

LENT

in the **Black Church Tradition:**
A 40-Day Justice Journey

POWERED BY



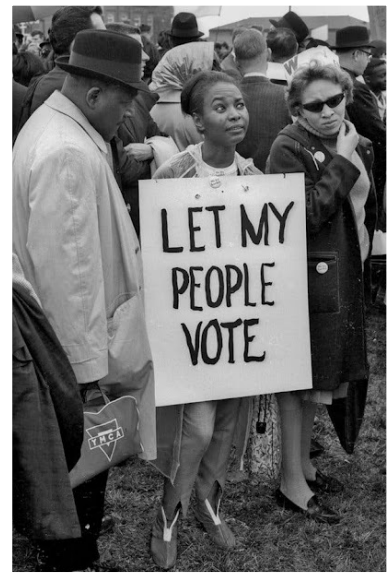
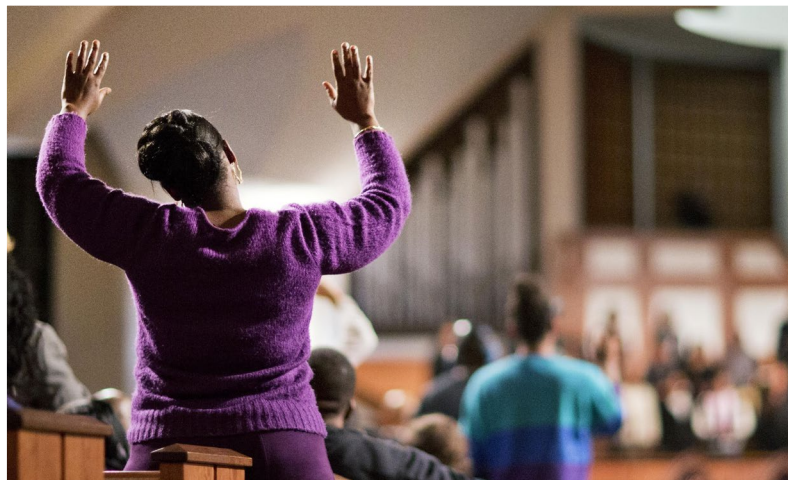
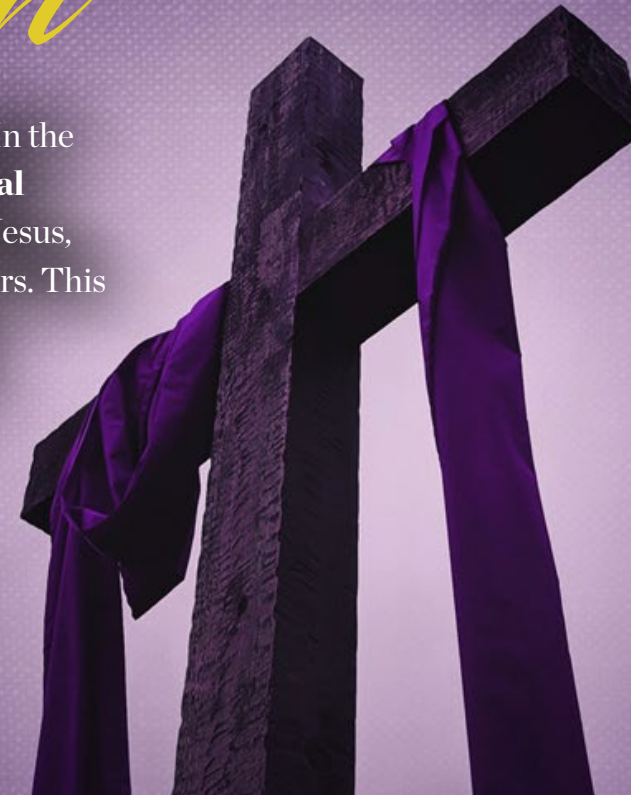
PNBC

PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL
BAPTIST CONVENTION, INC.

Introduction

Lent is a sacred season of reflection, repentance, and renewal. In the Black Church tradition, it has also been a time of **deep spiritual resistance and liberation**, echoing the prophetic witness of Jesus, the Hebrew prophets, and the freedom struggles of our ancestors. This 40-day devotional is designed to ground faith communities in **scriptural reflection, prayer, and direct action**, equipping us to confront racism, economic injustice, and the rise of white nationalism.

Each week includes a **scripture passage, prayer, reflection question, and action step**, guiding us to embody justice as an act of faith.



Week 6

Opening Commentary: “A Faith That Shows Up”

Too often, we hear the voices of others louder than the voice of God.

Lent is a season that calls us to listen more deeply for God’s voice and to return,
to return to God,
to return to what matters most,
to return to a faith that does not merely speak,
but acts.

The prophet reminds us in Micah 6:8 what the Lord requires:
to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

And in this season, we are reminded that justice is not an idea,
it is a responsibility.

Voting and voting rights sit at the very heart of that responsibility.

Our ancestors prayed for the right to vote,
marched for the right to vote,
and suffered for the right to vote,

because they understood that the ballot is more than a civic tool, it is power for we, the people.
It is a moral instrument.

