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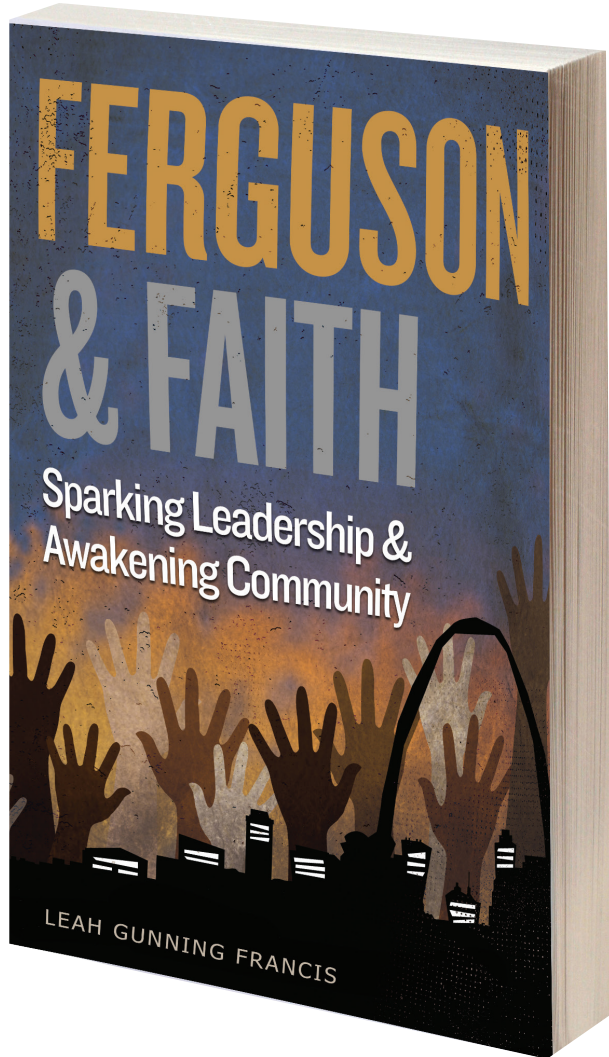
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# FERGUSON & FAITH

Sparking Leadership & Awakening Community

by Leah Gunning Francis

Foreword by Jim Wallis, Founder and President of Sojourners



The shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, re-ignited a long-smoldering movement for justice, with many St. Louis area clergy stepping up to support the emerging young leaders of today's Civil Rights Movement. Seminary professor LEAH GUNNING FRANCIS was among the activists, and her interviews with more than two dozen faith leaders and with the movement's new organizers take us behind the scenes of the continuing protests. **FERGUSON AND FAITH** demonstrates that being called to lead a faithful life can take us to places we never expected to go, with people who never expected us to join hands with them.

**FERGUSON AND FAITH** is the first book from the partnership of the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) and Chalice Press.



The Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) is a leadership incubator that inspires young people to make a difference in the world through Christian communities.

## LEAH GUNNING FRANCIS

is Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Associate Dean of Contextual Education at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, where she has taught since 2008. She earned her Ph.D from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in 2009 and her M.Div. from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 2001.



As a frequent lecturer and preacher for local, regional, and national audiences, Dr. Gunning Francis teaches and preaches for many groups including colleges, churches, and denominational events. She has provided pastoral leadership for congregations in Georgia, Illinois, and Ohio.

Dr. Gunning Francis is married to Rev. Rodney Francis. They live with their children in St. Louis.

## FERGUSON & FAITH: Sparking Leadership & Awakening Community

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# FROM THE FOREWORD

BY JIM WALLIS, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF SOJOURNERS

I believe that if the young Ferguson leaders hadn't gotten up day after day and gone to the streets night after night, and some courageous clergy hadn't joined them there and spoken out in their community, there might never have been a historic national commission on policing or a damning Department of Justice report on the Ferguson Police Department—and we would not be at the beginning of a new national conversation on reforming the criminal justice system. But it is only the beginning, and the test of the nation's soul will be action aimed at the systemic racial injustice embedded in that system. Without the courage and perseverance of the young Ferguson activists and clergy, we simply would not be in the place of new possibilities that we now find ourselves. While the road ahead of us to achieve racial freedom, equity, and healing is still long and difficult, I believe that future generations may well look back

on the Ferguson movement as a watershed in our painful racial history. The young leaders and clergy who led the way may be seen as key figures who helped bend the arc of history toward justice, much as the civil rights movement did in the 1960s.

Leah Gunning Francis's conversations with both the clergy and the young activists show how important it is for communities of faith to reach out to a new generation of young leaders and help elevate and nurture their gifts. What many of the clergy interviewed in this book realized in the course of the Ferguson protests was that rather than sitting back in their sanctuaries and waiting for the young people to seek out the church for guidance or leadership, it was the church that needed to go out and meet the young people where they were, joining them shoulder to shoulder, on the streets, in the struggle for justice.



## EARLY PRAISE

“This is a very important book. Leah Gunning Francis has penned a theological memoir of a movement. It is an invitation to see the spirituality at the heart of this movement. And it is an invitation to get into the streets...since we don't just change the world with our heads, but with our hands and feet and sweat and tears. One of the most important things this book does is celebrate a new generation of activists and faith-rooted organizers, without forgetting the freedom-fighters of old.”

—Shane Claiborne, author, activist, speaker

“Through the curation of poignant testimonies and reflections from local Ferguson clergy and activists, Dr. Gunning Francis has created a pathway for the construction of practical theologies that will inform and shape the prophetic leadership of preachers, pastors, and faith-based organizers in the ongoing struggle for freedom, justice and peace in our communities.”

—Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews, Director of Clergy Organizing, PICO National Network

“Rooted in St. Louis, Leah Gunning Francis effectively weaves together profiles of local Christian and Jewish leaders who, inspired by the Ferguson moment, are working to creatively disrupt white supremacy in their religious institutions and the wider society.”

—Ethan Vesely-Flad, Director of National Organizing, Fellowship of Reconciliation

“This book is a powerful collection of stories of clergy and young activists who were visible and vocal in the struggle for racial justice in Ferguson. They embodied the best of the human spirit that resonated with many around the globe, and challenged this nation to live up to its ideal of liberty and justice for all.”

—Emanuel Cleaver, U.S. Representative (Missouri)

“Their work was a work of justice. This volume is a work of justice too, as it allows us to hear the voices of both the young activists and the clergy who were on the streets of Ferguson during those stressful weeks and months. The ecclesiology that emerges from these testimonies is compelling. This is a must-read for all leaders of faith communities. In addition, this is a model for the power of qualitative research to change the narrative. Because Leah Gunning Francis has allowed the voices of these leaders to speak through her pages, we have a completely different picture of what was happening in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. Her work allows us to hear and see the vocation of the church, of the clergy, and of all children of God.”

—Margaret Ann Crain, author of *The United Methodist Deacon* and co-author of *Yearning for God*



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