunday on September 21st, to continue voter education, registration, and mobilization efforts each Sunday leading up to "turning out" our communities through the Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> election.

### **History of Freedom Summer 1964**

**"Freedom Summer"** was a movement in the Deep South to register Black citizens to vote during the summer of 1964. Thousands of civil rights activists, many of them white college students from the North, descended on Mississippi and other Southern states to try to end the long-time political disenfranchisement of African Americans in the region.

### **"Then, Now and Beyond"**

by Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.

*Chair, Faith Partnerships; Pastor Emeritus, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church*

Fifty years after the first Freedom Summer in 1964, we continue to face "weary years and silent tears." In 1964, three young men, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner, were lynched, murdered, and assassinated seeking to secure the right to vote for all of God's children. One was beaten, castrated, and murdered. One was shot and buried alive. These brutal acts were planned, pre-meditated slaughter. All were buried in brutal, muddy, man-made graves.

The blood of these young freedom fighters is united with the blood of Trayvon Martin and many more. This innocent [blood]cries out from the ground saying register, vote, participate and help somebody else in the process.

Fifty years ago, Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party laid the foundation for registration and participation in the democratic process. Most of them are now in eternity, but their lives and legacies call upon us to get involved with our ballots, books, and resources.

Forty-nine years ago, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Reverend James Reed and Viola Gregg Liuzzo were murdered as they helped to lay the foundation for the 1965 Voting Rights Bill. Their voices speak to and through us today saying, "Get On Up" and "do the right thing." Vote and never give up.



## SAMPLE FREEDOM SUNDAY EVENTS

September 21<sup>st</sup> – November 4<sup>th</sup>

During the Freedom Sundays Movement, churches are encouraged to hold events, conduct press conferences, use social media to highlight the legacy of Freedom Summer, and discuss what's at stake for African Americans in the 2014 Elections.

After your events, be sure to email us at [FreedomSundays1@gmail.com](mailto:FreedomSundays1@gmail.com) and [Kwame.Canty@gmail.com](mailto:Kwame.Canty@gmail.com) with number of people who attended, photos, and stories from your events.

- Show video of 1964 “Freedom Summer” where 3 Civil Rights Movement youth voter activists were slain; and youth mobilized in massive voter registration and education campaign.
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81kkJDvrUQ>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Yt\\_Gv37Trc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Yt_Gv37Trc)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bx3s2DU6Yg>
- Preach on Jesus’ command to provide justice for the poor and underserved.
- Share scriptures on God’s concerns for justice, for the poor, and “the least of these”.
- Give a **Pulpit Announcement** on what’s at stake for the Black community in 2014 and why, “for the sake of the our Civil Rights Movement martyrs, trailblazers, and the Trayvon Martin’s of our community, we must vote”.
- Post in the **Church Bulletin** the blurb on what’s at stake for Black Americans .
- Post what’s at stake for Black Americans on the church’s website.
- Include in praise and worship service, prayers for justice and fairness in the 2014 election and safety at the polls.
- Offer prayers of thanksgiving for trailblazers whose sacrifice helped secure the right to vote.
- Engage your Creative Arts Ministry (e.g. drama, dance, mime) in Freedom Summer skits.
- In preparation for Election Day, share with the congregation voter registration deadlines and voting rules.



- Assign a Church Voting Rights Outreach Captain and Volunteer Team to prepare transportation for those who need it.
- Appoint a poll monitor from your church who can be trained for vigilance on Election Day to ensure that no one is wrongfully turned away from voting.
- Pass out to the congregation Election Day instructions and exactly what the state rules are for voting so everybody is clear what to bring to the polls.
- Encourage church buddy systems so people go to polls together.
- **Host a Town Hall Discussion on the State of Civil and Human Rights in Your Community**  
Host a panel and town hall discussion with local civil and human rights community leaders about the state of civil and human rights in your community. Discuss how ensuring the fundamental right to vote is protected in America ensures that every voice in your community can be represented and heard in local elected and appointed bodies where policy decisions are made.
- **Host a Young Leaders Roundtable**  
Partner with local organizations in your community that serve young adults and discuss how the Freedom Riders and Freedom Summer movements were led by a diverse coalition of young Black and White Americans. Discuss what the legacy of Freedom Summer means to them and what they believe are current civil rights challenges. Talk about the importance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the importance of ensuring that the work of the Civil Rights Movement is never forgotten.

