

Progressive Baptists elect new top executive: Walter Parrish III

News in the [September 22, 2009](#) issue

A New Jersey pastor who once worked for American Baptist Churches USA has been chosen as the top executive for the Progressive National Baptist Convention, one of the leading black Baptist denominations.

Walter Parrish III, senior pastor of Union Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, was elected general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention at the group's recent annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky.

Parrish, 50, will succeed Tyrone Pitts, general secretary of the PNBC since 1989, who is retiring. Parrish will assume the post January 1 but will continue as senior pastor of the Montclair church.

Before moving to the historic African-American congregation, which is dually aligned with the PNBC and the ABCUSA, Parrish worked 12 years for the American Baptists' Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board.

The Progressive Baptists formed in 1961 following a power struggle in the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Younger pastors wanted to move the denomination to the forefront of the civil rights movement, but older leaders desired to keep politics out of the convention and focus on worship and ecclesiastical concerns.

The PNBC was spiritual home for many of the period's most celebrated civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. The denomination has continued to emphasize social justice.

Parrish earned an accounting degree at Morehouse College in Atlanta and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1987 at New York's Union Theological Seminary.

ABC general secretary Roy Medley offered congratulations to both Parrish and the PNBC. "Walter is well respected within ABC life, where he has served for years, and we know he will bring excellent leadership to PNBC," Medley said. —*Associated Baptist Press*