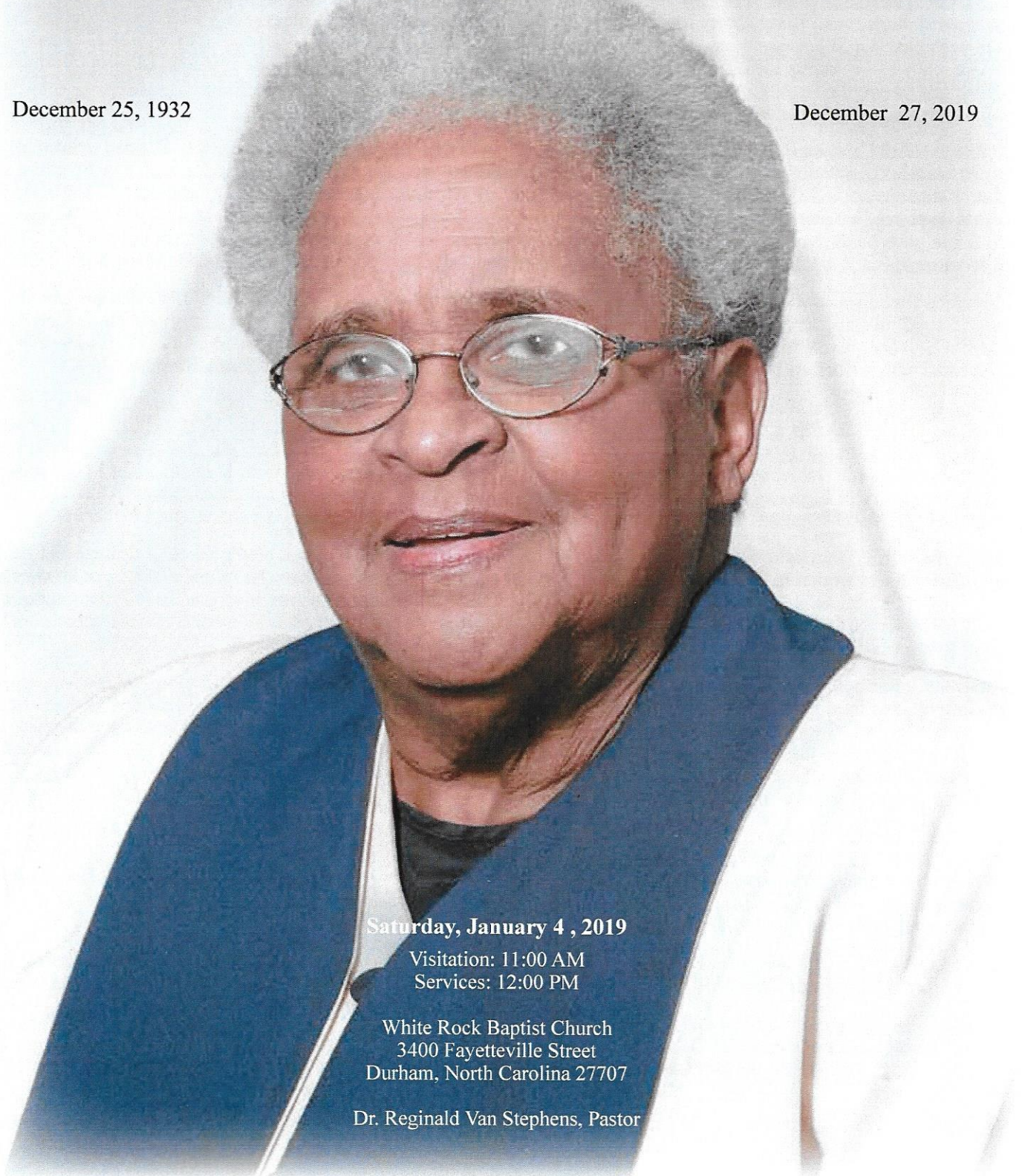


*Celebrating the Life and Homegoing  
of  
Reverend Thelma Melvin Battle*

December 25, 1932

December 27, 2019



**Saturday, January 4, 2019**

Visitation: 11:00 AM

Services: 12:00 PM

White Rock Baptist Church  
3400 Fayetteville Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27707

