

EVELYN

1946 - 2023





Celebrating EVELYN WHITLEY

June 8, 1946 – February 23, 2023

Celebration of Life Service
Thursday, March 2nd, 11:00 am

Celestial Baptist Church
1439 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Portsmouth VA
Pastor Aaron Lawrence

Order of Service

Thursday, March 2nd, 11:00 am

Pastor Aaron Lawrence, *Officiating*

The Processional of Clergy & Family

Opening Prayer

Pastor Aaron Lawrence

Music Selection

Damon Parker, Soloist
Dominic Wright, Organist

Scripture Readings

Old Testament

Rev. Dr Bobby Mitchell

New Testament

Pastor Dallas Ellis, Jr.

Prayer of Comfort

Elder Ann Fortineau

Reflections

Linda Keys, *Friend*
Casheba Cannon, *Educator*
Shirley Wimbrough, *Educator*
Antoinette Franklin, *Caregiver*
Edna Newby, *Friend*
Victor & Summer Johnson, *Family*
Wilma Whitley, *Family*
David L. Fitts, *Family*
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

Obituary

Silent Reading

Music Selection

Damon Parker, *Soloist*
Dominic Wright, *Organist*

Eulogy

Paster Aaron Lawrence

Closing Prayer

Paster Aaron Lawrence

Committal

Paster Aaron Lawrence

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Pallbearers

Dashawn Leary
Jermaine Lewis
Emmanuel Johnson
Cameron Whitley
Christopher Whitley
Nathaniel Whitley

Floral Bearers

Bernadine Leary
Pat Williams
Nikeah Tynes





EVELYN WHITLEY

Her Life & Legacy

A brilliant woman who served her community by educating generations of Portsmouth, Virginia children, Evelyn Louise Whitley was a renowned educator, mentor, and friend. She dedicated her life to public service as an educator for more than four decades.

Evelyn Louise Whitley was born on June 8, 1946, in Weldon, North Carolina. She was the second of seven children born to Clyde and Olivia Ellis. Both parents and two of her siblings JoAnn Gadson and Dallas Scott Ellis, Sr. – preceded her in death.

Evelyn grew up in Weldon, North Carolina, and graduated as the 1964 Salutatorian at Ralph J. Bunche High School, Weldon, NC. She went on to attend Elizabeth City State University in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. During her time there Evelyn became a member of the Delta

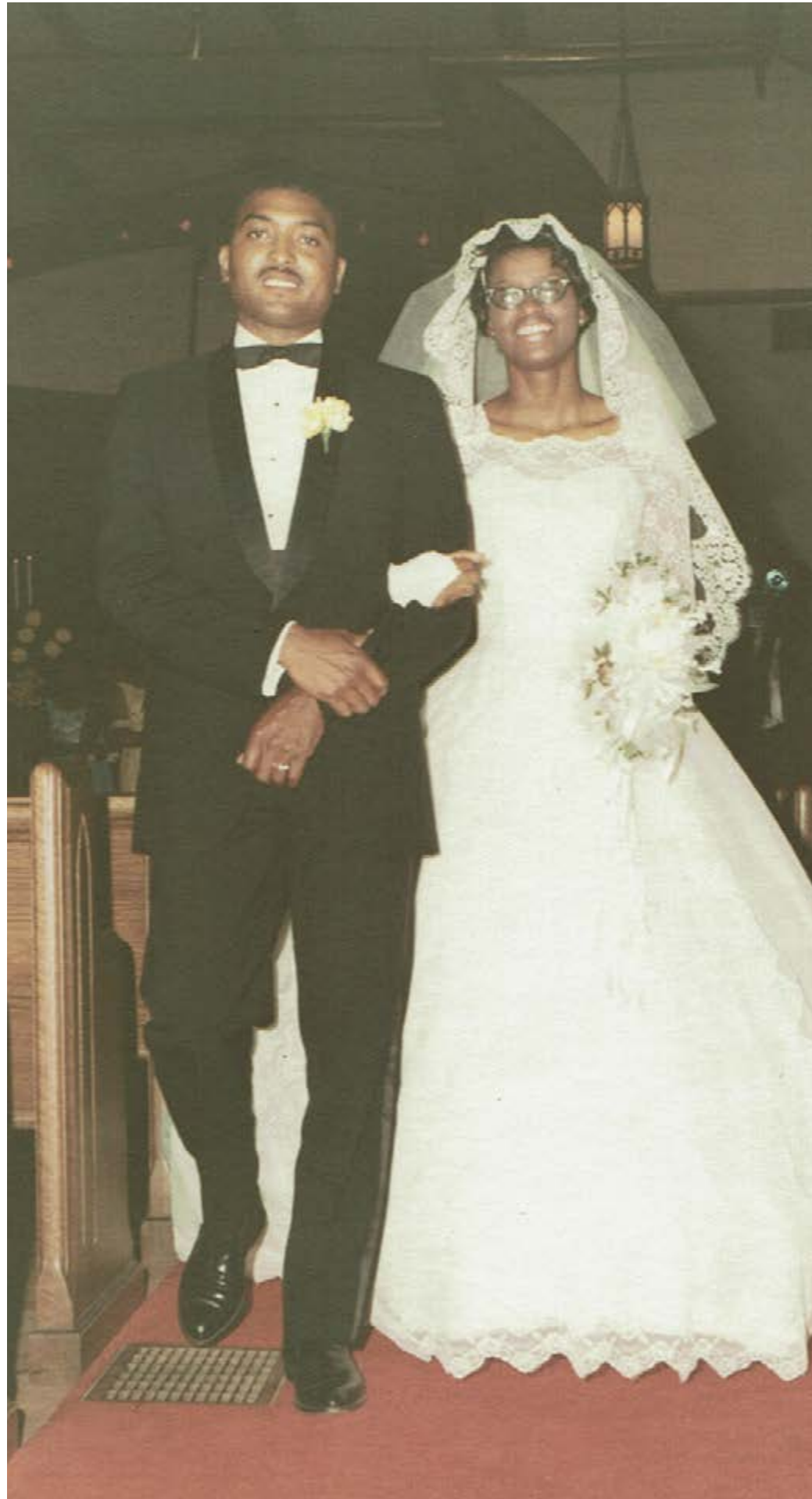
Chi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and served as its chapter president from 1967-1968. In 1968 she graduated from Elizabeth City State University with honors with her Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education.

