



# Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

By Rev. FitzRoy Smith

**Day 31**  
**March 29, 2023**

**Read Matthew 5:13 - 14**

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

## **Critical Race Facts!**

Black Southerners who survived the lynching era remained subject to the established legal system of racial apartheid known as Jim Crow. As organized resistance to this racial cast system began to swell in the early 1950's Black demonstrators were met with violent opposition from white police officers and community members. Black activists protesting racial segregation and disenfranchisement through boycotts, sit-ins, voter registration drives, and masa marches consistently faced physical attacks, riots, and bombings from whites.

## **Today's Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for churches that have operated outside of their four walls of the church to help members of the community to experience a little heaven on earth before we experience the heaven beyond the sky. In Jesus name, amen.

The Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church formally known as the “Second Colored Baptist Church,” and then Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was founded in 1877 in a slave trader’s pen. On January 30, 1879, the church trustees paid \$270 for a lot at the corner of what is now Dexter Avenue (formerly Market Street) and Decatur Street. The original church was built between 1883 and 1889, on Dexter Avenue and Decatur Street in Montgomery, Alabama.

The church served as a battleground and planning hub for some of the most influential actions of the Civil Rights movement throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Dexter Avenue Baptist Church held the voices of great leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which the church in 1978, officially changed its name to Dexter Avenue King Memorial Church, in memory of its twentieth pastor, Dr. King, Jr. who led the congregation from 1954 to 1960.

In 1954, Dr. King helped to launch the congregation into the midst of the fight for Civil and equal Rights. The Montgomery Improvement Association, which was formed in the early 1950s, met in the church basement for the planning of the MIA’s Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. Ten years later in 1965, upon his arrival in Montgomery after successfully completing the Selma-to- Montgomery March for voting rights and equal justice for African American, King delivered his speech in front of the Alabama capitol, facing Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

From the early days of Jim Crow resistance, through the anti-lynching campaign in 1920 and the Bus Boycott in 1955, the Dexter Avenue congregation was important in the struggle for Civil Rights. As a planning site, and as a force of community change, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church was integral to the Civil Rights movement in Alabama, and the nation.

## **Questions to Ponder**

1. What historic role has your church played in society?
2. What historic and/or significant role has your church played in the civil rights struggle?
3. What significant role is your church playing now?