Dr. Reginald Van Stephens, Pastor



# The Obituary



THE REVEREND THELMA MELVIN BATTLE is the daughter and granddaughter of Baptist ministers. She was born on Christmas day in 1932 in Hope Mills, North Carolina and gifted into the family of Rev. Lee Andrew Melvin and his wife Bessie Melvin. She is predeceased by her brothers Alton (Hike) Melvin, Houston Melvin and her sisters Juanita (Tiny) Hicks, Ruth Melvin LaSane and adopted sister, Doreatha Melvin Smith. She is survived by her sister Irene Sansbury and adopted brother Milton (Millie) Buxton and fostered siblings Laura Burns, Larry McKoy and Orlando Campbell and a host of nieces and nephews. Her father was the pastor of the First Baptist Parkton Church for 40 years where many of his family members were active members. At an early age she professed Christ and joined the Baptist Union M.B. Church, Hope Mills, NC; and later in life she continued the family ministerial lineage and became an ordained Baptist Minister.

While at North Carolina College, she met the football standout "Iron Man" Joseph Battle, who was destined to become a noted academic mathematician. Their union was sustained until death parted them. Dr. Joseph Battle died in 2012. Dr. & Rev. Battle reared their three children to reflect their values for educational excellence: Ms. Angela Josette Battle, with MA/MS degrees in anthropology and computer science; Joseph Andrew Battle, who holds the M.B.A. and Dr. Kimberly Jo Battle, who holds the Ph.D. in systems engineering. Mrs. Battle has two grandsons who are recent college graduates, Khari Joseph Battle and Iyin Joseph Battle, born to her son Joseph Andrew Battle and his wife Emma Singletary Battle.

Reverend Battle was always a conscientious achiever. She was the valedictorian of the Class of 1950 at Anne Chesnut High School in Fayetteville, NC. She is a 1954 graduate of North Carolina College at Durham (now North Carolina Central University), majoring in sociology, where she studied under the esteemed sociologist, Mr. Joseph S. Himes, Jr. and graduated with honors. At North Carolina College, she became a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

With a Master of Social Work degree from Howard University and other professional education, Reverend Battle enjoyed a distinguished career as a social worker and educator. She began her professional career as a social worker for the Veterans Administration (VA) in Perryville, MD and later worked in the VA in Ann Arbor, MI. Subsequently, while her husband, Dr. Joseph Battle, served in Nigeria during 1964 through 1968 as Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Lagos as an employee of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Rev. Battle taught 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades in Lagos, Nigeria at one of the progressive Corona Schools and at The American School.

When the family returned to Durham, she assisted in the Department of Sociology at North Carolina College and then served as a social worker in the Durham City Schools at a school for expectant mothers. Recruited by Dr. John H. Lucas, principal of Hillside High School, she became Dean of Girls at Hillside and later an assistant principal. When Dr. Lucas retired, she served as interim principal. Reverend Battle later served as principal of W.G. Pearson Elementary School. After retirement from public education, she worked part-time as a social worker for the Durham City Schools.

Reverend Battle retired from public education when she was called to the ordained ministry. She earned the Master of Divinity degree from Shaw University's School of Divinity in 1990 and was ordained by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. She was a devoted, faithful, active and long-term member of White Rock Baptist Church, joining this fellowship under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Miles Mark Fisher. She served faithfully in the Shepard-Womack-Williams Missionary Circle, other church auxiliaries, and as an Associate Minister. Reverend Battle has preached for many congregations in the city of Durham and beyond.

Over the years, she has received many honors and awards. She was named "Principal of the Year" in 1981 by the Durham City Schools. In 1984 she was presented the Human Relations Award by the North Carolina Association of Educators in recognition and appreciation for services related to the well-being of students and faculty members. The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People honored her in 2005 as a teacher, minister, educational administrator and visionary humanitarian. In 2018 she was an honoree at the Lawrence & Artelia Perry Scholarship Fund Banquet.

Reverend Battle was an avid traveller and has journeyed to Europe, Asia and the Middle East and maintained a loving relationship with the continent of Africa from her past sojourn and the extended South African residency of her daughters.

Reverend Battle lived a beautiful and bountiful life and positively touched the hearts of everyone she encountered on her life journey. On December 27<sup>th</sup> 2019, two days after the anniversary of her earthly appearance and after a lifetime of enriching many other lives, she concluded her earthly mission and the divine reclaimed its gift and returned her to the heavenly abode.

