

Moral Mondays leader launches campaign in spirit of Martin Luther King

William Barber II has left the North Carolina NAACP to lead a new Poor People's Campaign.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [June 21, 2017](#) issue



William Barber (right front) at a Moral Monday rally in North Carolina. [Some rights reserved](#) by [twbuckner](#)

William Barber II, a Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) pastor and leader of the Moral Mondays movement, is launching a new Poor People's Campaign, marking the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's 1967-1968 effort.

As the new campaign began, Barber (above, speaking at a Moral Mondays rally in 2013) stepped down as president of the North Carolina NAACP, the second-largest state conference in the United States, a role he has held since 2006. He will remain

pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and continue to serve on the NAACP's national board of directors.

"Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King called for a radical 'revolution of values,' inviting a divided nation to stand against the evils of militarism, racism, and economic injustice," Barber said in a statement. "In the spirit of the Poor People's Campaign of 1967-68, we are calling for a national moral revival . . . There is a need for moral analysis, articulation of a moral agenda, and moral activism that fuses the critique of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and national morality in a way that enables organizing among black, brown, and white people, especially in regions where great efforts have been made to keep them from forming alliances and standing together to change the political and social calculus."

In North Carolina, [the Moral Mondays movement began after the legislature passed voting restrictions](#) in 2013. Protests were regularly held on Mondays at the state legislative building. More than 80,000 people attended the Moral March on Raleigh in February.

The new campaign plans to build on work in North Carolina to counter what it considers to be immoral public policies across the country. It will be co-led by the Kairos Center at Union Theological Seminary, where Barber is a professor of public theology. The campaign plans to organize 40 days of simultaneous direct action and civil disobedience in state capitols and in Washington, D.C., in early 2018.

"Rev. Dr. Barber has been considered a prophetic voice across this nation," said James Forbes Jr., senior minister emeritus of Riverside Church in New York City. "It appears that he is now . . . an apostolic voice."

The forthcoming report *The Souls of Poor Folk*, codeveloped by Forbes and Barber, along with economists, historians, and public policy experts, will explore issues of poverty in the past 50 years.