

JUSTICE FOR ALL
A TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT INITIATIVE

**History of the Tennessee Faith and
Justice Alliance**

for the

**North Carolina Faith and Justice
Alliance**

June 5, 2020

2008 Economic Downturn

The Scope of the Problem



1 in 6 Tennesseans

Of 6.78 million Tennesseans, nearly 1 in 6 lives at or below the poverty line.

60% of low-income residents

TN's statewide legal needs assessment showed that 60% of low-income residents have some type of civil legal problem each year. 20% have 3-5 civil legal issues, 10% have 6 or more legal issues in a given year.

1.4 Million Tennesseans

Which means that approximately 1.4 million Tennesseans need legal counsel and cannot afford it.

Good News/Bad News

- 4 LSC-funded organizations in Tennessee, 100 excellent, experienced attorneys to handle civil matters **BUT**
 - 1.4 million Tennesseans needing help with a legal matter **AND**
 - Most did nothing to help themselves because they did not recognize the problem as legal or did not know where to go or did not trust the system enough to approach an attorney
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Tennessee Access to Justice Commission Created 2009

- **Court made Access to Justice its #1 Strategic Priority**
 - **Mobilized the 20,000+ attorneys who already had ethical obligations to provide pro bono help**
 - **Sought to meet clients where they were to identify and assist with civil legal needs**
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The needs are many.

- **Housing**
 - **Medical care**
 - **Immigration Status**
 - **Government benefits: unemployment, disability, workers' compensation, veterans**
 - **Child custody**
 - **Wills**
 - **Drivers' license revocation**
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How Did We Initially Serve Those in Need?

A. We brought “ ‘them’ to ‘us’ ”

- **Legal Clinics at courthouses, lawyer offices**
 - **Sponsored by bar associations, law firms**
 - **Very successful with early clinic efforts in more rural places**
 - **But still not attracting many who we wanted to assist**
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First Evaluation

- **Where do people go when they have legal issues or other crises? Who do they trust to solve their problems? Where do they “hang out”? How can we engage them there?**
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Some Answers

- **Nowhere: they don't recognize problem or likelihood of solution**
 - **Internet**
 - **Neighbor, friend, or trusted person (hairstresser, mechanic)**
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Most Intriguing Answer

- **Houses of Worship or worship leaders**
 - **And spiritual leaders already know how to give assistance—but may not think about legal nature of issues**
 - **A perfect match!**
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And thus began the TFJA!



TN Faith & Justice Alliance

Engaging the Faith Community for
Enhanced Access to Legal Care

An Initiative of the
Tennessee
Supreme Court
Access to Justice
Commission

TFJA has actively extended outreach to faith communities

- **Early participants were primarily Christian Protestant denominations**
 - **Actively and intentionally extended to all religious groups and individual congregations**
 - **Further extension to universities, rehab facilities, arts organizations, immigration clinics, NAACP**
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...and to other settings

- **Exploring extensions to jails and prisons**
 - **Expungement and drivers' license clinics**
 - **Room in the Inn programs**
 - **We are limited only by our own imaginations!**
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The Goals and Assumptions of the Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance



Connect

The goal is to attract attorneys who are not currently involved in pro bono work and to connect them with low income Tennesseans in need of legal services.



Seek

One assumption behind this program is that people in need will go to their houses of worship to seek assistance.



Calling

A second assumption is that some members of the private bar experience a spiritual sense of calling to serve the poor.



Community

Attorneys in the congregation may already volunteer but not realize their legal expertise is needed in the community.

TN Faith & Justice Alliance Projects



Project 1

Training clergy to spot legal issues when they are listening to the concerns of parishioners.



Project 2

Using a Referral Model designed to pair volunteer lawyers with congregants in need.



Project 3

Establishing inter-faith free advice clinics.



Project 4

Providing community education.

We have added outward community awareness programs.

