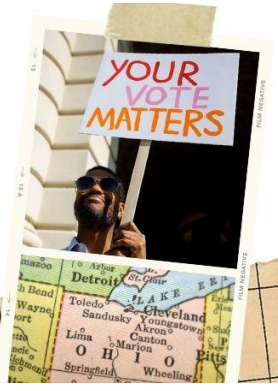


WE HAVE FAITH IN FAIRNESS!



Have Faith in Fairness: Why Fair Districts Matter in a Moral Ohio

Digital faith toolkit for Christian congregations co-sponsored by Fair Districts and Ohio Voter Rights Coalition

As people of conscience and faith, we bear witness to the need for an open and equitable redistricting process that results in fair maps. A transparent process and fair maps are essential to the successful continuation of our democracy.

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Redistricting One Pager

As people of conscience and faith, we bear witness to the need for an open and equitable redistricting process that results in fair maps. For more information on redistricting and action steps [click here!](#)

Take Action

Sign the Petition

Join Fair Districts Ohio in honoring the human dignity of all Ohioans and rejecting gerrymandered districts. We must advance fair redistricting that is transparent, non-discriminatory, and politically impartial. [Sign the petition now.](#)

Request a Redistricting 101 Session for Your Congregation

Email Pastor Brandi Slaughter at bslaughter@ohcouncilchs.org to request a Redistricting 101 session for your congregation.

Craft a Community Map

While we wait to start drawing district maps, we are engaging volunteers in a state-wide project to draw community maps across Ohio. The goal is to have as many community-made maps as possible to help inform how we draw districts. [Draw your community map now.](#)

Prepare to Testify

Public testimonies will make a difference in our redistricting process. Here are [step-by-step instructions](#) on how to present your testimony at upcoming public hearings.

Sample Social Media

[Graphics Folder](#)

- We join our voices together in this letter to ask that you ensure that Gov. DeWine honors the dignity of every Ohioan by ensuring that Ohio's redistricting process is transparent, including feedback from diverse experts and voters! Sign today!
bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps
- As people of conscience and faith, we bear witness to the need for an open and equitable redistricting process that results in fair maps. Sign today!
#RedistrictingOhio bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps
- This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for our state to have fair districts that truly represent the people of Ohio. A transparent process and fair maps are essential for our democracy to thrive. Sign today! bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps
- We have a responsibility to call on our leaders and demand that they turn from their old partisan political tricks, and do what is fair for everyone when they make Ohio's new legislative maps. #RedistrictingOhio bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps

Gathering Prayer

[Download and share this video of the prayer.](#)

Spirit of Love and Life,

We are a diverse group of kindred spirits, not here by coincidence but because we choose to journey together.

We care deeply and live our love as best we can.

We are one in the interdependent web of life.

We are here to side with love with the 95% who are not the wealthy and privileged of society.

We are here because we want a society that works for 100% of all of us.

We know that in a world filled with brokenness, poverty and political corruption, it would be easy to lose ourselves in never ending grief and despair.

And we are tempted to despair each day.

But as Margaret Wheatley notes, the "cure for despair is not hope. It is discovering what we want to do about something we care about."

May we come to know that there is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

How we care for one another is a moral issue.

How we share this nation's prosperity is an ethical issue.

How we offer witness to the need for fair and equal representation is a faith issue.

In a world of close mindedness, may we hold our hearts open.

In a world that desires instant gratification, may we know our strength for the long haul.

In a time when people who care about fairness are attacked from all sides, may we be filled with blessed courage.

And in a time when hate seems to have the upper hand, may your divine love flow through us into this world to create healing and wholeness.

May we create the Beloved Community together and know that we are truly one.

Amen and Blessed Be.

Sample Newsletter Post

As people of faith, we believe in fairness and we believe it's our calling to hold all leaders accountable so that they fairly represent the will of the people of our state.

For many decades in Ohio, politicians of both major political parties have used gerrymandering – a crooked way of drawing voting district boundaries – to protect their own political power. Ohio's gerrymandered congressional and state legislative districts flunk the fairness test big time, breaking apart communities and lumping huge swaths of unrelated small towns together into districts that are impossible to fairly represent in the federal congress and the Ohio General Assembly.

While we certainly don't engage in partisan political activity (which is prohibited by law for tax-exempt faith organizations), we definitely engage in non-partisan advocacy that aligns with our values. We believe that every person should have a fair chance to succeed, thrive, and have their voice heard in the public square – that's why we support **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**.

Please take time to check out **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**, sign on to their letter advocating fair maps for Ohio, and add your voice to the growing chorus of faith voices calling for fairness in Ohio. Check out bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps for more information!

