

LENT

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

POWERED BY



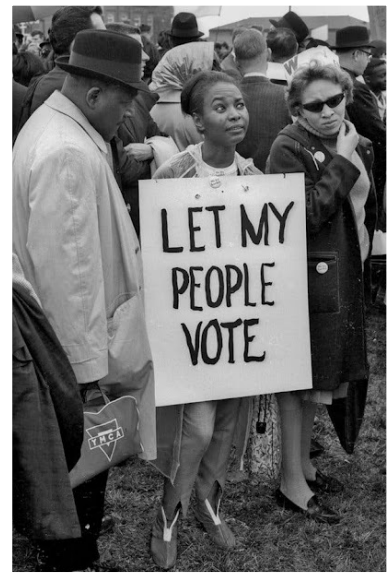
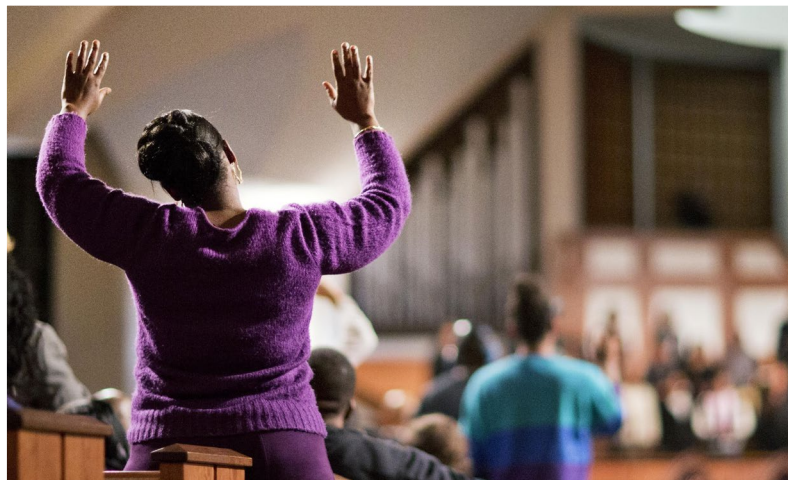
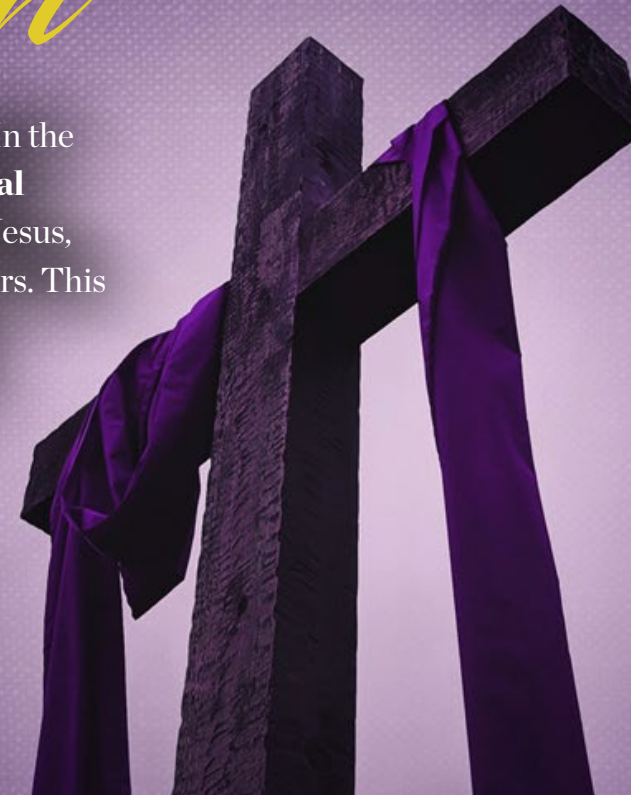
PNBC

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 7

Opening Commentary: He is Risen... Rise Up

Beloved,

As we come to the end of this Lenten journey and make our way toward Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, churches across the country will gather to reflect on the seven last words of Jesus. We will listen to the final words of The Carpenter crucified by the state and condemned through a heinous collusion between religious elites and Roman imperial power. In this sacred season, we are invited to remember what happened then and examine how that historical moment must be compared with the dire moments of our own time. Lent has never been only about personal sorrow. It is also about telling the hard truth about the world that still crucifies love, punishes truth, and asks the vulnerable to bear the cost of political and moral failure. Jesus died in a manger-to-cross pipeline eerily resembling of the womb-to-prison pipeline of today. His people withstood second class citizenship under settler colonial rule not unlike MAGA vision unleashed by the ongoing, steady implementation of Project 2025.

This Resurrection season finds us in deep dissonance. Across the nation, people have taken to the streets in “No Kings” demonstrations, rejecting authoritarian politics and insisting that democracy must not be handed over to the ambitions of strongmen. At the same time, essential workers, including TSA officers, have labored under the strain of political dysfunction that has left many working without pay for weeks. Families are carrying the pressure of rising food costs and

higher gas prices. Workers are strained. Fear is being normalized and weaponized. We are literally at war at home and abroad! Tragically, in such a moment, people of faith are being tempted to take our eyes off the Jesus who gathered the disinherited, touched those rendered untouchable, and refused to let the law be used as an excuse for ignoring human suffering. We are being tempted to fear Caesar, to bow before the empire, and to mistake domination for order. ***This is what it means to live under siege.***

But Matthew 27:51 tells us that when Jesus died, “*the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.*” This is more than small narrative detail in the passion event; it is an announcement! The veil that symbolized distance, hierarchy, and restricted access to God has been broken. We are no longer beholden to a hierarchy that keeps us far from God, far from dignity, or far from one another. The Resurrection is the fullness of that promise of power unmatched by governmentality and hegemony. It is God’s declaration that death does not have the final word, that fear is not sovereign, and that the future does not belong to those who traffic in chaos. What looked like defeat became an assignment, a womb of resistance. What looked like the end became the beginning of a new community, a new courage, and a new possibility.

