



SOUTH JERSEY ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION
CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

HOMEGOING CELEBRATION FOR

Bertha Jean Graves

JULY 25, 1960 – MAY 3, 2023



SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023
VIEWING 9AM • SERVICE 11AM
GREATER LOVE CHAPEL COGIC
279 PRINCE ALBERT STREET
ELWOOD, NEW JERSEY



Where It Rains

Sometimes I wonder if missing someone who has passed is selfish?

Is it an acceptable form of jealousy?

Who do we really feel bad for?

*Do we feel for the one who has gone on or
do we feel for ourselves because a new void has been created?*

We groan when it rains.

As if seeds have no place in this world.

*We plant seeds in empty spaces but hate the parts of the
process that give our visions a chance at reality.*

Every empty space needs time.

And time fills every empty space.

So, where it rains I hope purple flowers bloom.

And every hue we see gives us the strength we've longed for.

*Let it show us what was inside all along
and that we can push forward no matter the void's
absence creates in our hearts.*

*Where it rains, I hope we can find peace in what's being washed away
and rejoice in what's being nurtured.*

Where it rains, let's be thankful that the void is being filled.

*So don't fear the spaces transition has created for our Father Time and
time again will be in each gap with His arms wide open with every deed
written and every blemish forgiven.*

Where it rains don't seek out shelter.

There is no danger in what's assigned to wash you.

The discomfort you feel isn't in what's coming down.

It's in what's being taken away.

*Where it rains let's rejoice knowing that
an answer to an archived prayer is closer than every void we built.*

-Written By: Jeffrey Hughes (Nephew)



Celebration of Life Service

Administrative Assistant Timothy Harris, Worship Leader

The Invocation

Superintendent John E. Kitchen

The Old Testament Reading

Lady Beverly Harris
Psalm 23



The New Testament Reading

Lady Beverly Clybourn
Revelation 21:1-7

Solo

“The Lord’s Prayer”
Elder Deborah Oatman-Onyeze

The Church Reflections

Mother Helen Bowser, Representing Graves Temple COGIC

The Jurisdictional Reflections

Mother Deborah R. Kitchen, Supervisor of the Department of Women
Lady Katrina McCombs, Representing the Jurisdictional First Ladies
District Missionary Anita Sutton, Representing Graves-Barton Memorial District Women
District Superintendent Joseph Lewis, Sr., Representing Graves-Barton Memorial District

The Song of Comfort

“I Decided To Make Jesus My Choice”
Jurisdictional Choir

The Family Tribute

Apostle Donald Robinson, Cousin
Elder William C. Oatman, Jr., Son
Co-Pastor Geamarice Napier, Daughter
Brother Lamaar Oatman, Sr., Son
Pastor Designee Benjamin Graves, Jr., Husband

Jurisdictional Resolution & Acknowledgements & Reading of the Obituary

Mother Carolyn Lewis, Assist. Jurisdictional Secretary

The Presentation of the Eulogist

Administrative Assistant Timothy Harris

Solo

Evangelist Deborah Jones



The Eulogy

Bishop Tyrone W. McCombs, Ph.D., Prelate
South Jersey Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction
Church of God in Christ

Recessional

Bertha Jean Graves



Mrs. Bertha Jean Graves (nee Smith) departed this life on May 3, 2023, in Galloway, NJ surrounded by her family. Bertha was born in Mullica Township on July 25, 1960, to Martha Washington and Lester Smith. She attended Mullica Township schools and went to Oakcrest High School. She was currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Christian Counseling at Liberty University. She worked at Prudential Insurance Co., and later became the Human Resources Director at Zelphy's in Millville, NJ until she became disabled in 2009.

Bertha loved God and His people! She was ordained into ministry at St. James Bible Deliverance in the late 1980's under Dr. Alberta Johnson. She also served as Pastor of St. James Bible Deliverance in 2004 and later returned as Senior Pastor in 2008. While living in Virginia she also served as an Elder. Bertha counseled and mentored several young women, couples, and women in transition periods of their lives. This was the biggest part of her ministry and was the reason she was pursuing her bachelor's degree. She was doing the work already but wanted to be able to help more people on a grander scale. Bertha was truly an intercessor. She was a part of the Prayer Warriors group at Graves Temple COGIC in Pleasantville, NJ, where she also served as First Lady Designee. She also prayed on the noon day prayer during the Spring Workers' meeting for the South Jersey Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.

Bertha was an avid reader. She was a lifelong student of the Word of God. She attended The Women of the Bible Class taught by the South Jersey Jurisdiction Supervisor of Women, Mother Deborah R. Kitchen. She had many books and study aids to help her properly exegete the Word of God to where even a child could understand. Bertha had a green thumb. If you look closely at her hand, you just might see it. She had names for all her plants. Now Bertha loved a good tea set and making jewelry. Working with her hands satisfied her. Bertha was the ultimate lady. She was classy and always put together. This led to Bertha having the latter years of her life be very joyous.



In August of 2021, Bertha married her true love, Pastor Designee Benjamin Graves, Jr. She lived out her last days experiencing love, joy, and wedded bliss. Pastor Designee Ben said he loves her even down to her toes! You would often see them together just happy and smiling at restaurants, shopping and at church. They were also on the move but also was just fine spending hours talking together. They were truly best friends.

Bertha was predeceased by her Father Lester Smith Sr., her grandfather James O. Smith, grandmother Armilla Smith, uncle Lawrence Smith, aunts Alberta Johnson and Mae Woods. On her mother's side she was predeceased by her Mother Martha Washington, brothers Anthony McCoy, James (Jimmy) McCoy, sister MaryAnn McCoy, Aunt Alice Nesbitt, mother in the Lord Rhuby Jones and sister Ruby Jackson, and other members of the Jones family.

Bertha leaves to cherish in her memory her husband Pastor Designee Benjamin Graves Jr., sisters Doris Wesley (William), Ida McCoy, Donna Smith and Valerie Durr, brothers Clifford McCoy, Randy Smith and Lester Smith Muhammad, uncle Daniel Smith and aunts Eva Smith and Stella Fagans, mother-in-law Mother Esther Graves and sisters in law Dr. Dianna Hughes (Elder Jefferey) and Evangelist Deborah Graves-Jones, Carolyn Morgan (Edward) and Dorothy Birts. She also leaves to cherish in her memory her sons and daughters Co-Pastor Geamarice Napier (Pastor Mckenley), Elder William C. Oatman Jr. (Elder Terrie), Lazaar C. Oatman (MaryAnn), Dr. Natacia Graves-Owens (Nicholas), Nylah Graves, Clarence Washington, and special son Earl Fletcher (Cassie). She also leaves grandchildren she adored Teryjah (Kenny), Cassandra (Dylan), Aaron, Isaias (Jasmine), Leylah, Prince William, Jameir, Lazaar Jr., Malachi, Kendra, Xavier, and Willow, Olivia. She also leaves a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, family and friends.



*"I have fought a good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith"*
2 Timothy 4:7





Palbearers

Grandchildren

Acknowledgements

The family of Lady Bertha Graves would like to thank everyone for their Prayers, thoughts, cards, contributions, condolences, and all acts of kindness. May God continue to bless you all.

Burial

Lincoln Memorial Park
5125 Harding Highway
Mays Landing, NJ 08330

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES ENTRUSTED TO:



Thomas C. Jennings, Manager N.J. Lic. No. 3989
501 South New Road, Pleasantville, NJ 08232
Telephone (609) 650-7501

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