It is a declaration of dignity.

It is a way of saying, I matter. I am somebody.

Yet even now, that right is contested, challenged, and constrained,
because forces that would do us harm know just how powerful our vote is.

Efforts like the S.A.V.E. Act represent voter suppression wrapped in legislation,
policies that threaten to silence our voices rather than strengthen our democracy.

And as people of faith, we cannot be silent
when our access is restricted
and our voices are diminished.

Lent asks something of us.

It calls us to examine not only what we believe,
but how we show up for what we believe.

It calls us to fast, not only from what satisfies the flesh,
but from indifference.

From silence in the face of injustice.

From the temptation to disengage when the work becomes difficult.

A faith that follows Jesus, rooted in the theology of Dr. King and the history of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, must be a faith that shows up,
in our communities,

in our advocacy,
in our preaching,
and yes, at the ballot box.
We do not engage because it is convenient.
We engage because it is faithful.
Because we are made in the image of God,
and our voices are sacred.
As we journey toward the cross, we are reminded
that Jesus did not shrink back from the weight of his calling.
And neither can we.
So let this Lenten season be a time of renewal,
a time to recommit ourselves
to the sacred work of justice.
Let us protect the right to vote.
Let us educate, organize, and mobilize.
Let us ensure that no voice is silenced
and no community is left behind.
Because this is not just about politics.
This is about people.
This is about dignity.
This is about faith.
And in this season,
we will not be silent.
We will not be still.
We will show up.
We will stand up.
We will speak up.
And we will press on,
because, as Ella Baker reminded us,
“we who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.”
We don’t just pray about justice, we show up for it.

Rev. Thomas L. Bowen
*General Secretary, Progressive National
Baptist Convention.*

Rev. Thomas L. Bowen serves as General Secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention. An ordained Baptist minister and longtime advocate for faith-rooted social justice, he has served since 2002 at Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and has led public engagement efforts at the city and national levels, including roles in D.C. government and the White House Office of Public Engagement.



Opening Prayer

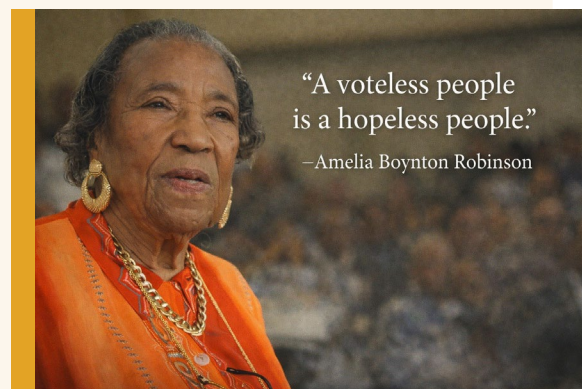
God of justice and truth,
We come before You with heavy hearts and open eyes.
You are the One who calls us out of bondage and into freedom—
yet we confess that systems of oppression still bind Your people,
and too often, we have learned to live with chains we did not create
but have not resisted as we should.

Forgive us, O God,
for the ways we have been silent
when voices were silenced,
for the times we have been comfortable
while others were pushed away from the ballot,
for every moment we accepted barriers to democracy
as “just the way things are.”

We remember the wisdom of Amelia Boynton
Robinson,
who kept before her the truth:
“A voteless people is a hopeless people.”
God, keep us from contributing to hopelessness.

Today we name the sin of voter suppression—
the closing of polling places,
the manipulation of laws,
the burdening of the poor, the elderly, and the marginalized.
We name the lie that some voices matter more than others.
We name the fear that seeks to keep power in the hands of the few.
But God, make us watchful.
Make us bold.
Make us faithful stewards of the freedom You intend for all people.
And as we journey through this Lenten season,
move us from repentance to action—
that we might not only lament injustice,
but dismantle it—

We pray in the spirit of liberation,
in the name of the One who sets captives free. Amen



Contemporary Leader Spotlight:

John Lewis

John Lewis – Civil rights icon, champion of voting rights, and friend and sojourner alongside the Progressive National Baptist Convention

John Lewis was one of the most courageous and enduring voices for voting rights in American history. As a young leader, he served as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and



was the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington. Lewis helped lead the Selma voting rights campaign, where he was brutally beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on “Bloody Sunday”—a moment that helped galvanize support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

For more than three decades, Lewis carried this fight into Congress,

consistently advocating for the protection and expansion of voting rights. He reminded the nation that the right to vote is “precious, almost sacred,” and must be defended at all costs.

First introduced in 2019 and reintroduced most recently in 2025, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act remains stalled in Congress, leaving critical protections for voters un-restored. In that absence, new proposals like the SAVE Act would require documentary proof of citizenship—such as a passport or birth certificate—to register to vote, raising concerns about new barriers for millions of eligible voters.

This moment reflects a familiar pattern: when protections are weakened, new restrictions often follow. John Lewis called this work “good trouble.” His legacy challenges us not only to vote, but to fight for the right to vote for all people.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Esther 4:14

“14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

Reflection

Esther was living in a moment when a law had been written that would bring harm to her people. She had access to power—but using her voice would come at a cost. She could remain silent and protect her position, or she could speak and risk everything. Mordecai’s warning makes the choice plain: silence is not neutral.

