

"...to bring good news to the poor... proclaim release to the captives...let the oppressed go free..." - Luke 4:18-19



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The Dream Still Lives

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Beloved Sisters,

Each February, we pause to honor Black History Month—celebrating the accomplishments, courage, and lasting contributions of our African American brothers and sisters. This month is more than a tradition; it's a call to remember, to learn, and to give thanks for the ways Black communities have shaped our nation and strengthened the church.

Black History Month began with historian Carter G. Woodson, who worked to promote the serious study of Black life and history circa 1915. What started as a focused effort grew into a national movement of pride and education. Over time, it became a month-long celebration, intentionally scheduled for February to highlight key moments and figures in Black history, such as Frederick Douglass's birthday (Feb. 14).

With deep gratitude, American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) honors African American women in ministry—women who have answered God's call even when the journey has been unfair, exhausting, or filled with obstacles. We recognize that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream is still unfolding. Even today, the world sometimes acts as if skin color can limit a person's calling or capacity. But God's call is not limited by human bias—and the same God who calls also sustains, strengthens, and makes a way.

This month, we remember the powerful witness of Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall (1940–2002). In 1977, she became one of the first African American women ordained in the American Baptist Churches tradition. Long before that, she was active in the Civil Rights Movement, living what many call freedom faith—the belief that God created people to be free, and that God equips those who work for liberation and justice. Rev. Dr. Hall’s ministry held together prayer, social justice, and womanist wisdom.

One story stays with me. In 1962, Rev. Dr. Hall led a prayer vigil where she repeatedly said, “I have a dream.” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was present, heard the phrase and asked her permission to use it. Those words later became part of one of his most well-known sermons: “I Have a Dream.”

And in 2026, ABWM also has a dream: that women will be treated justly; that our African American sisters will be fully supported as they live out God’s call; and that they will be free to put their hands to the plow—serving boldly, faithfully, and without barriers—to glorify the Lord who called them and us. This dream means strengthening our courage, renewing our hope, and deepening our commitment to justice and equality for women in ministry.

Pd. Rev. La Thelma Armstrong, Rev. Dr. Christine Smith, and Rev. Dr. Cassandra Foster, thank you for all that you do in ABWM. We see you, and we honor you.

In solidarity,

Karla

<https://asalh.org/about-us/origins-of-black-history-month/>

<https://ptsem.edu/profiles/prathia-hall/>

[The First Black Women in Ministry](https://www.mccormick.edu/herald/the-first-black-women-in-american-ministry) <https://www.mccormick.edu/herald/the-first-black-women-in-american-ministry>

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