### **Talking Points**

- Black voters play a huge role in determining who will lead the make decisions that affect our communities in 2014.
- **Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, and North Carolina** are widely considered to be the most pivotal states in determining who will represent our communities on the issues which directly impact African American citizens.
- Black voters are much less apt to vote than White voters during mid-term elections, the average Black share of the vote with President Obama on the ballot is 30.1 percent. The average Black share of the vote in 2006 and 2010 fell to 25.3 percent.
- Anyone can register to vote, update their registration and receive election information by text messages and in their email by visiting [www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org](http://www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org).





### SAMPLE TWITTER POSTS

Hash tags: **#FreedomSummer #FreedomSundays #Freedom50**

- People died for the right to vote. We should not take it for granted...**#Freedom50 #FreedomSundays**
- Our nation has changed dramatically, and for the better. But the present bears many parallels to that historical moment 50 years ago. **#Freedom50 #FreedomSundays**
- 50 years ago, **#FreedomSummer** organizers risked their lives for civil rights. Today, we need the courage to ensure their efforts were not in vain. **#FreedomSundays**
- In 1964, 3 Civil Rights workers disappeared in Mississippi at the start of **#FreedomSummer**.
- We remember Schwerner, Chaney & Goodman, & the sacrifices of so many during **#FreedomSummer #FreedomSundays**
- **#FreedomSummer** is a story worth knowing and remembering. **#Freedom50**
- 50 years after the Civil Rights Act, there are now modern efforts to keep people from voting. **#FreedomSundays**
- You have the freedom to vote! Protect it. **#Freedom50 #FreedomSunday**
- Do you think America needs a second **#FreedomSummer** this year? Let's start the conversation...our words can turn into actions. **#FreedomSundays**
- 50 years since **#FreedomSummer** African Americans and other minority groups STILL face oppression and discrimination **#Freedom50**.
- "**#FreedomSummer** made the country take a look at itself" –Bob Moses **#FreedomSundays**
- It's 2014: it is time we are all treated EQUALLY. Discrimination belongs in HISTORY. **#FreedomSundays**
- "Voting is the language of American democracy: if you don't vote, you don't count." Let's make everyone count. **#FreedomSundays**
- **Let's protect the lives of our Youth – vote for the security of our children in 2014! #nomoretrayvons #FreedomSundays**

### SAMPLE FACEBOOK POSTS

- "Freedom Summer" highlights an overlooked but essential element of the civil rights movement: the patient and long-term efforts by outside activists and local citizens in Mississippi to organize communities and register black voters—even in the face of intimidation, physical violence and death.
- We have come a long way since those terror-filled years of the 1960s, but we still have a long way to go since bigotry still raises its ugly head when we turn on the news. We need to be vigilant to prevent returning to those days when an individual was judged by the color of their skin rather than by their character.
- The more one knows about Jim Crow, racial segregation laws enacted between 1876 and 1965, the more astonishing it is that ordinary people had the initiative and courage to oppose it.



## SAMPLE SERMON

### Excerpts from “The Darkness”

by **The Reverend Congressman Emanuel Cleaver**

Isaiah 45:3 *“I will give you treasures in darkness”*

The human race has never been completely comfortable with the darkness. During earth’s primordial period, darkness was the dread of our ancestors. Then, as today, the great predators used the darkness as a screen during their pursuit of prey. In humankind’s earliest days, darkness was the time to hide from the hunters: The ferocious and fearless beast that roamed the thickets with a God given night vision far superior to their prey which included Homo sapiens. For example, scientists tell us that lions can see six times better than humans. We were, in millennia past, hunted at night.

On the first day of creation, God Said “Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: And God divided the light from the darkness, and the darkness he called night.” It is crystal clear from the text that God was not especially fond of the darkness.

Darkness clearly works against us. There is nothing so bad that it can’t be made worse at night. A cold, the flu or a toothache, no matter how distressing during the day is always more annoying at night. Burglars wreak their greatest havoc in the still of the night.

