



Henry III and Sharon Fordham

July 18, 2021

To view the live-streamed service, click the link below:

<https://www.visitaec.org/>

HENRY J. FORDHAM, III & SHARON E. (WRIGHT) FORDHAM

Henry Joseph Fordham III, known affectionately as “Butch” to family and friends, was born to parents Henry Joseph Fordham II and Geneva Duncan on August 27, 1943 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Oakwood Academy in 1961 and was voted “Most Versatile” in his high school year book. Henry could play multiple instruments, including the piano, organ, clarinet, and trumpet, and enjoyed roller skating, bowling, and other sports. He went on to work at Monsanto in Dayton, Ohio. Henry was a remarkably responsible and dependable worker. Sometimes, in the absence of transportation, he walked 14 miles to get to work. At the age of 19, Henry married his first and only love, Sharon Elaine Wright (lovingly known as “Sherry”) on July 20, 1963. To their union they added four children: Joseph (Joey), Shawn, Donovan and Danielle.

By all accounts, Henry and Sharon first met when

they were just seven years old. His father, Henry J. Fordham II was the Pastor of Berea Chapel, the little Wright Family church in Germantown, Ohio. According to Sharon's brothers—Paul Jr., Tommy, and Brian—Henry was smitten with Sharon from the start. She was taller than Henry at that time and she was not very responsive to his overtures at first. He started to really pursue her when they were preteens at Allegheny Campmeeting. Henry was always so attentive – anticipating her needs and making every effort to meet them. Over time their affections grew as Henry courted her, often driving from Philadelphia to Germantown just to see Sharon. That's over 550 miles, with a drive time of about 9 hours.

After answering God's call to the ministry, Henry and his family moved to Huntsville, Alabama where he earned a Theology Degree from Oakwood College in 1973. He later received a Master's Degree in Theology from The Ohio State University. While completing his coursework and awaiting a call into the ministry, Henry worked various jobs to provide for his family as they moved to various cities, including working as a welder, an X-ray technician, and while living in Philadelphia he worked with the Street Brothers selling hotdogs in their vending business. In 1974, the family moved to Pine Forge Academy where Henry was offered a job as a teacher. In 1976, Luther Palmer, then president of Allegheny East Conference, extended him an offer to join the Conference. His first assignment was the Sharon Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wilmington, Delaware.

Henry followed God's call and faithfully pastored several Adventist Churches, including in successive order the Emmanuel Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church, Brinklow, MD; Berryville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berryville, VA; Berea Temple Adventist Church, Baltimore, MD. He also served as an interim pastor for Cedars of Lebanon Seventhday Adventist Church, Chesapeake VA; Capitol Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington DC; Germantown Seventh-day Adventist Church, Philadelphia, PA; Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, DC; and Trinity Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church, Newark, NJ. Henry also evangelized portions of India and several countries in Africa.

Henry's ministerial career assumed greater leadership responsibility in the early 1990s. He was elected to serve in the Allegheny East Conference as Director for Ministerial, Personal Ministries, and Religious Liberty Director. He was elected Executive Secretary in 2000 and conference President in 2012, a position he held until his death. Henry's selfless service in the cause of God spanned more than 45 years.

Sharon, "Sherry" to those who knew her best, was born to parents Paul LaMar Wright and Bessie Louise Pitts Wright on November 4, 1943 in Dayton, Ohio. She graduated from Germantown High School and

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married the love of her life, Henry Fordham, at the age of 19, in a simple wedding ceremony in which her

brother Tommy and her cousin Mark Wright were their only witnesses. Although a simple ceremony, Sharon often reflected on the special white dress that her Aunt Rudy loaned her to wear for the wedding. Aunt Rudy, a member of the famous BlendWrights singing group, loaned Sharon the white dress that was used when the trio posed for the cover of one of their famous albums, "Let Down the Ladder."

Sharon came from a musical family and she loved to sing. Sharon had a rich, soulful voice that she used often to minister in song to others. In her early years she sang with her cousins in a musical group in Germantown. She had the opportunity to meet gospel great Mahalia Jackson and the two made an instant connection. They remained friends for many years and Sharon's singing style was influenced by Mahalia. Sharon was determined to support her husband in ministry and held various jobs while he attended college and during his long tenure in ministry. Her determination was unmatched. Once she worked for a women's prison. On the second day of the job, an incarcerated individual grabbed a hold of her hair and pulled out a lock of it by the roots. Undeterred, she showed up again the next day for work. Sharon would later develop excellent secretarial skills, typing more than 100 words-per-minute, and easily gained employment in an effort to support her family while Henry was in the ministry. She was hired at the Social Security Administration (SSA) as a secretary and was eventually promoted to Budget Analyst. She retired from SSA after 30 years of exemplary service. Sharon

stepped elegantly and thoughtfully into her role as Henry's First Lady. She exemplified the values of the Proverbs 31 virtuous woman: (excerpts)

12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Sharon encouraged other Pastors' wives in Allegheny East to develop these values as they ministered alongside their husbands.