# The Order Of Service

Delta Sigma Theta Omega Omega Farewell Service

Family Visitation and Remembrances

Organ Prelude ..... Dr. Paula Harrell

Call to Worship.....Rev. Dr. Reginald Van Stephens

Hymn of Praise..... #601 - "I'll Fly Away"..... White Rock Baptist Church Choir  
and Congregation

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 40:28-31

Rev. Dr. Irene Perry

Psalms 121

Rev. Dr. Michael Battle

Revelation 21:1-7

Rev. Nancy Ross

Prayer of Comfort .....Rev. Carolyn Brown

Acknowledgements and Resolutions ..... Mrs. Minnie Forte-Brown

*Assistant Church Clerk*

Selection ..... "Move On Up A Little Higher" ..... Rev. Constance M Prince  
Accompanied by Mr. Raymond Johnson

Moments of Reflection

Deacon Ernest Jenkins

Mr. Reginald Shaw

Ms. Tamera Timberlake Ziglar

Dr. John Lucas

Mr. Khari Battle

Mr. Iyin Battle

Selection ..... "Your Grace and Mercy"..... Mr. Mack Jarmon

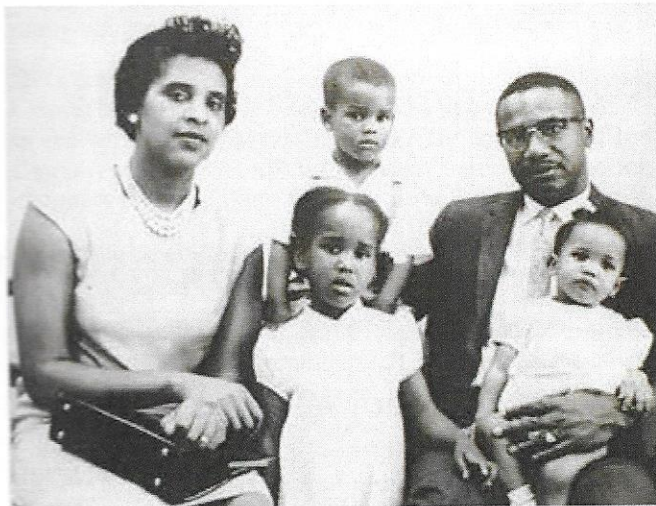
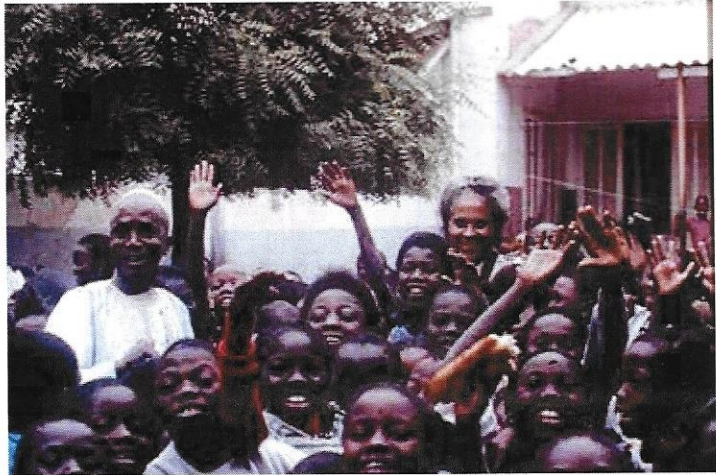
Eulogy..... Rev. Dr. Stephens

Recessional ..... "When We All Get To Heaven"