Together, by living our values out loud and proud, we can secure a holy future of fairness for Ohioans for decades to come. May our voices become a blessing for Ohio's future when we say together: **We have faith in fairness!**

Sample Bulletin Announcement

[Graphics Folder](#)

Do you believe in fairness? Let our leaders know it! Take time to check out **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**, the non-partisan coalition calling for fairness in Ohio's redistricting process in 2021. You can join the Faith Voices for Fair Maps sign-on letter advocating fair maps for Ohio

today, adding your voice to the growing chorus of faith voices calling for fairness in Ohio. Just check out bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps for more information!

Sample Pulpit Announcements

[Graphics Folder](#)

Short

We have faith in fairness! Check out Faith Voices for Fair Maps, the non-partisan coalition calling for fairness in Ohio's redistricting process in 2021. Sign their letter advocating fair maps at bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps and tell Ohio's leaders that you have faith in fairness (and they should, too!).

Medium

We have faith in fairness! Check out **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**, the non-partisan coalition calling for fairness in Ohio's redistricting process in 2021. This coalition is advocating for a fair map drawing process that would prevent any one political party from drawing maps that divide communities for political gain.

You can sign the letter advocating fair maps for Ohio and add your voice to the growing chorus of faith voices calling for fairness in Ohio at bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps and tell Ohio's leaders that you have faith in fairness (and they should, too!)

Long – Moment for Mission

Good [morning/afternoon/evening] everyone! Today, I have a question for you: Do you believe in fairness? Really think about that question – do you believe in fairness? – Do you believe that people in our community should get a fair chance at success? Do you believe all people should have a chance to have their voices heard – no matter how much money they make, what their skin color looks like, or what neighborhood they live in?

If you're like me, you can say, "Yes! I believe in fairness!" I might even say I have faith in fairness – I believe that fairness makes our community better, and fairness reflects our moral values. It's so plain, this idea of fairness, you may be wondering, "Why are you even asking us about this now?"

Well friends, right now in Ohio fairness is up for debate. For many decades in Ohio, politicians of both major political parties have used gerrymandering – a crooked way of drawing voting district boundaries – to protect their own political power and to destroy fairness in our political system.

While we certainly don't engage in partisan political activity here (which is prohibited by law for tax-exempt faith organizations), we definitely engage in non-partisan advocacy that aligns with our values. We believe that every person should have a fair chance to succeed, thrive, and have their voice heard in the public square – that's why we support **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**.

Please take time to check out **Faith Voices for Fair Maps**, sign on to their letter advocating fair maps for Ohio, and add your voice to the growing chorus of faith voices calling for fairness in Ohio. Check out bit.ly/OhioFaithFairMaps for more information!

Remember: all people should have a chance to have their voices heard – no matter what. Let's make sure our leaders know we have faith in fairness and that they should, too.

Sample Christian Prayer

Holy Jesus,
You who lost a rigged election
To a man called Barabbas,
We call upon your gracious spirit today
As we seek fairness in our own elections
Here in our community and across Ohio.

Like the packed crowd of voices that once cried against you,
Rallied and wrangled by insecure leaders
Desperate to protect their own interests,
We have too often seen lawmakers in our state
Draw maps in their own best interest
To the harm and ruin of We the People.

We pray this day for courage to match our convictions –
A willingness to act in ways that ensure equity
And a commitment to live out our faith in fairness.

Grant us power to contend with every force
That would scheme, plot, conspire, and connive
Against the fair treatment of all people in our state.

Grant us perseverance to keep chasing after justice
For the sake of those who are ignored and disenfranchised
So that every voice may be heard and every person valued.

Grant us passion to confront our leaders in love
Holding them publicly accountable
To the moral imperative of fairness.

We ask this all

For the sake of the one
Who we call the Ruler of Life
Jesus, the Christ.
Amen.

Sample Interfaith Prayer

Spirit of gentleness,
Wind of good change,
Breath of hopeful longing,
Fill us this day with renewed strength
That we may contend for fairness
In all our common work.

We lift up our collective hope
That fairness might reign in all our affairs,
That justice might be made real in the work of our government,
That compassion might be deepened in our love of neighbor,
That equity might be our future
And love our legacy.

Blessed Be / Namaste / Shalom / Amen / Asé / Inshallah / Peace

Sample References with “Sermon Seeds”

NOTE: Both the JPS Tanakh (Jewish) text and NRSV (Mainline Protestant) text for the Hebrew Bible passages

Deuteronomy 1:16-17a

I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, "Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God's. (*JPS Tanakh*)

I charged your judges at that time: 'Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgement is God's. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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While this passage speaks specifically about judicial leaders, we have seen all too well how our interconnected political system in the United States allows partisan political maneuvers like gerrymandering and unfair maps to affect the appointment and confirmation of judicial leaders as well as the subsequent administration of justice from those leaders.

The ethics outlined in this passage are clear: fairness and right judgment are core moral values that the community should be upholding. We know that fair maps and faithful representation of all Ohioans are the outcomes that constitute fairness and right judgment in drawing legislative district boundaries.