Pro Bono & Faith Days (#PBFDays)

Statewide Awareness Campaign Third Year Initiative

Through Pro Bono & Faith Days (#PBFDays), celebrated annually in October, the Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance asks the faith community across the state of Tennessee to celebrate Pro Bono Month by raising awareness about pro bono resources and opportunities for involvement statewide, participating in and hosting #PBFDays events, celebrating existing faith & justice programming, and joining the conversation and the fight for equal access to justice for disadvantaged Tennesseans of all walks of life.



"Making Faith and Justice as Familiar as a PB&F Sandwich." Photos developed during 2017 #PBFDays TN Faith & Justice Partnership with Poverty & the Arts, an Arts Collaborative Empowering Artists Overcoming Homelessness.

PRO BONO & FAITH DAYS

(#PBFDays) presents

2019 FAITH & JUSTICE UNIVERSITY – MID TN

–LEGAL RESOURCES TRAINING: 2019 FOCUS ON ABUSE & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE–

FIRST BAPTIST GALLATIN – 205 E Main St

10/24/2019 / 1PM–3PM / GALLATIN, TENNESSEE

As part of Tennessee's Annual Pro Bono Month Celebration, the TN Faith & Justice Alliance will be hosting a Pro Bono & Faith Days (#PBFDays) training on Thursday, October 24, 2019 in Gallatin, TN, designed to help faith leaders and community partners learn about free legal resources and help in their area and consider ways they can better serve their communities through faith and justice partnership and connection. This year's program partners with National Interfaith Alliance Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and Tennessee Senior Law Alliance for special resource presentation on community legal care for those experiencing abuse and domestic violence. Faith leaders (both clergy and lay leaders) of any religious tradition, social workers, advocates, access to justice partners, interpreters, court clerks, court administrators, judges, attorneys, law enforcement personnel, and interested community members are invited to attend. There is no charge to attend.

Four 2019 Faith & Justice Universities will be held in each grand division of Tennessee during October 2018 in honor of Celebrate Pro Bono Month.



And even gone virtual during COVID-19!



We are blessed with great staff and commission members and community partners.



Court Commitment

Commission Leadership



Full-Time Staff

Statewide Partners

Keys to Success

We love to share thoughts and ideas.

- **The Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance is excited that we could help in any way with North Carolina's creative process. Chief Justice Cheri Beasley is an incredible leader!**
 - **We are excited to see that you are already identifying even more and better ways to serve those who lives can be changed with our help! We will take those home with us!**
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Congratulations!

NORTH CAROLINA FAITH AND JUSTICE ALLIANCE

A PROGRAM OF THE NORTH CAROLINA EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
CHIEF JUSTICE CHERI BEASLEY, CHAIR



ISSUE

More than 1.5 million people live in poverty in North Carolina and millions more live paycheck to paycheck. In the past year, 71% of low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem like custody disputes, denial of government benefits, driver's license revocation, landlord and tenant disputes, and drafting wills, among others.

MISSION

The North Carolina Faith and Justice Alliance seeks to build a coalition of faith-based groups and legal practitioners to help meet the growing need for legal assistance for North Carolinians who lack the resources to access our courts and protect their legal rights.

GOALS

1. Create partnerships among faith leaders and the legal community to improve access to the judicial system
2. Reduce the financial burden on counties by restoring driver's licenses that have been revoked due to the inability to pay court imposed fines and fees
3. Improve access to expunction relief

NEXT STEPS

1. Meet with faith leaders and establish Faith and Justice Alliance chapters (March - December 2020)
2. Provide training to FJA-involved faith communities (June 2020 - June 2021)
3. Hold individual FJA legal clinics in the Triangle, Triad, and Wilmington (June 2020)

FJA FAITH-BASED REFERRAL MODEL

1. A community member brings a concern to the attention of a religious leader
2. The religious leader recognizes the legal issue implicated by community member's concerns and refers the community member to the Faith and Justice Alliance
3. The Alliance refers the community member to Legal Aid of North Carolina, the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center, or another local provider of pro bono services



PRO BONO CLINIC MODEL

Faith-based groups can host driver's license restoration clinics or expunction clinics in their facilities. The Alliance will provide legal training and other resources necessary to host a clinic. The faith-based group will recruit local attorneys to volunteer their time, publicize the event, and provide the facility on the day of the event.



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