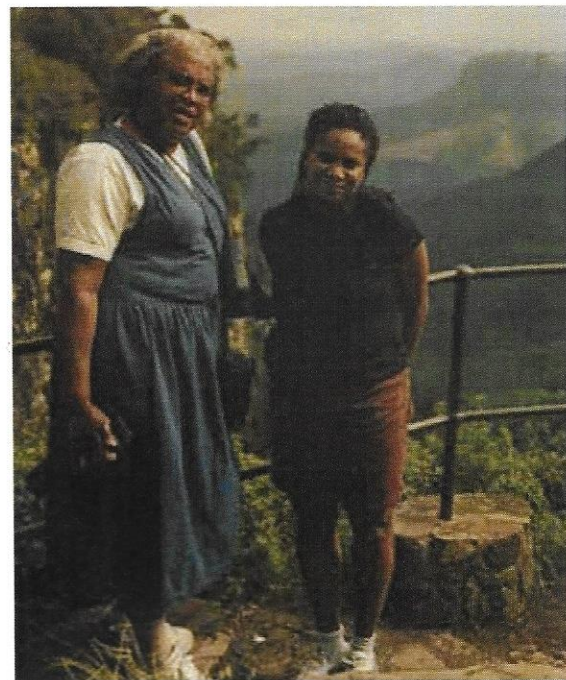
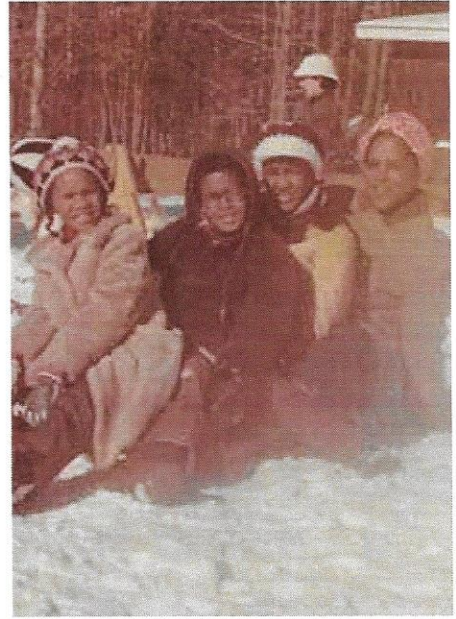
Postlude ..... Dr. Harrell



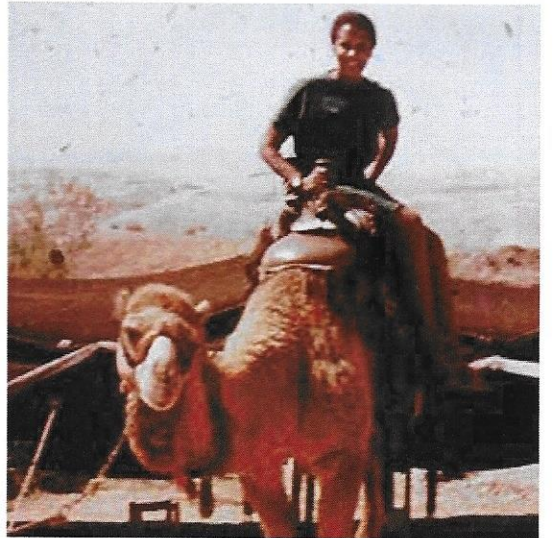
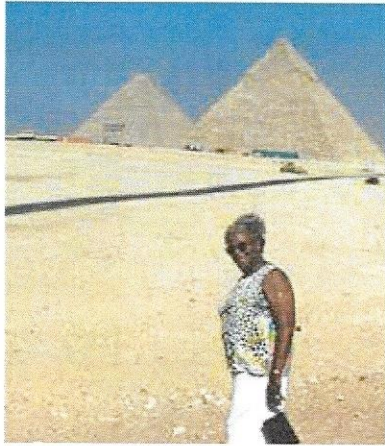
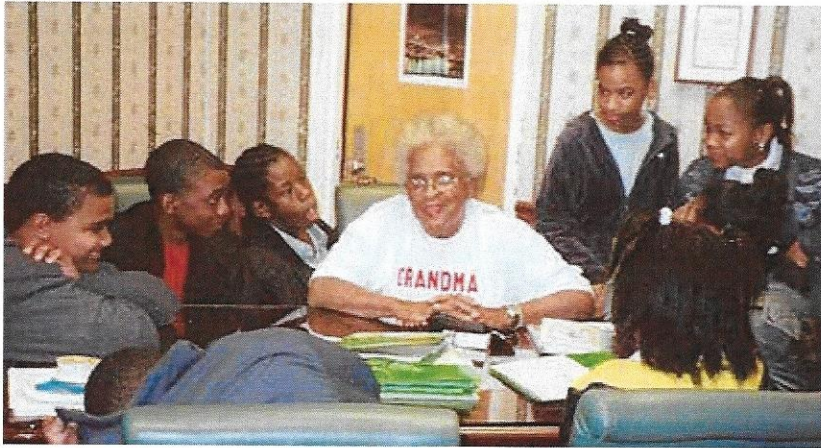
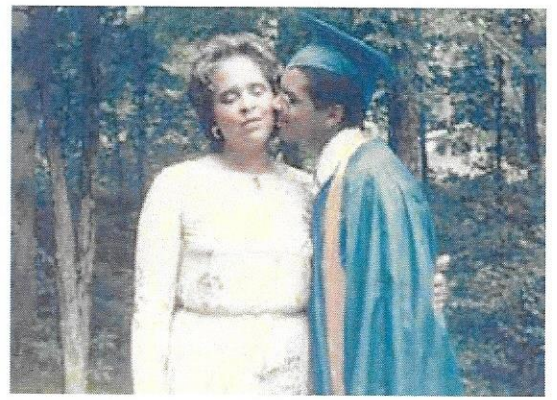
*M*om lived a remarkable life. She was fearless in pursuit of excellence in academics, family life, school administration, and she was a zealous traveler and adventurer. Fortunately, there is an extensive photographic record of many of the special moments and people in her life. We, the family, scoured our boxes, albums and hard drives and came up with these images that we would like to share as part of her memorial. These images show a woman who was an amazing daughter, sister, wife, aunt, mother and grandmother; was a friend to all, especially children and youth; and most importantly, lived a vibrant life fully grounded in the truth of her spiritual beliefs.



