**Preacher and Civil Rights Leader Gardner Taylor Dies**

**VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 4/7/15)**—American Baptist Churches USA celebrates the life of Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, who died on Sunday, April 5. Taylor was Pastor Emeritus of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, New York, where he served as pastor for 42 years, before retiring in 1990. He was President Emeritus of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (PNBC), and had a long relationship with ABCUSA and served for a brief time on the [MMBB](https://www.mmbb.org/) Board of Managers.

“Dr. Taylor was one of those who defined the preaching ministry not only within the Baptist tradition, but far beyond that, within the protestant family in the United States as a whole,” said Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. “While many figures have flitted across the screen of religious life in the past half century, his contributions will endure because of his grace, wisdom and wit.  He ennobled the ministry with his courage and integrity. He will be greatly missed.”

Rev. Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, executive director of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, said, “Dr. Gardner C. Taylor was God’s gift to the church in general and to American Christianity in particular. He was both a prophet, speaking truth to power, and was a pastor, caring for the spiritual life of his congregation. He was a prolific writer and preacher, who spoke transformatively in helping to recreate souls, and the soul of America. American Baptists will miss him deeply.

“Dr. Gardner C. Taylor was a great light in Christendom. He was a giant of the Christian pulpit, ecumenical thought leader, a renowned proclaimer of the Gospel, mentor to preachers, civil rights leader and human rights advocate. He shared his gifts broadly and generously across this nation; even serving for a time as a member of MMBB’s Board of Managers. His was a great and faithful voice that will be sorely missed,” said Rev. Dr. Perry J. Hopper, associate executive director for MMBB Financial Services.

Progressive National Baptist Convention President Dr. James C. Perkins said, “The world has lost a giant of man, who transformed America and the world for the better. How appropriate it is that God called Dr. Taylor home on Resurrection Sunday. In both life and death Dr. Taylor gave a clarion call to the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Gardner Taylor was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1918. He graduated from the Oberlin College School of Theology in 1940, and from there went on to become a preacher and civil rights activist.

While serving as pastor of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Taylor helped to found the Progressive National Baptist Convention with close friend Martin Luther King Jr. He also served for a time as the organization’s president. In 2000, President Clinton awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Taylor published many books, including “We Have This Ministry” (1996, with Samuel Proctor), published by [Judson Press](http://www.judsonpress.com/). Judson Press also published multiple versions of a set, “[The Words of Gardner Taylor](http://www.judsonpress.com/catalog.cfm?category_id=242&qpath=1,32),” which includes a collection of resources commemorating his ministry.

Services will be held at Concord Baptist Church, 833 Gardner C. Taylor Blvd., Brooklyn, NY  11216, with a wake on Sunday, April 12, from 5:00 pm-8:00 pm. The Viewing will be on Monday, April 13, from 9:30 am-11:30 am, with the Funeral Service following at 11:30 am.

*American Baptist Churches USA is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with more than 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.*