

A
Celebration of Life

HENRY J. FORDHAM III & SHARON E. (WRIGHT) FORDHAM



SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 2021

LO, THIS IS OUR GOD

by Eleanor Wright

A blessed hope is that holds
Such comfort for our weary souls
O how within our hearts it burns
This promise of our Lord's return

Beyond some portal in the sky
The King of Kings is standing by
His voice will soon be heard to say
Arise, oh dead and live today

*Lo, this is our God
How we have waited
How we have waited
Lo, this is our God
Our God will save us
He will save us*

Lift up your heads the time has come
To meet our Lord and journey home
We long to see our Savior's face
And evermore to sing His praise

We'll see a tiny cloud at first
Then bursting through the universe
A blinding light shall make its way
'Tis then we shall look up and say

*Lo, this is our God
How we have waited
How we have waited
Lo, this is our God
Our God will save us
He will save us*

*Lo, this is our God
Our God will save us
He will save us*

A portrait of a woman and a man standing in front of a bookshelf. The woman is on the left, wearing a black jacket with a white brooch and glasses. The man is on the right, wearing a dark pinstriped suit, a patterned tie, and glasses. The background is a dark wood bookshelf filled with books.

Sharon

ELAINE (WRIGHT) FORDHAM

SUNRISE
NOVEMBER 4, 1943

Henry

JOSEPH FORDHAM III

SUNRISE
AUGUST 27, 1943

SUNSET
JULY 18, 2021

A Celebration

OF THE LIVES OF
HENRY J. FORDHAM III & SHARON E. (WRIGHT) FORDHAM

Eulogist: Henry Wright
Officiating Minister: Furman F. Fordham II

POSTING OF THE COLORS	Allegheny East Pathfinders
PROCESSIONAL	Allegheny East Mass Choir
	<i>When the Saints Go to Worship/For Every Mountain</i>
SCRIPTURE	Pastor Buford Griffith Jr.
	<i>Psalm 15, The Passion Translation</i>
PRAYER OF COMFORT	Dr. Gene Donaldson, Ministerial Director Allegheny East Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists®
WELCOME	Pastor Furman F. Fordham II, Nephew
MUSICAL SELECTION	Mrs. Evelyn Fordham-Goodman, Niece <i>Christ is All</i> – by Rev. Ernest Davis, Jr.
REFLECTIONS	President & First Lady Dr. G. Alexander & Mrs. Desiree Bryant, <i>President & First Lady</i> <i>North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists®</i> Dr. Dave & Mrs. Becky Weigley, <i>President & First Lady</i> <i>Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®</i> Elder Pete & Mrs. Dahlia Palmer, <i>Vice President for Administration</i> <i>Allegheny East Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists®</i>
MUSICAL SELECTION	Dr. Jeremy Winston <i>Will You Worship Me Now?</i> – by Gilchrist Sprauve
REFLECTIONS	Pastor & First Lady The Honorable John Street <i>Former Mayor of Philadelphia, PA</i> Rev. Richard Dickens, Pastor <i>New Metropolitan Baptist Church, Baltimore</i> Dr. Barry Black, Chaplain <i>United States Senate</i>
MUSICAL SELECTION	Pastor Wintley Phipps <i>It is Well</i> – by Horatio Spafford/Philip Bliss

REFLECTIONS

Butch & Sherry

Mrs. Diedra Tramel, *Niece*

Mrs. Ruby Burrell

Mrs. Carolyn Ward-Moore

Ms. Julie McKnight, *Cousin*

MUSICAL SELECTION

By and By – by Charles Tindley

OBITUARY READING

Dr. Jacquelyn Wright Palmer, *Cousin*

REFLECTIONS

Family

Mrs. Sandra Brooks, *Representing Wright Cousins*

Mr. Walter Fordham, Jr., *Representing Fordham Cousins*

Ms. Leila Danielle Fordham, *Granddaughter*

Mr. Donovan Fordham, *Son*

MUSICAL SELECTION

Ms. Julie McKnight, & Ms. Tracey Wright, *Cousins*

A Better Day – by Eleanor Wright

EULOGY

Pastor Henry Wright, *Cousin*

MUSIC SELECTION

Allegheny East Mass Choir

When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder – arr. Lloyd Mallory and Armand Hutton

FAMILY RESPONSE

Mr. Henry J. Fordham IV, *Son*

MUSICAL SELECTION

Allegheny East Mass Choir,
Family

Lo, This Is Our God – by Eleanor Wright

CLOSING PRAYER

Pastor S. Peter Campbell, Sr.

