



Rev. Dr. William James Simmons

March 26, 1937 - November 5, 2020

To view the service for Rev. Dr. William James Simmons live stream please use the link below:

www.facebook.com/ZandersFuneralLIVE .

A Time of Birth

William James Simmons was born in Dooley County, Georgia on March 26, 1937, the only child of Lewis and Ida Mae Simmons. The family relocated to Orlando, Florida when William was three months old.

A Time of Education

William attended Holden Street Elementary School and graduated from Jones High School June 18, 1955. While working at Morrison's Cafeteria, he received a music scholarship offer to attend college in Tennessee. William "Bill" attended Friendship Junior College in Rockhill, South Carolina where he became the first Student Body President. He graduated in 1957 and worked for one year before enrolling in Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. He completed his Bachelor's in Elementary Education and Music, and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Allen University in 1960. As a young man, he led "Sit-ins and Pray-ins" in South Carolina and Florida. The ministry of William Simmons began with an initial sermon preached in 1959 in Pineville, South Carolina under the pastorate of Reverend Nathaniel Burgess.

A Time to Wed

While at Allen University he met and married Kathryn Key. They relocated to Delray Beach, Florida.

A Time of Matriculation

Dr. Simmons' professional teaching and administrative experiences are long and varied. He was an elementary school teacher, a college instructor, a recruiter and counselor for colleges and services such as, Upward Bound, high school principal, administrator of adult education program, instructor of sociology at the University of Florida. Eager to continue his education, he matriculated at Indiana University and the University of Florida, where in 1981 he became the first PH.D. Black graduate of the Sociology Department. Dr. Simmons was an Ambassador to the Nigerian Government, serving as the Culture Coordinator for Joint Venture Company between the U.S. and Nigeria. He learned to speak and write Swahili. In 1996 he became the first African American Administrator at St. Johns River Community College. He retired as College Provost at St. Johns River State College in 2011.

A Time of Dedication and Devotion

His calling to preach after his certification to teach led him to be ordained as an itinerant Elder in 1981 in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Central Florida Conference under Bishop Samuel S. Morris. In the 11th Episcopal District, Reverend Dr. Simmons has pastored: New Zion A.M.E.C.-Raleigh, Mt. Zion A.M.E.C.-Ocala, Allen Chapel A.M.E.C.-Williston, St. Paul A.M.E.C.-Winter Garden, and St. Andrew A.M.E.C.-Jacksonville Beach, where he retired in 2012 after 31 years of pastoring.

A Time of Civic and Fraternal Involvement

Reverend Dr. Simmons was much loved in cultural affairs at the University of Florida of Florida. He served as the Director of the Institute of Black Culture,

serving on committees; Financial Aid, Intergroup Relations, UF Alumni Association and the Task Force of AIDS. He was responsible for presenting programs for Black History Month, Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday, Tribute to Malcolm X, Black Americans Conference, Black Alumni Reunion and The Afro Arts Festival. Reverend Dr. Simmons service to society encompassed many areas besides his professional and educational contributions. He served as President of the Pleasant City Economic Development Cooperation of West Palm Beach County. He was a member of Florida American Association of Teachers, The African Studies Association and the Association for Study of Negro Life and History. His local organizations included the Salvation Army, and Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM). His honors included Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities, Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society, Danforth Fellow, and nomination in "Outstanding Young Men of America". He was presently serving as President of Allen University Alumni Association, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and the Orange Park Rotary Club.

A Time of Departure

After a period of illness, Dr. Simmons transitioned from life to life eternal on Wednesday, November 4, 2020 at Haven Hospice of Clay County. He was preceded in death by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Simmons and in-laws, Reverend and Mrs. Randall Key.

A Time of Acclamation

His life was a blessed and exemplary one. He is survived by his loving wife, Kathryn Simmons; Son, Johnny Clark; Daughters: Lynn Almond, Valerie Simmons-McClain (Leon), Denise Simmons Depolis, and Rhani Simmons; Ten Grandchildren; Several Great Grandchildren; Sisters: Lucille Glover and Kathy Rogers; Brother, George Henderson; Aunts: Annie Pearl Holmes and Viola Burnam; Uncle: Abraham Simmons; Special friend, Benjamin Cain and

numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and sorrowing friends. Reverend Dr. William Simmons has served the Church Militantly and has gone on to serve the Church Triumphantly. He declared, "Through the presentation of lectures, seminars, forums, class discussions, traveling exhibitions and numerous sermons, I have facilitated the education of students, members, congregations and communities about the History and Culture of Black Peoples of the World," and I have proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ carrying out the motto; "God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Holy Spirit Our Comforter, Humankind Our Family."