Thunder and lightning, while frightful anytime, but the explosive sound of thunder and the unpredictable and unfriendly lashes in the sky are surely more ominous during the darkness of night. The homeless, and their numbers are growing, are constantly at risk, but when the sun sets, they are easily victimized in the numbing cold of darkness of night. War, that international act of barbarism with three armies: an army of the mutilated, the army of the bereaved and an army of thieves, is even more grisly when the battle rages in the bitter blackness of the night.

“For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitation of cruelty” so says the psalmist as he speaks of the dread of darkness.

Dracula, that bloodthirsty prince of the living dead, cannot withstand the bright and lethal rays from the sun; therefore he prowls the dingy darkness for his game.

In our contemporary culture, there are hundreds of places called night clubs where we find a half lit lounge full of half lit Christians.

In an attempt to dramatize the negative nature of darkness, John the revelator, informs us that during the coming tribulation period, days will be shortened and nights lengthened, this information was recorded 8:12 of the Book of Revelation.

It is theologically safe, I believe, to say that darkness has come to define sin. Whenever we sin, at high noon or midnight, to heaven, we create a dingy darkness.



A great teacher asked his young students if they could tell when night had ended and the new day dawned. One said, “It is when you can see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a sheep or a dog,”

“No” replied the teacher.

Another student took a try. He said, “It is a period when you can see a tree that is far away and can tell whether it is a fig or an apple tree.” Again the teacher said no.

A third student said, “Okay, we do not know, please explain how we can tell when night has ended and the day is dawning.”

The teacher explained that “It is when you look on the face of any woman or man, be it black, brown or white, conservative or liberal, and see a sister or brother because if you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night.” Whenever we are out of sync with God, it is night. Whenever we engage in ideological hatred, it is night. Whenever Congress becomes more committed to the next election than the next generation it is night. That is what is meant in Job 5:14, “They meet with darkness in daytime.” The scripture is saying that sin, even in the brightness of the noon day, generates a blackness of spirit. Each violation of Gods laws, whether midday or midnight means that we are standing in dark shadows of his disapproval and disappointment. Solomon said the same thing in Proverbs 4:19, “The way of the wicked is as darkness.”

Maybe, then, we should just ignore the prophet Isaiah. Perhaps he was engaged in theological theatrics. Obviously, he was misleading us when he spoke for God saying, “I will give thee treasures in darkness.” If darkness is as I have been saying, a sinful and scary time, where is the treasure? If Isaiah, the son of Amos, really wanted to be helpful he would have issued a warning about the demonic nature of the darkness. I would suggest that there is a warning. Speaking for myself, I have heard that still voice that said “No! Do not walk into that dark place. Do not embrace that dark deed.” God warns us pretty much in the words recorded in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse of the Motown group “War,” when they sang, “You been slippin’ into darkness oh, oh, oh, pretty soon you’re gonna pay oh, oh, oh.” When we slip into darkness, a payment is required. Everyone has at one time or another visited the darkness. This should not surprise us because even the moon has a dark side.

Any sailor attempting to reach the port at night without crashing into the rocks is very likely to see the lighthouse as a waning and treasure in darkness. Likewise we are warned of the darkness of wickedness. We are warned of the darkness of bigotry, political tribalism, self-righteousness, and irreverence for the poor.

Wait, wait, maybe the scripture is right after all. I was going to suggest that we began a movement to scratch the entire book of Isaiah be removed from the holy writ but I am now having second thoughts. It looks like there are treasures in darkness. While I do not often go to movies, when I do, I have noticed that the projectionist never begins the movie with the light on. It is only in the darkness of the movie house that I can clearly see the movie. Yes, I can see on the big screen with the lights off far more than I could see with the lights on.



It could be that Isaiah did not have a biblical breakdown when he spoke of treasures in the darkness. It seems as if he might have known what he was talking about. Treasures in darkness? Yes, perhaps there are treasures in darkness.

Even in my own life, I can say on holy ground that in the darkness of my mother's death in 1986 I was able to see a better way to live and a pathway to work out my ministry. Like you, I would rather live permanently in the bright sunshine of a problem free existence, but I have learned far more about God and me in the darkness of pain than I ever did in the flashing brightness of joy. We all need to understand that we usually discover the deepest things out of darkness. Job tells us that there are "visions at night."

Still, we may be apprehensive about the darkness of night. But I have got to tell you that when I sat down and began to consider nights, I realized that there were many great nights in our faith tradition.