Soon after graduation, Evelyn met and married Albert Lee Whitley, Sr. on August 24, 1968. Two children were born into their union: Albert Lee Whitley, Jr., and Jonelle Leneé Leary. Albert and Evelyn shared a beautiful life of love, laughter, and friendship for 54 years.

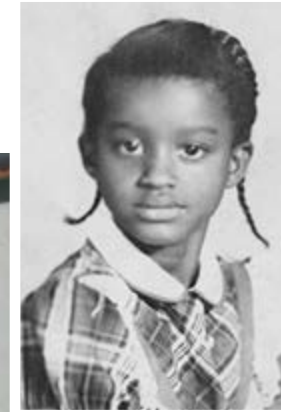
In 1968, Evelyn moved to Portsmouth, VA with her husband, Albert, who inquired about an available position for Evelyn at Portsmouth Public Schools and secured an elementary interview for her. During the interview, she let her passion, energy, enthusiasm, and love for children resonate. She secured her first teaching position at Mt. Hermon Elementary School, where she taught 6th grade. In 1976 Evelyn went on to earn her Master of Education Degree from Virginia State University.

Evelyn was baptized at an early age at St. Peters Baptist Church in Weldon, North Carolina. Since 1969 Evelyn has been a member of Celestial Baptist Church. Despite her busy school schedule, Evelyn always devoted time to the Lord. Evelyn loved the Lord, Jesus Christ. She was an active member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, Gamma Chapter, and served as chapter President from 2000-2002.

Evelyn was an outstanding classroom teacher; her talents and leadership skills were quickly recognized, and she was chosen to be a teacher trainer with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in 1986. She monitored and supported many new teachers, helping them transition from novice skills to proficient teaching abilities. She worked with each new teacher until tenure status was earned. Evelyn continued to



Evelyn loved children and always knew she wanted to teach and believed she was called by *God* to do so.



pursue her dream of teaching and helping children while making a positive impact toward a better future. Evelyn was nominated by her peers and named Teacher of the Year at Lakeview Elementary School in 1987.

Evelyn had an earnest desire to help children learn; often investing extra time, money, and energy to assure that every student was successful. In 1989, she transitioned from being a traditional education classroom teacher to a special education teacher at Lakeview Elementary School. She set out to teach students who lagged in their scholastic ability. She developed and implemented Individual Educational Plans that strategically targeted the necessary basic skills for each student to learn. Under her tiered instruction, many boys and girls showed one to two grade level(s) of growth in one academic year.



In 1992, she became an assistant principal at Churchland Academy Elementary School, where she served for eight years. Her work ethic, professionalism, and leadership skills caught the attention of the Director of Elementary Education and the Superintendent. In 2000, she was offered the principal position at Highland Biltmore Elementary School. Eager to walk in God's call for her life, Evelyn willingly accepted the position and embarked upon new horizons.

As a new principal, Evelyn proved that she had the fortitude to handle the at-risk student population with dignity, respect, and sustainability. Due to the city's declining population and school system rezoning Highland Biltmore was closed in 2001 and Evelyn was reassigned to James Hurst Elementary School.

Upon her arrival at James Hurst, Evelyn quickly realized that James Hurst was Provisionally Accredited because it lacked a sound research-based instructional program. She embraced the challenge and organized a strategic academic improvement plan. In 2005, Evelyn's hard work, commitment to academic excellence, and dedication to children paid off. James Hurst earned the top state rating of Full Accreditation for the first time in its history. Along with her leadership team, she forged forward working tirelessly to maintain Full Accreditation.

Under Evelyn's leadership, James Hurst Elementary School realized its highest achievement scores ever recorded by the Virginia State Department of Education; therefore, the school has received many awards, School Improvement Award-2010; 100% SOL Accredited Award-2010; Competence to Excellence Award, by the Virginia Department of Education - 2007 & 2008; and the State Accreditation Achievement Award by Third Baptist Church, Portsmouth, VA.

