

A Call We Cannot Ignore: Faith, Voting Rights, and the Spirit of Our Ancestors

METHODIST CHURCH
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
5TH DISTRICT
Bishop Francine Brookins, Presiding Prelate

**ELECTION 2026
BALLOT PARTY**

GET TO KNOW YOUR CA BALLOT

on **ZOOM**

TUESDAY
MAY 12, 2026

6:30 PM PACIFIC TIME

FOR ALL CALIFORNIA VOTERS

ELECTION DAY, JUNE 2ND
bring your ballots

Please Scan QR code to register for Zoom

BE INFORMED, BE ENGAGED, BE HEARD.

YOUR PARTICIPATION MAKES AN IMPACT. LET'S BUILD A STRONGER CALIFORNIA TOGETHER!

TOGETHER, WE CAN RESOLVE DISTRESS, SOUVENIR, AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

** Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." - Amos 5:24

THE 5TH DISTRICT OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH - "RISE UP!" MENTAL HEALTH, MUSIC AND MISSION

Beloved community, there are moments in history when disappointment feels heavier than grief because it carries memories with it. Today, we find ourselves in such a moment. Recent court rulings and redistricting efforts across the South have struck at the very heart of voting rights that were secured through sacrifice, suffering, and courage. These developments are not random, nor are they mere legal technicalities; they represent the slow, deliberate reassembly of Jim Crow, sanitized in language, hidden behind processes, but devastating in impact.

Our ancestors did not march so that their descendants would have to question whether their vote still matters. They did not boycott, sit in, pray, bleed, or die only for protections to be stripped away quietly decades later. From Selma to Birmingham, from lunch counters to jail cells, the Black church was not on the sidelines, it was the backbone. And that same moral backbone is required now.

In April 2026, the United States Supreme Court struck down Louisiana's second majority-Black congressional district, ruling that it relied too heavily on race. In doing so, the Court significantly narrowed the power of the Voting Rights Act—particularly Section 2, which for generations has served as the primary safeguard against

racial vote dilution. This decision sent a clear message across the South: states now have more freedom to dismantle districts that allowed Black voters to elect candidates of their choice.

The response was immediate. Political leaders in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Texas began calling for new maps, special sessions, and aggressive redistricting. Predominately Black communities that had finally achieved representation now face being fragmented, packed, or erased once again. These actions do not restore fairness; they revive exclusion, discrimination, and a lack of representation for Black people in their own communities.

At the same time, in Virginia, a voter-approved redistricting amendment was voided by the state Supreme Court, not because the people rejected it, but because of procedural arguments. Once again, the voice of the people was overridden, and power remained concentrated where it already resided. The pattern is clear: when the will of the people threatens entrenched power, the rules are changed.

Church, let us be honest. This is what Jim Crow looks like in the 21st century. There are no longer "Whites Only" signs, but there are maps drawn to ensure the same outcome. There are no literacy tests, but there are legal standards so complex that justice becomes unreachable. There are no poll taxes, but there are diluted votes and diminished voices. And yet, into this moment, a clarion call is being issued.

Bishop Francine Brookins, Presiding Prelate of the 5th Episcopal District, has called for action—one that transcends district lines and speaks directly to the conscience of the church. She urges the entire 5th Episcopal District to unite with national Black organizations, courageous leaders, and sister Black church denominations across this nation.

Her charge is clear:

- This is the season to educate our people so they understand what is happening and why it matters.
- This is the season to mobilize, so that apathy does not accomplish what oppression alone cannot.
- This is the season to study and understand the issues, not through partisan lenses, but through the moral lens of justice.
- This is the season to vote, faithfully, consistently, and strategically.

This call is not political; it is prophetic. It echoes the words of Scripture, reminding us that faith without works is dead, and that justice is what love looks like in public.

The Black church has always been more than a place of worship. It has been a schoolhouse, a meeting hall, a strategy room, a refuge, and a launchpad for freedom. When voting rights are threatened, the mission of the church is implicated. Silence is not an option. Neutrality is not faithfulness.

We honor our ancestors not by nostalgia, but by action. We protect our children's future by refusing to disengage from the present. The struggle did not end with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and it will not end now unless we abandon it.

Jim Crow has returned once again. But we have returned too, rooted in faith, united in purpose, and guided by leaders willing to speak the truth. Now is not the time to be silent. Now is the time to stand.

At COR Church, we are moving beyond words and into faithful action. In alignment with the 5th Episcopal District of the AME Church, we are committing to hands-on civic engagement through phone banking, text outreach, and coordinated get-out-the-vote efforts. Our goal is to educate, encourage, and mobilize our community, not only to register to vote but also to be informed about the issues and candidates that will represent all of us.

As your pastor, I urge every member to be intentional during this critical season. Your vote matters, as does the vote of everyone connected to you. Let's come together and make a difference!

Rev. Dr. Ralph E. Williamson

References:

"Supreme Court Voids Majority Black Congressional District in Louisiana." AP News.

"Republicans Push to Redraw Maps After Supreme Court Deals." Politico.