



Ms. Ethel Mae Cunningham

June 6, 1954 - August 1, 2025

Ethel Mae Smith was born in Thomasville, Georgia on June 6, 1954 to Emma Grace Hadley and Ernest Smith, both preceded her in death. Ethel, her father, and brother Richard relocated to Michigan, where she attended school and graduated from Airport High school.

By her father being the head Deacon and the best friend to his Pastor District Elder Clinton C. Williams the founder of Bethlehem Temple of Belleville, where Ethel was introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ and was baptized in Jesus name on August 18, 1971.

Sometime later, Ethel met a tall light-skinned man by the name of Jasper Haywood Cunningham Jr. (Jazz) they courted for some time and had two beautiful daughters Sharita Renée Smith (Rita) and ILisha Denise Smith-Thomas (LeeLee). Sometime later Ethel and Jazz married on March 4, 1981, from that day forward, you would hear her called Mrs. Cunningham as her husband would say. Ethel introduced Jazz to the Lord Jesus Christ and thereafter they both received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Ethel was a member of Bethlehem Temple Belleville for many years. She served on the usher board as an usher, in the missionary department, a choir member and was also part of the kitchen staff. She would tell anyone who would listen about the Lord Jesus Christ, Ethel and Jazz had many adventures together on the road 18 wheeler trucking in which Jazz started his own business and named it after her EMea Trucking LLC. As time went on challenges of life hit hard and Ethel and Jazz divorced and not too long after

Ethel was diagnosed with breast cancer. Having both of her breasts removed, she was a survivor. She conquered it. She survived it, to God be the glory but once again, life continued to hit hard. Her health began to decline, but she was still holding strong, she got the opportunity to see her first grandson to be married (Anthony Thomas) in June 2025, she truly enjoyed herself. That's all she talked about. It was a highlight of joy for her.

On August 1, 2025, her two daughters Rita and LeeLee went on their routine visit to their mother's home only to find their mother Ethel deceased. Ethel has one brother Richard Dudley Hadley, who preceded her in death.

She leaves to cherish her memory: three sisters Doris Cole, Teresa Scott, and Beatrice Scott and her stepmother Earlie Smith; two daughters Sharita Smith and ILisha Thomas (Mark Thomas); bonus son/nephew Rodrick Scott; bonus daughter Jatara Wright; six grandchildren Syasia Smith, Anthony Thomas (Shauntae Thomas), D'Angelo McWilliams (Allison McWilliams), Avianna Mathia (Caleb Mathia), Demerra Smith, Allana Thomas; bonus granddaughter Grace Thomas; Spiritual mentor and prayer partner to Britni James; seven great-grandchildren Arianna, Shamyra, Dedrick, DeNasia, La, Vaeh and Elijah, AaRion (lil Jazz); and a host nieces and nephews and families and friends.

Previous Events

Family Hour

Saturday, Aug. **23**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethlehem Temple of Belleville
45100 Willow Road
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 461-2121

Celebration of Life

Saturday, Aug. **23**. 11:00 AM (ET)

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Tribute Wall



“ Jeffrey Davis lit a candle in memory of Ms. Ethel Mae Cunningham



Jeffrey Davis - August 09, 2025 at 11:32 AM