Recessional for Clergy and Family - please stay seated during the recessional

INTERMENT: Immediately following the service please join the family at the Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens located at 2150 Mount View Road, Marriottsville, Maryland 21104
(The Garden of St. Luke section of the cemetery).

Obituary

OF

HENRY J. FORDHAM, III & SHARON E. (WRIGHT) FORDHAM

Henry Joseph Fordham III, known affectionately as “Butch” to family and friends, was born to parents Henry Joseph Fordham II and Geneva Duncan on August 27, 1943 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Oakwood Academy in 1961 and was voted “Most Versatile” in his high school year book. Henry could play multiple instruments, including the piano, organ, clarinet, and trumpet, and enjoyed roller skating, bowling, and other sports. He went on to work at Monsanto in Dayton, Ohio. Henry was a remarkably responsible and dependable worker. Sometimes, in the absence of transportation, he walked 14 miles to get to work. At the age of 19, Henry married his first and only love, Sharon Elaine Wright (lovingly known as “Sherry”) on July 20, 1963. To their union they added four children: Joseph (Joey), Shawn, Donovan and Danielle.

By all accounts, Henry and Sharon first met when they were just seven years old. His father, Henry J. Fordham II was the Pastor of Berea Chapel, the little Wright Family church in Germantown, Ohio. According to Sharon’s brothers—Paul Jr., Tommy, and Brian—Henry was smitten with Sharon from the start. She was taller than Henry at that time and she was not very responsive to his overtures at first. He started to really pursue her when they were preteens at Allegheny Campmeeting. Henry was always so attentive – anticipating her needs and making every effort to meet them. Over time their affections grew as Henry courted her, often driving from Philadelphia to Germantown just to see Sharon. That’s over 550 miles, with a drive time of about 9 hours.

After answering God’s call to the ministry, Henry and his family moved to Huntsville, Alabama where he earned a Theology Degree from Oakwood College in 1973. He later received a Master’s Degree in Theology from The Ohio State University. While completing his coursework and awaiting a call into the ministry,

Henry worked various jobs to provide for his family as they moved to various cities, including working as a welder, an X-ray technician, and while living in Philadelphia he worked with the Street Brothers selling hotdogs in their vending business. In 1974, the family moved to Pine Forge Academy where Henry was offered a job as a teacher. In 1976, Luther Palmer, then president of Allegheny East Conference, extended him an offer to join the Conference. His first assignment was the Sharon Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wilmington, Delaware.

Henry followed God’s call and faithfully pastored several Adventist Churches, including in successive order the Emmanuel Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church, Brinklow, MD; Berryville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berryville, VA; Berea Temple Adventist Church, Baltimore, MD. He also served as an interim pastor for Cedars of Lebanon Seventh-day Adventist Church, Chesapeake VA; Capitol Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington DC; Germantown Seventh-day Adventist Church, Philadelphia, PA; Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, DC; and Trinity Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church, Newark, NJ. Henry also evangelized portions of India and several countries in Africa.

Henry’s ministerial career assumed greater leadership responsibility in the early 1990s. He was elected to serve in the Allegheny East Conference as Director for Ministerial, Personal Ministries, and Religious Liberty Director. He was elected Executive Secretary in 2000 and conference President in 2012, a position he held until his death. Henry’s selfless service in the cause of God spanned more than 45 years.

Sharon, “Sherry” to those who knew her best, was born to parents Paul LaMar Wright and Bessie Louise Pitts Wright on November 4, 1943 in Dayton, Ohio. She graduated from Germantown High School and

married the love of her life, Henry Fordham, at the age of 19, in a simple wedding ceremony in which her brother Tommy and her cousin Mark Wright were their only witnesses. Although a simple ceremony, Sharon often reflected on the special white dress that her Aunt Rudy loaned her to wear for the wedding. Aunt Rudy, a member of the famous BlendWrights singing group, loaned Sharon the white dress that was used when the trio posed for the cover of one of their famous albums, "Let Down the Ladder."