As Mordecai declared—and as the Progressive National Baptist Convention affirms—to remain quiet in the face of unjust law is to allow harm to continue. But to speak is to step into purpose. We are living in such a time.

Across this country, laws and policies are shaping who has access to the ballot—and who does not. Voting is one of the clearest ways people speak into the systems that govern their daily lives.

And like Esther, we are faced with a choice:
Will we remain silent when access is threatened,
or will we use our voice to protect the freedom to be heard?

Reflection Questions

1. Silence and Consequence

Where do we see silence allowing harm to continue today—especially when access to voting is limited or threatened?

2. This Moment

What does it mean for us, in this moment, to recognize that we have been placed “for such a time as this” when it comes to protecting the right to vote?

3. From Voice to Action

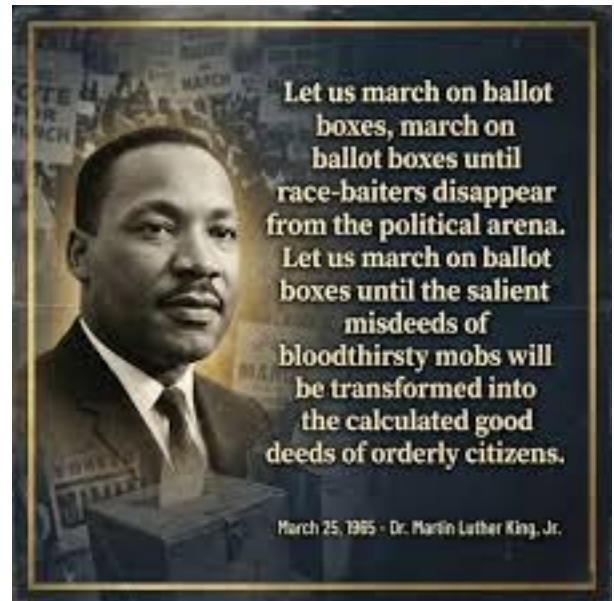
What is one concrete way you can use your voice this week to ensure that all people have the freedom to be heard?

Action Step for the Week

Holding the Line on Voting Rights

Lent is a season of sacrifice and it invites us to release what is comfortable and take up what is just. Throughout history, progress has never come without resistance. There are moments when change feels uncomfortable. This is one of those moments.

The proposed Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act (SAVE Act) would require documentary proof of citizenship such as a passport or birth certificate to register or update voter registration. While framed as election security, the impact is clear: it would create new barriers for millions of eligible voters.



Why This Matters—Especially for Women

This legislation would disproportionately impact women—particularly Black women.

- Many women have changed their names due to marriage or divorce, creating mismatches between identification documents. For those women, they may not have easy access to passports or certified birth certificates.
- Caregivers, working women, and elders may also face additional burdens navigating documentation systems.
- In a moment when Black women are already facing economic and political pressure, this feels like another attempt to limit access to voice and power.

We should not still be fighting for the right to vote in 2026.

But since we are, we will hold the line.

Two Actions for This Week

I. Call Your Senators – Vote NO on the SAVE Act

Why calling matters:

Staff track every call. It is widely understood that **1 call can represent up to 100 constituents** who feel the same way but did not call.

U.S. Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

(Ask to be connected to your Senator’s office)

Call Script

“Hello, my name is ___ and I live in ___ (ZIP code ___).

I am a member of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, a faith community rooted in the Civil Rights Movement.

I’m calling to urge [Senator ___] to **vote NO on the SAVE Act.**

Too many Black Americans gave their lives for the right to vote—for us to still be fighting this battle in 2026 is unacceptable. We should be expanding access to the ballot, not creating new barriers. As a person of faith, I believe voting is a moral act. And we will not go backwards.

Please vote NO on the SAVE Act and protect the freedom to vote.

Thank you.”



2. Prepare Your Documents and Get a Passport

If laws like the SAVE Act move forward, passports may become one of the most reliable forms of voting identification. Our President, Dr. Peoples has asked us to see securing a passport as **preparation and protection.**

How to Get to the U.S. Passport (First-Time Applicants)

1. Complete Form DS-11: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

2. Gather Required Documents:

- Proof of citizenship (birth certificate or naturalization certificate)
- Government-issued photo ID (driver's license, etc.)
- Passport photo

3. Apply in person

- Find a passport acceptance facility here: <https://iafdb.travel.state.gov/>

4. Pay Fees (2026 standard):

- \$130 – Passport book \$35 – Execution fee

Total: \$165

5. Processing Time:

- Routine: 6–8 weeks
- Expedited (additional fee): 2–3 weeks



Closing Prayer

Faithful God,
Teach us what it means to hold the line—
to act with wisdom,
to prepare with intention,
and to stand with courage.
We remember our ancestors,
who faced violence and still found a way to the ballot.
Give us that same resolve.
Though we face new barriers,
strengthen us to meet this moment without fear.
Remind us that voting is not just a right—
it is a witness.
So steady our hearts,
guide our steps,
and help us not be silent.
For such a time as this.

Amen.



