

# PARTICIPANT ROLES AND WHAT TO EXPECT

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Everyone who has done this before will tell you that there is plenty of time to kick back and relax early in the day and in the evening during the Fast & Vigil. However, we are coming to the court to witness in opposition to the death penalty. That is very difficult to do if we are not reaching out to the people who see us and if we are not doing everything we can to allow them the chance to become active abolitionists. That is a key goal - attracting new abolitionists. Remember, if we are to win this struggle, we must each see our number one job as being to find our replacements.

We are all volunteers, and participants are asked to help in whatever way they are comfortable. There are many roles for participants to play. Some of these are described below. Please read this all the way through. If all this seems unfamiliar to you, never fear - you'll get the hang of it.

## **BEING PRESENT AT THE COURT**

It takes between 20 and 25 vigilers to actively "hold down the fort." This breaks down as follows:

- 5 pairs (10 people) holding the big signs.
- 2 people passing out brochures.
- 2 to 4 people at the table talking to people who stop and making buttons
- 2 to 4 people standing by to jump in when needed.
- 1 to 2 people in the room watching our stuff and handling sales and donations.

Even if you are not fasting, it still gets tiring. We all need to watch out for each other. You never know when nature will decide to make an urgent call, or when some other unforeseen circumstance might happen. If you are holding a sign and suddenly you need to "go," it is great to have a relief person standing by ready to replace you. Similarly, when you are fresh on the scene after a break, offer to relieve people, or stand by until needed.

When we have a surplus of vigilers (more than 20 - 25 vigilers present in front of the court), that is when we can send groups (or individuals) to leaflet at other busy traffic areas. That said, it is rare that we have a surplus. More frequently, we're at \*just enough\* people, or we're slightly stretched. So if you are making plans to see the sights or spend significant time away from the Court, please consider committing to the times when we need the most help - notably set-up time and from 11am to 2pm. Remember, there will always be somebody who needs a break eventually.

## **FLIERS & BROCHURES**

Last year we distributed more than 4,000 pamphlets. That is a lot of information to distribute, so we need everyone to take time to approach tour groups, passerbys, families stopping for selfies, etc. Always have brochures in hand to pass out to people to take with them.

## **WHAT'S ON THE TABLE?**

Our table features information about the death penalty, petitions, sign up sheets, select literature, stickers and buttons. You need not worry about bringing any materials. We have a universal flier on the issue, and a single theme petition focusing on the call for a moratorium on executions. In order to keep the information on the table from being overwhelming, and unfocussed, we try to stay away from individual cases and instead focus on the broader theme of the issue.

That said, and to repeat, ANY group may display death penalty and/or human rights oriented information on the info table INSIDE the United Methodist Building, in the same room where our sales area is. We try to keep the table outside at the court very focused, and not too cluttered. With so many organizations co-sponsoring, the table would be very cluttered if every group had to have its fliers there. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to raise them with the coordinator at any time.

## **VIGILERS WITH UNIQUE (RELATED) EXPERIENCES**

Among the participants will be murder victim family members, death row family members, death row survivors, and others with unique experiences or in-depth knowledge about the issue. When someone comes up to challenge us ("You'd feel different if it happened to you,") it's great to be able to say, "Well maybe you are right, but let me introduce you to my friend Bill, and he can tell you why he doesn't want the person who killed his grandmother to be executed." Or something like that. We do our best to make sure such people are around as much as possible, but sometimes they need breaks too.

## **DO's & DON'T's**

- \* Please DO NOT engage in any activity that would discourage a person passing by from approaching us. If you want to read something, or are engaged in deep conversation, please either do that away from the table, or stop such activities when you see a person walking by or approaching the table. DO greet them with a warm smile as you look them in the eye and invite them to sign the "Time Out on Executions!" (moratorium) petition.
- \* Please DO help us keep the table neat and clear of any garbage.
- \* Please DO help us keep the general area and drink table neat looking.

- \* There should always be at least one person passing out the F&V flier on the sidewalk in front of the table. When it is very busy, there should be at least two people passing out fliers. Please DO step in to fill a need when you see it.
- \* Please DO NOT stand in front of the big signs while holding them or while talking with people who are holding them. We are wasting our time if people cannot read our messages.

There will be busloads of tourists and students to be leafleted and given a little talk whenever possible. People passing by should be invited to come to the table to sign the moratorium petition.

### **"SALES" & DONATIONS**

Those who express interest in helping us with a donation, either straight out or in exchange for the t-shirts, buttons, books, etc., should be escorted across the street to the United Methodist building to make their contribution. We are NOT allowed to accept money on the sidewalk in front of the Court.

Erase that word, "sales" from your lexicon. What we do is provide activist materials that help people take action to stop the death penalty. This year we may have some books and music available in addition to the usual t-shirts, etc. A display of some of the items available will be maintained on the table. People who come to the table should be informed that more such items in the full range of sizes is available for a "suggested donation" inside the United Methodist building (UMB), "which is just over there." People who express an interest in making a donation - either outright or in exchange for one of the items we have available - should be escorted into the UMB....

Remember, when doing activist work, people who support that work are participating as activists as well. It is called "checkbook activism." When facilitating a donation in exchange for a tangible good like a t-shirt or a book, there is *\*never\** a set price. Always phrase it as a "minimum suggested donation." When we do that, the person is no longer buying something - they are making a contribution and participating in our work. Thus, a \$12 book provides the opportunity for a person to consciously round up to \$15, \$20, or more. And that's what keeps our world spinning.... (It costs about \$4,500 to pull this event off this year!)

Please make it a point to let people know that there is free information available inside the UMB in addition to the shirts/merch.