

## *Acknowledgements*

On behalf of our loved one, Delories Willingham, we, the family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and support of condolence during our time of such a great loss.

## *Active Pallbearers*

Rasuli Preston • Christopher Ellington • Rory Bradford  
Kei'ontae Patterson • Maurice Bradford • Jesse Anderson

## *Honorary Pallbearers*

Dovi' Cure • Iyanu Preston • David Hudson  
Ron Smith • Marcus Jones • Corey Fenderson

## *Flowerbearers*

Revelation Missionary Baptist Church Mass Choir

*"Ma, I'll forever love and miss you and guess what,  
I'll have your voice living inside of me still."*

*With Infinite Love,  
Wonnie*



## *Interment*

Vine Street Hill Cemetery



**PRESTON CHARLES FUNERAL HOME**  
400 N. Wayne Avenue • Lockland, OH 45215  
Phone: (513) 761-0082 • Fax: (513) 761-0257

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# *In Loving Memory of*

## **Delories Willingham**

July 21, 1936 — April 2, 2021



Wednesday, April 21, 2021

*Viewing – 10:00 a.m.*

*Funeral Service – 11:00 a.m.*



**Revelation Missionary Baptist Church**  
7717 Harrison Avenue • Cincinnati, OH 45231

**Pastor Kendall Washington, Officiating**

# Obituary

**Delories Willingham** was born on July 21, 1936 in Cincinnati, Ohio to Lawrence Bradford and Alva Elizabeth Crumb. She was the second eldest of three children blessed by their union. A baby brother preceded her in death and also her sister, Delta Bradford and half brother, Robert Gafney. Her grandparents, the late Deacon William and Ennie Franklin took part in her rearing from infancy to adulthood, growing up in the cities historical West End.

She was introduced to the Lord by her grandparents at an early age when she accepted Christ and was baptized at Revelation Baptist Church where she loved to lift her voice in song. As a child, she attended the Cincinnati Public School System, Heberle Elementary and Old Woodward High School. She played basketball, tap danced, played piano, moreover, sang in the school's choir. She was recognized and stood out because of her unique vocal abilities and sang a soprano that could be described as operatic, yet angelic and incomparable. Upon graduating from high school at 16 years old, she was considered and asked to attend the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. However, instead, she began working with inner city children with behavior learning problems from her own neighborhood at 6th District School. Delories' formal musical training and the most influential on her life took place within the church. She could sing through the rafters.

Delories grew up in the church at a time when there were numerous choirs and singing groups of all sorts, each type with it's own unique sound and tempo. From spirituals to hymnals, inspirational and shape note music just to name a few, all within the same church congregation and there was standing room only on Sunday mornings. She loved the Lord and her church home. Singing was in her blood and she sang with the anointing of God within her voice. With her gift, she spread the message of Christ and his unconditional love for us. Delories sang in churches of different denominations: Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic and Holiness.

Joining the Thomas Dorsey National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses as a girl was a proud era in her life. Here she learned how to direct choirs of a much larger scale, as well as sing God's praises and tell the world how good he's been in her life. She often recalled memories of everyone being in order and on one accord, singing and shouting, travelling across state lines to meet for grand occasions, packing each house out. Delories sang along gospel greats like Melvin Carter who later formed a group with his mother named Melvin Carter and the Carvettes. They sang together for a number of years and were well known. Having such a pristine voice, recitals were held in her honour, showcasing her voice as a canvas.

Delories married twice and became the mother to three beautiful children: a son, Kevin who preceded her in death and two daughters, Angeli, who preceded her in death and Dawona, the baby girl. She continued the family tradition of introducing Christ in the lives of her children making sure they were baptized, taught and aware of his love, spirit and truth in their search to find him within their own lives. Her enduring devotion to Christ, family and community led her involvement with community organizations.

She was a member of the West End Community Council, advocating unification of its local leaders and citizens to form community government through involvement for social and economic change. She spoke of segregation as a child and its impact on the poor inner city residents, remembering political leader and activist the Honorable Theodore M. Berry, Cincinnati's first African American Mayor who fought to desegregate Cincinnati Public School's education on white vs black student use of the same swimming pools for physical education purposes. Shaking hands with the late great Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. after hearing him

speak at her church and marching with him was another historical event in Delories' life. She became involved and active during the Civil Rights era. She sang when invited to various churches in the south on occasion to support the movement that would help change the world. She worked for the Cincinnati Recreation Commission as a youth counselor and mentor at facilities to help at risk youth, Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses and the H.U.B. Center in Over the Rhine.

Majoring in Early Childhood Education with emphasis on urban children, Delories became a student at the University of Cincinnati's Education Foundation Program. She earned her Master's degree in Education all while filling requirements writing her dissertation to obtain her Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.). She experienced a fall while on the job that decreased her mobility causing her to be unable to complete. During her college years, she also received her Bachelors of Arts degree in Social work with licensure and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice. Delories taught in many schools throughout the West End: Washburn, Heberle, Bloom, Rothenburg, Taft Elementary, Hays/Porter, Washington Park and Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy, the first private minority school to the West End community. She retired from the Public School System serving more than 40 years.

Continuing her life's journey, knowing the Lord, she still remained active as much as she could singing with the Revelation Baptist Church Mass Choir. She soloed gospel favorites: The Name of Jesus, Never Grow Old, Happy With Jesus Alone, Until Then and Choose Ye This Day, a song recorded on vinyl by the Revelation Baptist Church Mass Choir. She not only loved singing, but also reading the Bible, her Daily Bread and current events. She loved helping her grandchildren and was very active in their lives, helping them with their homework and cooking for them. Her grandmother's cornbread dressing recipe was a family favorite. She enjoyed gardening in her yard and taking walks to Findlay Market to shop, helping her neighbors in need and making phone calls to check in on family and friends.

On Good Friday, April 2, 2021, Delories was called to her heavenly home. She will be dearly missed by those who loved and knew her as well as her voice. She leaves to cherish these precious memories: a daughter, Dawona (David) Willingham-King; granddaughters, Zaaifrah (Christopher) Fields-Ellington, Whitney and Tammi; grandsons, Dovi', Iyanu, Rasuli and Reginald; great-grandsons, Kei'ontae, Asante' and Dovante'; one great-granddaughter, Empryss, the family's latest addition; a half sister, Martina Smith; nieces, Shaunda Bradford, Lil Keisha Smith and Anjelica Smith; nephews, Rory Bradford and Maurice Bradford of Atlanta, GA; great niece, Nichole Bradford; stepson, Jesse Anderson; a host of cousins, family and friends.

## Order of Service

Organ Prelude.....	Musician
Parting View .....	The Family
Selection.....	"I Love the Lord" by Whitney Houston (Audio)
Scripture – Psalms 23 .....	Pastor Eugene Ellington
Prayer .....	Pastor Eugene Ellington
Selection.....	"I Believe in Miracles" by Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers (Audio)
Acknowledgements.....	Church Secretary
Obituary .....	Read Silently
Remarks.....	
Eulogy .....	Pastor Kendall Washington
Benediction.....	Pastor Kendall Washington
Recessional – "God Be With You".....	Congregational Song