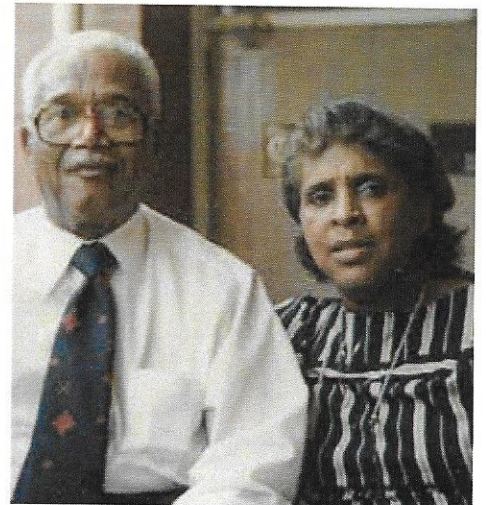
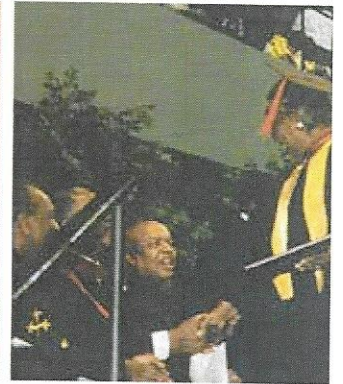
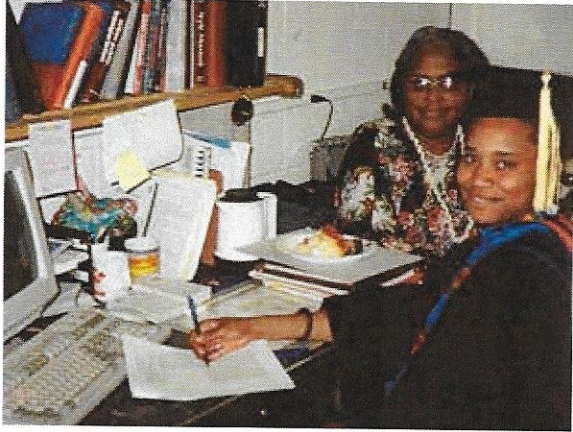
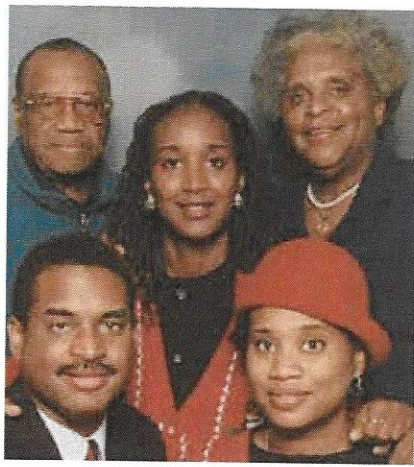