It was a great night for children of Israel when God dispatched his death angel down to Egypt. Because of the arrogance of the Pharaoh and the Egyptians the firstborn in every Egyptian house died that night in what is called the Passover as the death angel passed over the blood protected Hebrew houses.

It was a great night when Jacob slept beneath the stars and dreamed of a ladder reaching up into heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it.

It was a great night when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and our Lord uttered those immortal words, "You must be born again."

It was a great night when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying, "Not my will but thy will be done."

It was, I read somewhere that ... in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock by night.

The wise men from the east followed the star by night. And it was night when she brought forth her first born and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger. Jesus was born that night to be our savior. Jesus was born that night to show us what God was like. Jesus was born that night to show us the way. Jesus was born that night that we may have life and has it more abundantly. Jesus was born that night to suffer under Pontius Pilate to be crucified and buried. Jesus was born that night to negate death itself. Jesus was born that night that we might be reborn in the radiant richness of the Resurrection.

Maybe now, we can really agree with Isaiah whom the Lord told, "I will give you the treasures of Darkness." Now maybe we can make peace with darkness. Both night and day can bless us in that they are prime components of the same reality. Whether in darkness or light please know that the Lord is with you. Yes, Darkness can be a blessing to me and you who may have a loved one in a sick room. And to you, sitting in the darkness of a relationship that is moving backward. And to you, who are stumbling down a hallway of financial darkness. And to you, who are having a difficult and dark time forgiving yourself long after God has. And to you, hovering in the foggy midnight of fear and





trembling. And to you, who sit dangerously in the darkness of judgmental-ism. We began our journey in the creative darkness of our mother's womb.

From the darkness of your condition, please hear the Lord speak to you saying, "Lo I will be with you always." That includes the times of darkness.

From the darkness of your condition, hear the words of Job who during his darkest day, said, "He gives us songs in the night."

From the darkness of your condition learn the two songs of the night. The first is the pain in the darkness and the other is about the daylight that is on the way.

From the darkness of your condition look up! Look up! Look up into the blackness and see him who is known by many names, among them is the Bright and Morning Star that shines in our darkness. Look up from the darkness of your condition and sing to the Lord, "You light up my life," and he has. And he does. Ask me, watchman, what of the night? Morning cometh.

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Those who follow me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

As I move toward closing it might be important for me to speak of the light. In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world..." Keep in mind that he did not say, "I really appreciate the light." He did not say, "I love the light." He did not say, "I am holding the light." He did not even say, "Follow me to the light." No! No! No! Jesus said, "I am the light of the world..." Think about it, the light of the entire world. The Lord is the light and in him there is no darkness. Moreover, scientists tell us that darkness itself does not act as an entity, nor does it have a physical property. Darkness is simply the absence of light, nothing more.

Jesus then says, "You are the light of the world" Matt 5:14. First he is saying "Don't just hold your light and spend your waking hours telling people how well lit you are. But don't get a big head just because I said you are the light." Our light is an indirect light, our light is borrowed light. We are extensions of his light. We are like the moon, which has no light of its own, it simply reflects the light of the sun. Yes, we do have light and it is a sin not to use it.

This means that when we see darkness, we should automatically conclude that light is needed! When we see the darkness of crime in our neighborhoods, it does not mean that we need more police. It does not mean that we need more city, state or federal funds. Friends, it means that we need more light. Light enough to work on young boys and girls, on sex, on pregnancy, immature parenting. Light enough to let residents know that we, not the city government, we, not some politicians must maintain and clean our neighborhood.

Additionally, we must be the watchmen and women – ready to answer when those around us are confused and ask of us, watchman, what of the night. We must let them know, "The morning cometh!"

But I am unemployed, the morning cometh.

But I am elderly and sick, the morning cometh.

But my memory is not what it used to be, neither is the world but the morning cometh.

But something is missing in my life, yes but the morning cometh.

But I am lonely and tired, the morning cometh.

But my faith is faltering I am now questioning God. The morning cometh.

Don't stop walking until the light runs out.