Sharon came from a musical family and she loved to sing. Sharon had a rich, soulful voice that she used often to minister in song to others. In her early years she sang with her cousins in a musical group in Germantown. She had the opportunity to meet gospel-great Mahalia Jackson and the two made an instant connection. They remained friends for many years and Sharon's singing style was influenced by Mahalia.

Sharon was determined to support her husband in ministry and held various jobs while he attended college and during his long tenure in ministry. Her determination was unmatched. Once she worked for a women's prison. On the second day of the job, an incarcerated individual grabbed a hold of her hair and pulled out a lock of it by the roots. Undeterred, she showed up again the next day for work. Sharon would later develop excellent secretarial skills, typing more than 100 words-per-minute, and easily gained employment in an effort to support her family while Henry was in the ministry. She was hired at the Social Security Administration (SSA) as a secretary and was eventually promoted to Budget Analyst. She retired from SSA after 30 years of exemplary service. Sharon stepped elegantly and thoughtfully into her role as Henry's First Lady. She exemplified the values of the Proverbs 31 virtuous woman: (*excerpts*)

¹² She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. ²⁵ Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. ²⁶ She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. ²⁷ She looketh well to the ways of her

household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

²⁸ Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Sharon encouraged other Pastors' wives in Allegheny East to develop these values as they ministered alongside their husbands.

Sharon was the Queen of the castle, their home. Her role expanded as she and Henry took responsibility for raising Danielle's children after her untimely passing in August of 2003. In addition to the mission fields to which she and Henry traveled across the world, Sharon knew the importance of shepherding her children and her children's children, including Shane, India, Brook, and Kaleb, thus playing a significant role in raising their grandchildren.

One cousin shared that it was beautiful to see them interacting as a team. Sharon would always say how thankful she was that the Lord gave her Henry, often saying to others, "He's a good man."

Recently their son, Shawn, shared that when he and his parents were together, sometimes Shawn would point to his dad and jokingly ask his mom, "Who's that guy?" Sharon would answer, "He's the love of my life." Henry and Sharon had been married two days shy of 58 years.

Henry and Sharon were globally respected and much beloved. They easily forged friendships through their gracious compassion. Both, at age 77, passed away together on July 18, 2021 from smoke inhalation during a fire that consumed their home in Douglassville, Pennsylvania.

Henry and Sharon are survived by their three sons: Henry Joseph Fordham IV and spouse Tamy, and their children, Kristen Racquel Fordham, Henry Joseph Fordham V, and Shawn LaMar Fordham II; Shawn LaMar Fordham and his son Shane Robert Braxton Fordham; Donovan Troy Duncan Fordham and his children, Donovan Elijah Michael Fordham and Leila Danielle Fordham; and Danielle's children, William Shane Fordham-Brown, India Indrani Fordham-Brown, Taylor Brooke Fordham-Brown, and Kaleb Israel Michael Marshall.

They are also survived by their

great-grandchildren: Journey Noelle Jefferson, Elijah Monroe Fordham-Wilson, and Alaina Danielle Fordham; Sharon's siblings Paul LaMar Wright Jr. and spouse Linda; Thomas Milton Wright, and spouse Sheila; Brian DeWitt Wright, and spouse Tracy. Sherry's first cousins, Saundra Brooks, William Wright Jr., Henry Wright; and Henry's first cousins, Audrey Fordham Booker, Walter Fordham Jr., Marialyce Fordham and Carole Wagner Matthews. And many other cousins, nieces, and nephews who will dearly miss their Aunt Sherry and Uncle Butch.

Countless friends, colleagues and constituents from around the world will also miss them dearly and have been deeply impacted by their passing.

Henry and Sharon were preceded in death by his parents, Henry Joseph Fordham II and Geneva Duncan Fordham; her parents Paul LaMar Wright and Bessie Louise Pitts Wright; his sisters, Zella Fordham Street and Kathleen Fordham, and their daughter Danielle Gene Fordham Brown-Marshall.