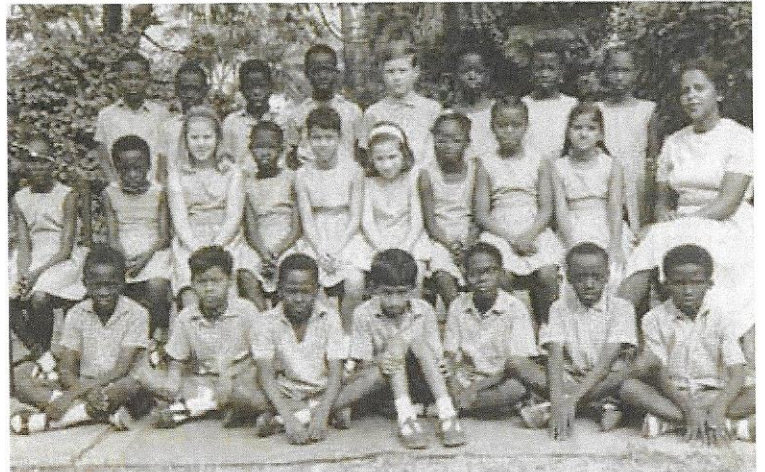
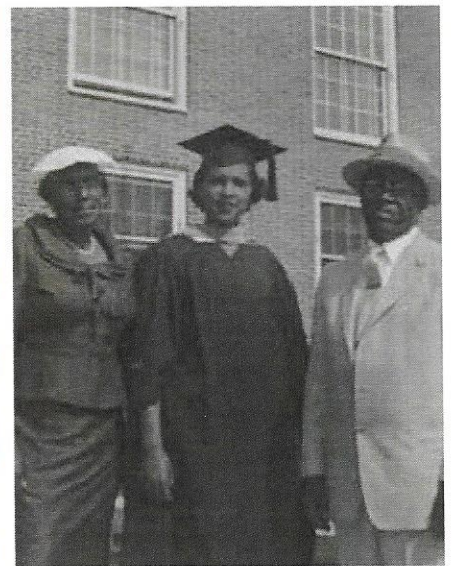