Because Jesus is risen, our communities shake off the shackles of a condemnation to remain politically powerless, morally anemic, and fear-taxed.

We are commanded with holy authority to be resurrected. From this living posture, we will witness the resurrection of public care, the resurrection of democratic courage, the resurrection of communities organized around joy, dignity, justice, and shared flourishing.

Beloved, that is our work now. The future depends on our resistance to the stymying seductions of the moment. We must interpret the multifaceted crisis and our uprising through the power of a risen Jesus. It is not in our denominational genes to surrender to the empire. We are a symptom of another world already breaking in. Because of the resurrection, we are called to embody civic tenacity and public

love amid mass divisiveness and moral decadence. We have only one King, One Savior, a Palestinian Good Troublemaker. And He is risen.

Let us rise too.



Rev. Dr. Willie D. Francois, III
Co-Chair, PNBC Social Action Commission

Opening Prayer

Risen God,

As we come to the end of Lent and make our way toward Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, hold us close to the truth of this season. In a world under siege, keep us from fear. In a nation strained by chaos, confusion, and cruelty, keep us near the cross and near the empty tomb.

Tear down every veil that keeps us from truth, from courage, and from one another, just as the temple curtain was torn when Jesus gave his life. Remind us that resurrection is not denial, but divine defiance; not escape, but holy power breaking into history. (Matthew 27:51)

So make us resurrection people:
clear in our witness,
steadfast in our hope,
and bold in our love.
In the name of the Crucified and Risen Christ,

Amen



Historical Leader Spotlight:

Ella Baker

Ella Baker (1903–1986) was one of the most important architects of the modern Civil Rights Movement, even though her name is often less known than the leaders she helped shape. A gifted organizer, Baker



worked with the NAACP, helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and was instrumental in convening the student gathering at Shaw University that led to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She believed deeply in grassroots leadership and participatory democracy, insisting that ordinary people—not just charismatic figures—were the engine of lasting change. Her organizing helped nurture a generation of young freedom fighters, including Diane Nash and John Lewis.

“Strong people don’t need strong leaders.”

— Ella Baker

Baker’s witness reminds us that the work of justice is not about waiting for a single heroic figure to save us. It is about building communities so rooted in courage, clarity, and collective power that they can move history together. In a season that calls us to resurrection faith, Ella Baker invites us to trust that ordinary people, organized around a moral vision, can become an extraordinary force for change.



Listen and Reflect

**In Her Own Words: Ella Baker -
*Making the Struggle Every Day***



Reflection: *He Is Not Here*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Luke 24:5–6

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here; He has risen!”*

Reflection

The resurrection announcement is brief, but it changes everything: **“He is not here; He has risen.”** The women come to the tomb carrying grief, memory, and expectation, but they do not find death where they expected it. Instead, they are met with the unsettling, beautiful truth that God has already moved beyond what looked final. Resurrection does not deny suffering. It declares that suffering is not sovereign. It reveals that the cross does not get the last word.

So, the question for us today is not only whether we believe He is risen. The question is: **What kind of world do we now have the courage to imagine because He is risen?**

Reflection Questions

1. Resurrection and Possibility

What in our communities have we treated as finished, defeated, or beyond repair that the resurrection invites us to see differently?

2. Dreaming Beyond the Tomb

We believe the resurrection is God’s declaration that death does not have the final word. What is one bold vision you believe our people should carry into this next season of organizing, policy, and public witness?

Action Step for the Week

Dream Big. Tell the Truth. Help Shape the Agenda.

As we celebrate Resurrection Sunday, we do so looking ahead.

All Roads Lead to Washington, D.C.!

The Progressive National Baptist Convention will gather for its **65th Annual Session, July 19–23, 2026**.

We will convene in the nation's capital just two weeks after the country marks its **250th anniversary**, while **Congress is still in session**, and roughly **90 days before Get Out the Vote season for the midterm elections**.

That timing matters.

If we are truly moving away from the politics of kings, strongmen, and charismatic personalities, then we must be bold enough to build a moral vision that can guide our public witness and ground our vote. Our communities need more than candidates. They need a shared agenda. A people's agenda. One rooted in dignity, justice, abundance, and the real lives of our people.

Your Action This Week

We are asking you to do two things:

1. Share your vision.

Take the issues you have named in prayer and reflection and send them to the Social Justice Commission. What kind of world are you praying and organizing for? What policies, priorities, and public investments does that vision require?

2. Share your story.

We are also looking for people who may be willing to tell their stories while we are in Washington, D.C. Your lived experience can help shape our strategy, clarify our witness, and ground our work in truth.

Your voice will help us prepare for our time in Washington and shape our shared strategy as we move toward the midterm elections.

Submit your vision and your story [HERE](#)



Closing Prayer

Eternal God, our Father,

Send us now in the power of the resurrection.
Where there is fear, make us courageous.
Where there is suffering, make us compassionate.
Where there is injustice, make us determined.

Commission us to do more than celebrate resurrection—
send us to bear witness, to tell the truth,
to defend the vulnerable, and to build what love requires.

Let our faith be public,
our hope be active,
and our lives be aligned with Your liberating work in the world.

We thank You for Jesus Christ,
who rose with all power
and even now intercedes for us.

And because He is risen,
we rise to serve.

In the name of Jesus,

Amen.