Evelyn enjoyed serving people and working with children. Being an educator has always been her passion.



During her 15 years of administration and leadership, Evelyn mentored numerous assistant principals and served as a role model of professionalism to all. Also, she personally received many awards and accolades. She was recognized as the Administrator of the Year-2004 by the Portsmouth Association of Educational Office Professionals and as Principal of the Year-2008 for outstanding leadership by the Portsmouth PTA Council.

For 48 years, Evelyn devoted her professional career to academic excellence with the Portsmouth Public Schools System. She was an outstanding classroom teacher, teacher trainer, and principal. Her hard work did not go unnoticed as Evelyn received some of the highest honors in education including Teacher of the Year from the Virginia Department of Education and recognition of her teaching excellence from the 44th US President Barack Obama.

Evelyn believed all children could learn and worked to ensure that the children she served had an opportunity to thrive.

Evelyn emanated class, integrity, and kindness. She was admired for her stylish wardrobe; she loved mixing prints, textures, and let's not forget her signature black and white polka-dotted dresses. In her free time, Evelyn loved arts and

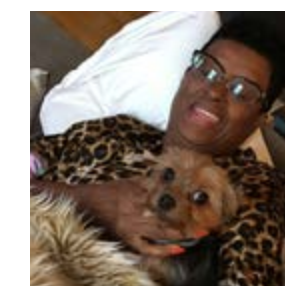
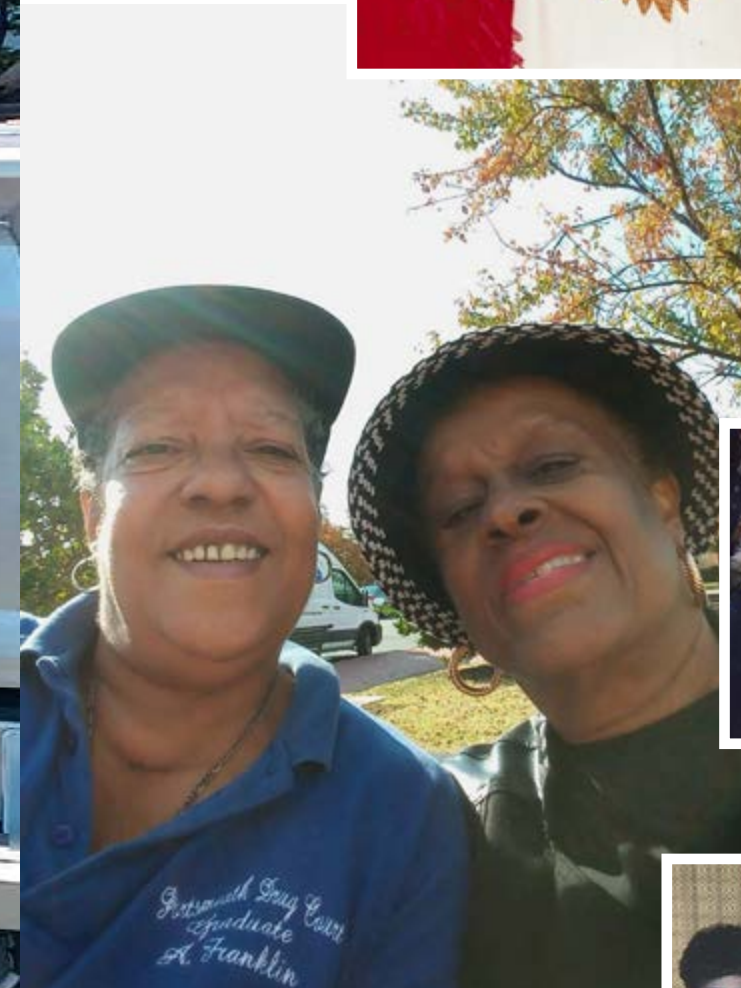
crafts, making floral arrangements, planning many family events, hosting family in her beautiful home, and gardening. She was a phenomenal baker and cook. She loved chewing gum; and her favorite pastime most of all was shop-ping.

She made her transition on Thursday, February 23, 2023, after a long battle with dementia and stroke. She was 76 years old. She is survived by Albert Lee Whitley, Sr. (husband), Albert Lee Whitley, Jr. (son), and Jonelle Leneé Leary (daughter). Five grandchildren: Antonek Tyquasia Edwards, Jordan Kalis Leary, I'lasia Margaret Cannon, Khari Isaiah Whitley, and Aji Leneé Whitley. Siblings: Nellie Clemons Green (sister); (brothers) Clyde Ellis, Jr., Charles Frederick Ellis, Steve Ellis; and a host of nieces and nephews.

We will miss her greatly. 🌹



Evelyn has inspired and motivated countless boys and girls academically.





The *Lord* is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of
my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALMS 23



The family of the late Evelyn Whitley sincerely appreciates every act of kindness shown towards Evelyn and our family. We gratefully acknowledge all acts of love, care, and comfort that were showered upon Evelyn by many.

We sincerely thank the Celestial Baptist Church family and Pastor Aaron Lawrence for their kindness and hospitality.

Thank You