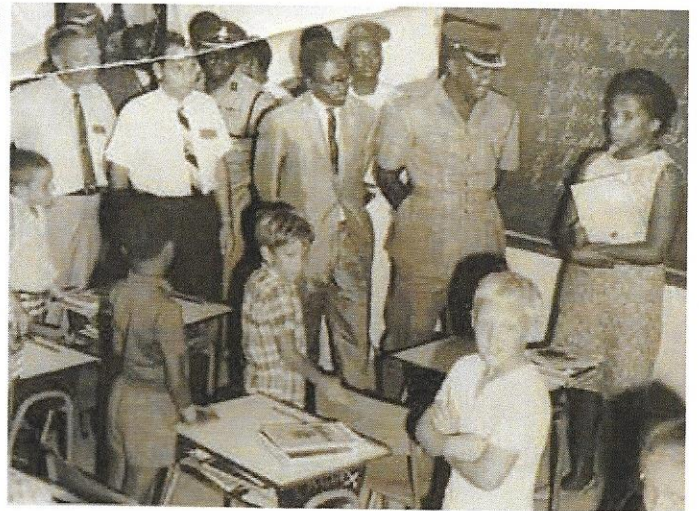




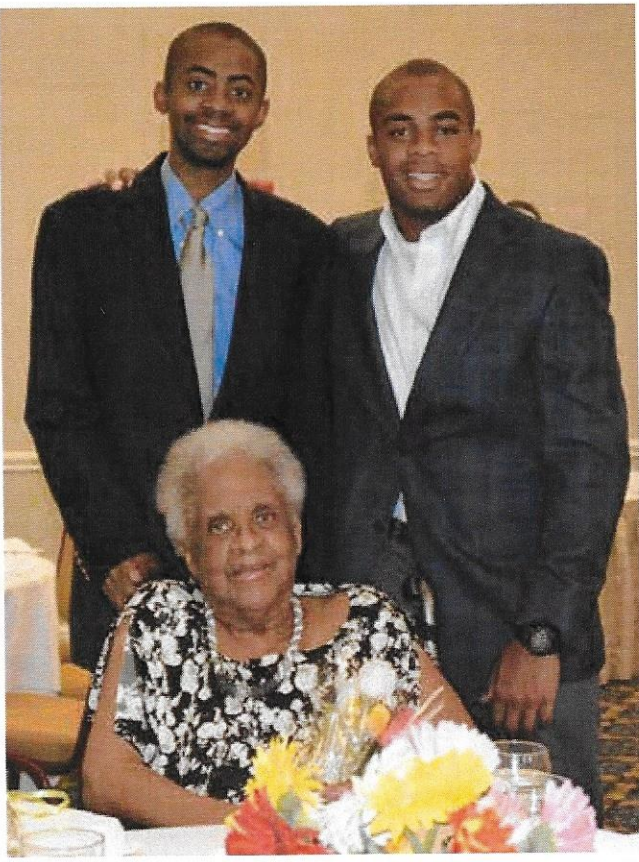




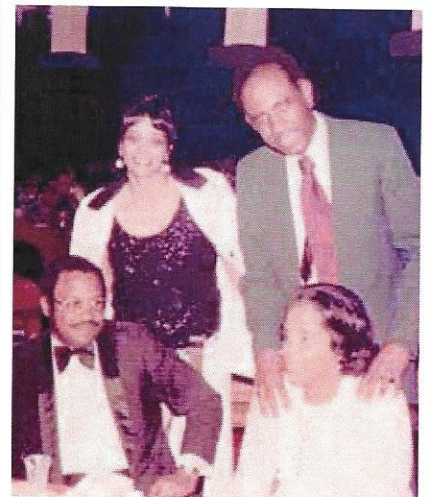
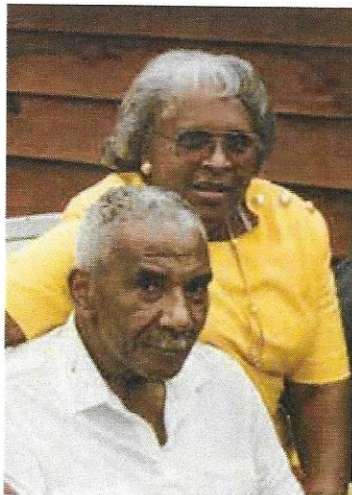
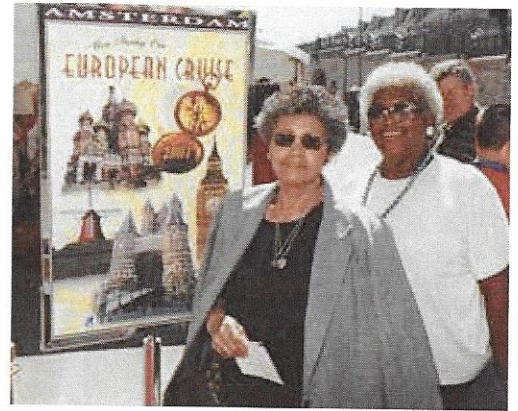
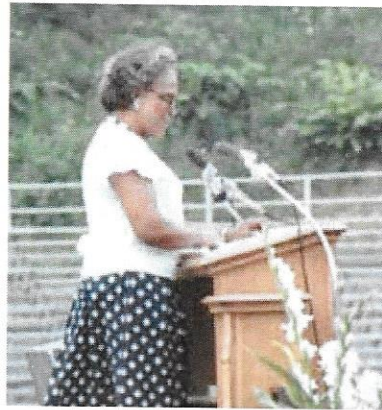














# Acknowledgements

The family would like to sincerely thank the White Rock Church Family and the Durham Community for providing a supportive and nurturing environment over many years and for many generations. We are deeply grateful for the love extended to our Mom from church members, former colleagues and students of Hillside High School and WG Pearson Elementary School and her wonderful friends and extended family. We are especially appreciative of the extraordinary care she received from the members of staff at The Forest at Duke where she resided for the last 5 years of her life.

## Pallbearers

Deacons of White Rock Baptist Church

## Floral Bearers

Deaconesses of White Rock Baptist Church

## Honorary Floral Bearers

## Professional Services Entrusted to and Provided by:

Fisher Memorial Funeral Parlor  
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Phone: 919-682-3276 Fax: 919-682-0892  
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Program designed by Erica Leathers King