Mrs. Willie Mae Whitaker

April 5, 1917 - December 13, 2014

The Beautiful and Blessed Life of Willie Mae Whitaker
“This is my story. This is my song. Praising my Savior all the day long.”
-Blessed Assurance

When you have a heart for God, you have a heart for ministry. "Yes, ministry is a must, not a maybe," is what Willie Mae Nolen Whitaker would tell you on any given day. Willie Mae was born April 5, 1917 in Learned, Mississippi to Lonnie and Kate Nolen. As the oldest of nine children, she learned the tenets of work and responsibility early in life. Often caring for her siblings, two brothers and five sisters, you could find Willie Mae cooking meals, mending clothes, tending to the family's crops, and even disciplining her younger siblings when needed. Her skillful care and nurturing spirit would materialize into a lifelong love for children and her community.

The Nolen's were God-fearing, taking their children to church regularly. As a result, Willie Mae accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior at an early age and began singing in the church choir. It was in the choir that Willie Mae's gift for music was recognized. Later she and her sisters began singing as a quartet, The Nolen Sisters, a traveling, gospel singing group. It was during one of her singing engagements at church that Willie Mae met a dark, handsome suitor, Lucious Whitaker (Luke, as she would affectionately call him).

After a persistent courtship guided by love, respect, and a mutual belief in God, Luke and Willie Mae married on December 28,1938. Their marriage only strengthened as they had shared nearly 65 years until the Lord called him home in November 2003. However, during their time together, Willie Mae and Luke moved from Mississippi to Detroit, Michigan in 1949 with their then five children seeking better opportunities. Together, they would go on to have six more and raise 11 children, four sons and seven daughters. They strongly believed in rearing a child "in the admonition of the Lord." Excellence was always the expectation. Education, discipline, and spiritual growth were imperative in the Whitaker household. As a result, all 11 children attended college and many achieved advanced degrees.

In addition to being a wife and mother, Willie Mae would often work during the summer months when school was out for the children to help support her family and to feel a sense of independence. She worked at Central Quality Supply for more than thirteen years. After retiring from there, she worked at T. Dale Cooke Elementary School as a Teacher's Aide eight years, well into her 70s, fulfilling a childhood dream to become a teacher. Her motto, "If it can be done, then you can do it!"

Willie Mae was also a devoted Christian woman. She loved going to church; she sang hymns throughout her home, prayed and studied the word daily. "Amazing Grace," "Blessed Assurance," and "Brighten in the Corner Where You Are" were favorites, and served as a warning to her children when someone was in trouble and "the rod of correction" was near.

Willie Mae became a member of Gospel Temple Baptist Church in 1949 under the pastoral leadership of Rev. W.E. Ramsey who was later succeeded by Rev. Joseph E. King and then Pastor Anthony E. Darrington. Willie Mae loved her church family and remained active until her final days. Her mantra was to "give the Lord some of your time." She was always busy doing whatever she

could. She was a member of the Gospel Chorus for more than 40 years, and served as president of the Missionary Department, and a revered Sunday school teacher for the past 20 plus years. Just before Thanksgiving this year, as she had done so many years before, she oversaw the distribution of Thanksgiving baskets that Gospel Temple's missionary department would provide to needy families. Quite the businesswoman, she kept detailed records of fund-raising, communications to families, and donations of food. These and other selfless acts were near and dear to her heart, and she often expressed that it gave her life purpose. Even on a "fixed" income, Willie Mae was a philanthropist, giving to charities all over the world, from Red Cross, Wounded Warriors, to St. Jude and countless others.

At 97 years old, Willie Mae had boundless energy and was quite the traveler. She loved nothing more than being with her family. She attended every event from school plays, birthdays, and graduations to holiday gatherings and weddings. No matter how far, if she could get there, she was there. She had a unique ability to make every single person in her family feel special. She was truly her family's most precious jewel.

On Saturday, December 13, 2014 at Providence Hospital in Southfield, MI God gently called Willie Mae home. With her children and family surrounding her, singing hymns and saying prayers, she made a peaceful yet praise-filled transition home to her heavenly father just as she wanted.

Willie Mae was preceded in death by her loving husband, Lucious; their children, Emma Nell Dixon, Lucious Jr. and Charlene Dickens; her parents, Lonnie and Kate Nolen, and six of her siblings.

Cemetery Details

Detroit Memorial Park East

4280 East 13 Mile Road
Warren, MI 48092

Previous Events

Visitation

Friday, Dec. **19**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Gospel Temple Missionary Baptist Church
18000 Wyoming
Detroit, MI 48221

Family Hour

Saturday, Dec. **20**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Gospel Temple Missionary Baptist Church
18000 Wyoming
Detroit, MI 48221

Funeral Service

Saturday, Dec. **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Gospel Temple Missionary Baptist Church
18000 Wyoming
Detroit, MI 48221

Tribute Wall

Mrs. Willie Mae Whitaker

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM

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Staff and Board of the Sugar Law Center purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mrs. Willie Mae Whitaker.

Staff and Board of the Sugar Law Center - December 18, 2014 at 02:18 PM