## SAMPLE SCRIPTURES

### God's Concern for Justice, the Poor, and the "Least of These"

**Psalms 10:17-18** 17 Lord, You know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. 18 You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them. NLT

**Psalms 82:3-4** 3 Enough! You've corrupted justice long enough, you've let the wicked get away with murder. 4 You're here to defend the defenseless, to make sure that underdogs get a fair break; Your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them. THE MESSAGE

**Proverbs 14:31** Those who oppresses the poor insult their Maker, but helping the poor honors him. NLT

**Proverbs 19:17** If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord and he will repay you. NLT

**Proverbs 29:7** The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. NIV

**Proverbs 29:14** If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will be established forever NIV

**Proverbs 31:9** Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. NIV

**Isaiah 58: 6- 8** 6 Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter? When you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. NIV

**Jeremiah 22:16** He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? declares the LORD. NIV



**Amos 5:21, 23, 24** 21 I hate, I despise your religious festivals; I cannot stand your assemblies. . . 23 Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! NIV

**Micah 6:8** O people, the Lord has told you what is good and this is that he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. NLT

**Zechariah 7:9-10** 9 This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other. NIV

**Matthew 25:31-46** 41“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ 44“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ 45“He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’” NIV

**Luke 4:8** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. NIV

**James 1:27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. NIV

**1 John 3:16-18** 16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. 1And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. NIV

**Scriptures are taken from New International Version (NIV), New American Standard (NAS), New Living Translation (NLT) and THE MESSAGE.**



## TIPS FOR REACHING YOUNG VOTERS

By Dr. Otis Moss, III, Senior Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL

1. Make an announcement requesting IT professionals and/or youth to meet with the pastor or designee following service.
2. Share the importance of freedom Sunday with the IT professionals and youth and how you as pastor want this community involved in this important effort.
3. If you have a digital minister or multimedia ministry, instruct the ministry to create posts and tweets about Freedom Sunday at least three times a day.
4. Request the congregation to post and/or tweet Freedom Sunday information on their personal social media accounts.
5. Print articles messages in the bulletin about Freedom Sunday.
6. Create a "quote campaign" have youth post and tweet famous quotes about the importance of voting daily on Instagram.
7. Post audio clips of members who experienced segregation speaking about the importance of voting on your media sight.
8. Allow a young people to tweet in service at a specified time about Freedom Sunday.
9. Reward the young person who receives the most re-tweets, new friends or followers as a result of Freedom Sunday.
10. Create a Youth Digital Ambassador who will from the pulpit share how to post, tweet and text for freedom.





## SAMPLE PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT

The prophet Amos reminds us to “*let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*” (Amos 5:24)

**From September 21<sup>st</sup> – November 4<sup>th</sup>**, we will be participating with other churches across the nation in Freedom Sunday Services in preparation for the November mid-term elections. We, as Black Americans, simply cannot afford to stay home.

Without voting, we had few Black elected officials.  
With voting, we now have over 10,000 Black elected officials and the first African American President in the White House.

Without voting, hate groups fought to keep African Americans from voting.  
With voting, we have a Black U.S. Attorney General fighting for our right to vote.

Voting gives us the right to decide whether we have jobs, health care, student financial aid, and other services our community needs. We ask all members to look out for instructions from our voting rights outreach team captain \_\_\_\_\_ (*indicate who your designated contact will be*) as we prepare for one of the most important dates this year – the November 4<sup>th</sup> election.

I ask each of you to commit to encouraging 5 family members, friends, and co-workers to vote November 4<sup>th</sup> and make sure they get to the polls.

If you need to register to vote, or update your registration information, you can do so online at [www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org](http://www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org).



## SAMPLE CHURCH BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

**Your right to vote has been bought and paid for in blood!**

**Exercise your power to protect it by:**

1. Register yourself and 5 friends, family members and co-workers to vote by Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> by visiting [www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org](http://www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org).
2. Make sure they turn out on Election Day – November 4<sup>th</sup>.
3. Volunteer here at the church to help educate others in our community Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> – Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>

**Contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_**

**for more information on joining our Voting Rights Outreach Team!**



## DO'S AND DON'T'S ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHURCHES & PASTORS

- **DO** discuss the candidates' positions on issues to the congregation.
- **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** allow your (the church leaders) personal opinions inflict the opinions of the congregation. Please note: the Pastor's personal views and personal donations (not affiliated with the church) can be used to his own discretion, as long as these views/endorsements are not imposed upon the congregation.
- As a congregation and/or as an individual church leader; **DO** lobby and campaign for or against legislation.
- **DO NOT** publish church editorials that are meant to support or oppose candidates.
- **DO** publish political ads; as long as the regular rates are applied...**DO NOT** publish these ads as a donation.
- **DO** publish news stories about campaigns...the congregation must be kept informed as best as possible.
- **DO** rent out church facilities (e.g. kitchens, athletic facilities, board/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 church events/services.
- As a part of the congregation, **DO NOT** distribute candidate campaign literature; however the individual church leader is allowed to do so.
- **DO** distribute candidate surveys and/or voting records of office holders.
- **DO NOT** pay for a candidate's or office holder's attendance at a caucus or political party convention. While the congregations **CAN NOT** pay for this, the church leader **CAN** do so on an individual basis.
- **DO** participate in non-partisan voter registration and identification: these activities **CAN NOT** be affiliated with a political party. **DO** provide non-partisan voter education: **CAN NOT** be affiliated with a political party. As a congregation, **DO NOT** give contributions to political action committees, but the church leader may **DO** this on his or her own terms.
- **DO** use the church van for transportation to the polls, **DO NOT** use the van to advertise for candidates or allow candidate discussions in the van.
- 

Source: "Preaching Politics from the Pulpit", *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*.  
[www.pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org)



**FREEDOM SUNDAY LOGO**



This logo can be used for published communications, Facebook cover photos, Twitter headers, email signature and Instagram posts.



## EARLY VOTING DEADLINES BY STATE

To get specifics on voter registration deadlines and voting rules for your state visit:  
[www.iwillvote.com](http://www.iwillvote.com)

- **Alabama-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Alaska-** Early voting begins on October 15, 2014 and ends on November 4, 2014.
- **Arizona-** Early voting begins on October 9, 2014 and ends on November 4, 2014.
- **Arkansas-** Early voting begins on October 20, 2014 and ends on November 4, 2014.
- **California-** Early voting begins October 16, 2014 and ends on November 4, 2014.
- **Colorado-** Early voting begins on October 20, 2014 and ends on November 4, 2014.
- **Connecticut-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Delaware-** Delaware doesn't have traditional early voting but they do offer in-person absentee voting. Excuses are required.
- **District of Columbia-** Early voting begins on October 20, 2014 and ends on November 3, 2014.
- **Florida-** Early voting begins on October 20, 2014 and ends on November 2, 2014.
- **Georgia-** Early voting begins on October 6, 2014 and ends on October 31, 2014.
- **Hawaii-** Early voting begins on October 20, 2014 and ends on October 31, 2014.
- **Idaho-** In-person absentee voting starts October 13, 2014.
- **Illinois-** Early voting begins on October 13, 2014 and ends on November 1, 2014.
- **Indiana** In-person absentee voting starts October 13, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Iowa-** In-person absentee voting begins September 25, 2014.
- **Kansas-** Early voting begins October 28, 2014 and ends November 4, 2014. Some counties can choose to begin early voting on October 15, 2014.
- **Kentucky-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Louisiana-** Early voting begins October 21, 2014 and ends October 28, 2014.
- **Maine-** In-person absentee voting begins September 20, 2014 and ends October 29, 2014.
- **Maryland-** Early voting begins October 23, 2014 and ends October 30, 2014.
- **Massachusetts-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Michigan-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Minnesota-** In-person absentee voting begins September 19, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Mississippi-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Missouri-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Montana-** In-person absentee voting begins October 5, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Nebraska-** Early voting begins September 30, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Nevada-** Early voting begins October 18, 2014 and ends October 31, 2014.
- **New Jersey-** In-person absentee voting begins September 20, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **New Hampshire-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **New Mexico-** Early voting begins November 18, 2014 and ends November 1, 2014.





## EARLY VOTING DEADLINES BY STATE

- **New York-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **North Carolina-** Early voting begins October 23, 2014 and ends November 1, 2014.
- **North Dakota-** Early voting begins October 20, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Ohio-** In-person absentee voting begins October 6, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.
- **Oregon-** All-mail voting begins October 17, 2014.
- **Pennsylvania-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Rhode Island-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **South Carolina-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **South Dakota-** In-person absentee voting begins on September 20, 2014 and ends on October 31, 2014.
- **Tennessee-** Early voting begins October 15, 2014 and ends October 30, 2014.
- **Texas-** Early voting begins October 18, 2014 and ends October 31, 2014.
- **Utah-** Early voting begins October 21, 2014 and ends October 31, 2014.
- **Vermont-** In-person absentee voting begins September 20, 2014 and ends October 31, 2014
- **Virginia-** In-person early voting is not allowed.
- **Washington-** Early voting begins October 17, 2014 and ends November 4, 2014.
- **West Virginia-** Early voting begins October 22, 2014 and ends November 1, 2014.
- **Wisconsin-** In person absentee voting begins October 13, 2014 and ends October 31, 2014.
- **Wyoming-** In-person absentee voting begins September 25, 2014 and ends November 3, 2014.