Cemetery Details

Jacksonville Memory Gardens

111 Blanding Blvd.
Orange Park, FL 32073

Previous Events

Graveside Service

NOV 17. 12:00 PM (ET)

Jacksonville Memory Gardens
111 Blanding Blvd.
Orange Park, FL 32073

Tribute Wall



“ *Rev. Dr. William James Simmons*

October 22, 2023 at 05:49 PM



“ *For my friend, Bill: We shared many a laugh and conversation back 2 decades ago, and visiting with you at the Clay County campus of SJRCC was always a high point of every trip I made to Orange Park. I just now found out about your passing over, yet I still still think of you as very much alive, sweetly smiiing and making very astute observations on many diverse topics.*

Thank you for all your help, understanding and your friendship. I shall miss you.

Your "Rebel Friend", Lyndarae Martin

Lyndarae Martin, Colleague - April 20, 2021 at 01:00 PM



“ *Bible study was enlightening and showed me the power of a life lived by faith*



Linda Estrada - November 19, 2020 at 04:39 PM

GT

“ To Soror Kathryn and the Simmons Family,

Dr. Simmons blessed so many people with his faith, guidance, encouragement, and kindness. My prayers are that you will find comfort in your memories of him and in the knowledge that he made a difference in the lives of so many. May God Bless you and keep you during this time.

G. Turner - November 19, 2020 at 03:49 PM

OA

“ To the family of the Rev. Dr. William James Simmons: The Clergy Family Information Center of The African Methodist Episcopal Church express profound sympathy to the family in your loss.



May knowing that others share the loss you bear be a comfort to you now and in the days, ahead. In your quiet and solitude, as you reflect over the life and labors of your loved one, we pray that you will find comfort and peace in the still small voice of God saying, “Lo, I’m with you even until the end of the world.”

*“But for a moment the trials and crosses, weariness, troubles, and tears,
When we have passed through the valley of shadows, Then, oh,
what glory appears!”*

*On behalf of Social Action Commission Chair, Bishop Frank Madison Reid, III, African Methodist Episcopal Church;
Director/Consultant Social Action Commission, Mrs. Jacquelyn DuPont-Walker, we extend prayers and condolences to you during your season of bereavement.*

Ora L. Easley, International Administrator, Clergy Family Information Center, African Methodist Episcopal Church. www.amecfc.org

Ora L. Easley, Administrator AMEC-CFIC - November 18, 2020 at 11:20 PM

GS

“ Condolences to family of my first cousin.
Gloria Simmons



Gloria Simmons - November 17, 2020 at 10:11 AM

EM

“ *Everyday People Ministries*

To the Simmons Family: The loss of a loved one is never easy, but know we are with you through your grief. We are blessed to have met Dr. Simmons and grateful for his support of the ministry and so thankful to be a part of your lives. It is our prayer and hope that we can offer words of support and comfort and strength during this time. Your Everyday People Ministries Family



Everyday People Ministries - November 17, 2020 at 09:57 AM

EM

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Everyday People Ministries - November 17, 2020 at 09:55 AM

JM

“ I met Rev. Dr. Simmions through my former college choir director. Six years ago, after more than 45 years Mr. Peter Felder (deceased) asked me to contact Rev. Dr. Simmons and Bro. Walter Ware (deceased) to arrange for Allen Univ., traveling choir to perform in Jacksonville, FL On the Sunday following his call, Rev. Dr. Simmons fellowshiped at Philip R. Cousin AME Church. We met and that was the beginning of a lasting, spirit filled friendship. Our conversations were always a God send as he shared on life's experiences. His teachings were full, rich and more. We never know what life will bring, but I will cherish those moments spent with Rev. Dr. Bill Simmons. May your soul now rest in peace, with our Lord and Savior.

James E. McGill - November 16, 2020 at 08:51 PM

BP

“ Bettye Palmer lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. William James Simmons



Bettye Palmer - November 16, 2020 at 08:50 PM

VF

“ Vincent Franklin lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. William James Simmons



Vincent Franklin - November 16, 2020 at 05:25 PM

VF

“ Vincent Franklin lit a candle in memory of
Rev. Dr. William James Simmons



Vincent Franklin - November 16, 2020 at 05:24 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for
the family of Rev. Dr. William James Simmons.



November 16, 2020 at 02:32 PM

RG

“ To my father in the ministry thank you for all
that you have shared in imparting God's word
in my life. To the family you are in our prayers.
May God continue to bless you and keep you
in your time of lost.



Rev. Lavern Glasco
Pastor At. James AME
Lake Butler FL

Rev. Lavern Glasco - November 15, 2020 at 06:49 PM

RY

“ *Rev. Leverk Youmans lit a candle in memory of Rev. Dr. William James Simmons*



Rev. Leverk Youmans - November 12, 2020 at 01:16 PM