If we were to consider Butch and Sherry's views of death, and the words with which they comforted grieving congregants and by which they comforted themselves following the devastating loss of Danielle—their “Baby Girl,” these Bible verses surely sustained their hope:

I Thessalonians 4:13, 16, & 17

¹³ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁶ For the

Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And these:

Isaiah 25: 8 & 9

⁸ He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. ⁹ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

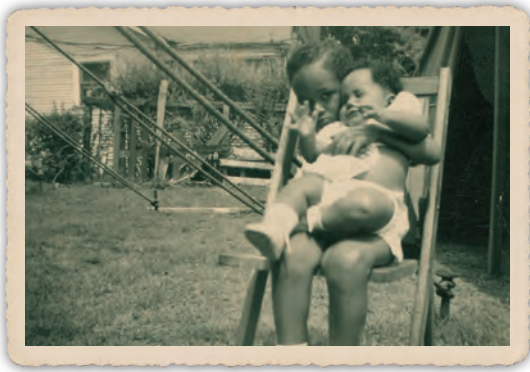
These powerful words from God's Word gave them strength for each new day and “bright hope for tomorrow.”

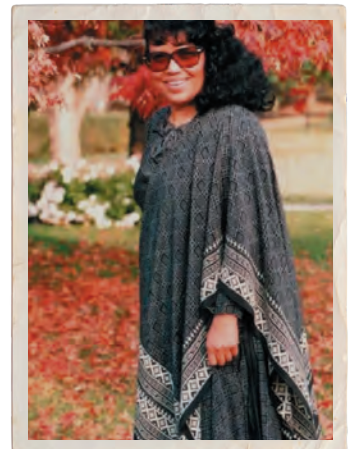
One day we will sing “Lo, This Is Our God” as we see Him coming in the clouds. It will be glorious to see Jesus, and it will give us unspeakable joy to see Henry and Sharon again. ❖



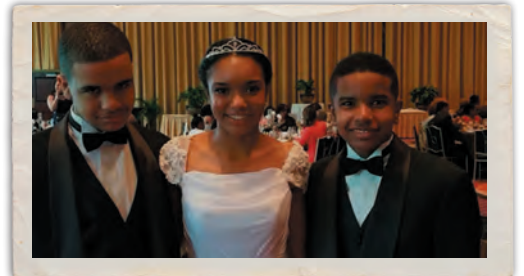
PICTORIAL

Memoirs









Acknowledgments

There are moments in life when the aptitude of the human mind falls short of expressing the exact sentiments of the heart. Shakespeare, with his belletristic craft, could not communicate how we feel at this moment. Today our feeble attempt at expressing our appreciation is vastly overshadowed by the real emotions of our hearts. Words cannot express how grateful our family is for your generous support, encouraging words, thoughts, and prayers. Thank you for thinking of us in our time of need.

Our sincere thank you to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Organization for your kindness and words of encouragement from the World Headquarters, Divisions, Unions, Conferences, and various local churches worldwide.

To the Allegheny East Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists and the many constituent churches who opened their heart to our parents for these decades and the tremendous contributions you've made to make this day possible, we are eternally grateful.

To our relatives and dear friends who have traveled far distances to be with us during our time of sorrow, such sentiments are deeply appreciated and will never be forgotten.

To those who sent messages via social media, cards through the postal service, and via text, we greatly appreciate the sentiments you've shared and the encouraging words and comments shared about our parents.

To the extraordinarily creative team that designed this program, we appreciate the incredible effort and countless sleepless nights to complete the excellent program design as well as the special anthology designed for our family.

To the musicians, music has always been an essential part of our family, and we thank you for replicating the warm emotions we've felt; your musical gifts lifted our hearts, and we are indeed grateful.

To the funeral planning committee along with the countless number of individuals who have helped us manage the despondencies of this entire process, we are eternally grateful.

— *Joey, Shawn, Donovan*

Hallbearers

HONORARY

James H. Street III
Kaleb Marshall

Kevin Street
Paul LaMar Wright Jr.

Shane Robert Braxton Fordham
Walter W. Saunders

STANDARD

Brandon B. White Sr.
Brian Dewitt Wright
Christopher Brooks
David Barnes
Donovan Elijah Michael Fordham

Glen Evans
Harold Jean Wright II
Henry Joseph Fordham V
Henry Monroe Wright II
Herbert Marcel Wright
Robert W. Booker

Shawn LaMar Fordham II
T. Milton Street Jr.
Thomas Milton Wright
Walter "Skoog" Fordham III
Warren Banfield

Musicians

Jeremy Winston, *Musical Director*
Lloyd Mallory, *Choirmaster*
Keith Goodman, *pianist for Evelyn Goodman*
Members of the Allegheny East Mass Choir
Members of the Orchestra
Members of the Band

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