Check your state's early voting dates here: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>



## PARTNER RESOURCES

Below is a list of organizations to partner with for local events around Freedom Sunday and Voting Rights. They have been champions for informing and empower communities around voting rights, voter protection, civil and human rights issues.

- **The Advancement Project** - [www.advancementproject.org/](http://www.advancementproject.org/)
- **NAACP Legal Defense Fund** - [www.naacpldf.org/](http://www.naacpldf.org/)
- **American Civil Liberties Union** – [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)
- **Common Cause** - [www.commoncause.org/](http://www.commoncause.org/)
- **Demos** - [www.demos.org/](http://www.demos.org/)
- **Fair Elections Legal Network** - [www.fairelectionsnetwork.com/](http://www.fairelectionsnetwork.com/)
- **Hip Hop Caucus** - [www.hiphopcaucus.org/](http://www.hiphopcaucus.org/)
- **Human Rights Campaign** – [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
- **League of Women’s Voters** - [www.lwv.org/](http://www.lwv.org/)
- **National Bar Association** - [www.nationalbar.org/](http://www.nationalbar.org/)
- **National Action Network** – [www.nationalactionnetwork.net/](http://www.nationalactionnetwork.net/)
- **Project Vote** – [www.projectvote.org/](http://www.projectvote.org/)
- **Rainbow Push Coalition** - [www.rainbowpush.org/](http://www.rainbowpush.org/)
- **AFL-CIO** – [www.aflcio.org](http://www.aflcio.org)
- **People for the American Way** – [www.pfaw.org](http://www.pfaw.org)
- **Black and Brown People Vote** – [www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org](http://www.BlackandBrownPeopleVote.org)
- **National Coalition on Black Civic Participation** – [www.ncbcp.org/](http://www.ncbcp.org/)
- **The National Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights** – [www.lawyerscommittee.org](http://www.lawyerscommittee.org)
- **The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights** - [www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org)



## Freedom Sunday Pledge Card

You may also complete and submit this form online at <http://bit.ly/FreedomSundayPledge>.

**Count Us In!** to educate and engage our congregation and community on “What’s at Stake for the African-American Community” in the 2014 Elections.

Our Church will:

- ⇒ Host Freedom Sunday Events on Sept. 21<sup>st</sup> – Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>
- ⇒ Appoint a Voting Rights Outreach Team Leader to recruit 10 volunteers to conduct voter outreach and education activities through Election Day.
- ⇒ Mobilize our congregation and community to vote on Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014.
- ⇒ Encourage individuals in your church to register to vote online at [www.BlackandBrownPeopleVoter.org](http://www.BlackandBrownPeopleVoter.org).
- ⇒ Provide transportation for use on Election Day.

### **Church Information:**

**Pastor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return email the information in this form*

*[FreedomSundays1@gmail.com](mailto:FreedomSundays1@gmail.com) and [Kwame.Canty@gmail.com](mailto:Kwame.Canty@gmail.com) .*



## Freedom Sunday

### Event Reporting Form

- ⇒ We Hosted \_\_\_\_\_ # Freedom Sunday Events on Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>
- ⇒ \_\_\_\_\_ #people attended the event/service.
- ⇒ \_\_\_\_\_ #new people registered to vote
- ⇒ \_\_\_\_\_ #committed to vote by November 4<sup>th</sup>!

#### **Church Information:**

**Pastor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Person:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please email the information in this form to:*

*[FreedomSundays1@gmail.com](mailto:FreedomSundays1@gmail.com) and [Kwame.Canty@gmail.com](mailto:Kwame.Canty@gmail.com)*

*or submit this form online at <http://bit.ly/FreedomSundayEvents>.*