Regardless of a person's status – "citizen or resident alien," "the small and the great" – God calls us to make sure their voice is heard and their rights are protected.

Isaiah 58:13-14

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
From pursuing your affairs on My holy day;
If you call the sabbath "delight,"
The LORD's holy day "honored";
And if you honor it and go not your ways
Nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—

Then you can seek the favor of the LORD.
I will set you astride the heights of the earth,
And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (*JPS Tanakh*)

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;
then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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Too often the people who draw Ohio's congressional maps put their own interests ahead of everything else. The desire for the ruling party to consolidate power and solidify their own security in positions of authority end up trumping any considerations of equity, justice, or fairness.

In the passage above from Isaiah, we are given a very clear roadmap for thriving: If we can put our own interests aside in favor of what God asks of us, we can realize a beautiful future. Only by seeking fairness in our political systems – including drawing fair maps in 2021 – we can soar to the “heights of the earth” by the mercy of God.

Ezekiel 18:25-27

Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Listen, O House of Israel: Is My way unfair? It is your ways that are unfair! When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does wrong, he shall die for it; he shall die for the wrong he has done. And if a wicked person

turns back from the wickedness that he practiced and does what is just and right, such a person shall save his life. (*JPS Tanakh*)

Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is unfair.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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So much of our work in the religious community is focused on making sense of seemingly senseless suffering. Life often seems remarkably unfair, and we might often question whether God is even fair at all. This passage flips that question, asserting that it is humanity's ways that are unfair.

*Surely we can think of many, **many** examples of human unfairness: gerrymandering, back-room processes for legislative map making, and a failure to be transparent in public participation around redrawing legislative districts are all choices that do great harm to Ohioans. We have seen the terrible consequences of these choices in the past: corrupt bills being passed through bribery at the statehouse, manipulated statewide elections through depressing the vote in minority communities, and the destruction of solidarity by dividing communities into separate districts have all hurt our state.*

Yet the hope in this passage is clear as well: life does not have to be like this forever. When the wicked turn back, change can happen. We have a responsibility to call all of our leaders away from the wicked behaviors of our past, demand that they turn from the partisan political tricks of yesteryear, and clearly call them to do what is fair for all concerned in making Ohio's new legislative maps.

Psalm 112:5-6

All goes well with the man who lends generously,
who conducts his affairs with equity.
He shall never be shaken;

the beneficent man will be remembered forever. (*JPS Tanakh*)

It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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Fairness takes many forms and manifests in many ways – equity and justice among them. When we imagine what a future with fair maps and fair legislative districts could look like, we should envision outcomes like those mentioned in this Psalm.

The people who choose to conduct their affairs with equity and justice will live into a future of wellness, being remembered forever as a result of their living witness to righteousness and their faithful commitment to fairness.

What will our state look like – not just next year, but decades from now – if we choose to conduct our redistricting affairs with equity and justice? If we draw maps with faithful fairness, what beautiful, God-pleasing future could we create just by seeking justice in our own behaviors and official state actions?

Mark 15:6-15

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to

satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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The story of the Passion of Jesus is complicated, but perhaps one of the most straightforward moments in scripture is this passage in which temple authorities rile up the crowd to vote against Jesus. We don't know whether the chief priests loaded the crowd with their friends or whether they had to work to persuade the existing crowd to support their position, but we do know those leaders sought to influence the crowd by whatever means necessary to preserve their own power.

Despite all the scheming from those leaders though, this passage clearly shows that the ultimate authority in the story – here, Pilate – was persuaded by the cries of the crowd (regardless of where their motivation came from).

Like Pilate in this story, leaders in Ohio are motivated by the cries of the people – people like you and me and everyone else involved in the fight for fair maps in Ohio. This reality is why it is so critically important that we, as people of faith who believe in fairness, raise our voices together in support of fair maps. It is only by hearing our cries as a crowd that our leaders will hear and decide to have faith in fairness, too.

Luke 6:46-49

'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.' (*New Revised Standard Version*)

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How can you get more direct than the parable of the two houses? We have all heard this story in some context, but the gist is still the same: one work is begun with sound preparation and it endures, while a second is done shoddily and that dwelling all comes tumbling down.

We know that a strong Ohio is built on a foundation of equity, justice, and fairness. Building the framework of our elected democracy on a shoddy foundation – one with gerrymandered maps and crooked legislative districts – will never withstand the storms of public discourse that all democracies must from time-to-time weather.

Demanding fair maps now means we are prepared with a healthy democracy that can weather whatever storms may come in the future. Pandemics, natural disasters, major public service scandals – you name it, we'll be ready if we have fairness in our political process and justice in our legislative assemblies.

"Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you?" Surely we know that it is not God's will for anything but fairness to reign in the administration of democracy in Ohio.

Co-sponsors