Sharon was the Queen of the castle, their home. Her role expanded as she and Henry took responsibility for raising Danielle's children after her untimely passing in August of 2003. In addition to the mission fields to which she and Henry traveled across the world, Sharon knew the importance of shepherding her children and her children's children, including Shane, India, Brook, and Kaleb, thus playing a significant role in raising their grandchildren.

One cousin shared that it was beautiful to see them interacting as a team. Sharon would always say how thankful she was that the Lord gave her Henry, often saying to others, "He's a good man."

Recently their son, Shawn, shared that when he and his parents were together, sometimes Shawn would

point to his dad and jokingly ask his mom, “Who’s that guy?” Sharon would answer, “He’s the love of my life.” Henry and Sharon had been married two days shy of 58 years.

Henry and Sharon were globally respected and much beloved. They easily forged friendships through their gracious compassion. Both, at age 77, passed away together on July 18, 2021 from smoke inhalation during a fire that consumed their home in Douglassville, Pennsylvania.

Henry and Sharon are survived by their three sons: Henry Joseph Fordham IV and spouse Tamy, and their children, Kristen Racquel Fordham, Henry Joseph Fordham V, and Shawn LaMar Fordham II; Shawn LaMar Fordham and his son Shane Robert Braxton Fordham; Donovan Troy Duncan Fordham and his children, Donovan Elijah Michael Fordham and Leila Danielle Fordham; and Danielle’s children, William Shane Fordham-Brown, India Indrani Fordham-Brown, Taylor Brooke Fordham-Brown, and Kaleb Israel Michael Marshall.

They are also survived by their

HENRY J. FORDHAM III AND SHARON E. (WRIGHT) FORDHAM 7
great-grandchildren: Journey Noelle Jefferson, Elijah Monroe Fordham-Wilson, and Alaina Danielle Fordham; Sharon’s siblings Paul LaMar Wright Jr. and spouse Linda; Thomas Milton Wright, and spouse Sheila; Brian DeWitt Wright, and spouse Tracy. Sherry’s first cousins, Sandra Brooks, William Wright Jr., Henry Wright; and Henry’s first cousins, Audrey Fordham Booker, Walter

Fordham Jr., Marialyce Fordham and Carole Wagner Matthews. And many other cousins, nieces, and nephews who will dearly miss their Aunt Sherry and Uncle Butch. Countless friends, colleagues and constituents from around the world will also miss them dearly and have been deeply impacted by their passing.

Henry and Sharon were preceded in death by his parents, Henry Joseph Fordham II and Geneva Duncan Fordham; her parents Paul LaMar Wright and Bessie Louise Pitts Wright; his sisters, Zella Fordham Street and Kathleen Fordham, and their daughter Danielle Genee Fordham Brown-Marshall.

If we were to consider Butch and Sherry's views of death, and the words with which they comforted grieving congregants and by which they comforted themselves following the devastating loss of Danielle—their "Baby Girl," these Bible verses surely sustained their hope:

I Thessalonians 4:13, 16, & 17

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 16 For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And these:

Isaiah 25: 8 & 9

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. 9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

These powerful words from God’s Word gave them strength for each new day and “bright hope for tomorrow.”

One day we will sing “Lo, This Is Our God” as we see Him coming in the clouds. It will be glorious to see Jesus, and it will give us unspeakable joy to see Henry and Sharon again.

Cemetery Details

Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens

2150 Mount View Rd,
Marriottsville, MD 21104

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 8. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Martin's West
6817 Dogwood Road
Baltimore, MD 21244

Service

AUG 8. 10:30 AM (ET)

Martin's West
6817 Dogwood Road
Baltimore, MD 21244
<http://www.martinscaterers.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *View and Download the Funeral Program*

Marshall-March Funeral Homes - August 08, 2021 at 11:14 AM



“ *Marshall-March Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Henry III and Sharon Fordham*



Marshall-March Funeral Homes - August 08, 2021 at 11:14 AM



“ *Henry III and Sharon Fordham*

October 23, 2023 at 08:15 AM



“ *We would like to extend our condolences to the family. Continue to rely on God and know that he hears your prayers, because he cares for you. Truly sorry for your loss.*

Evans family - August 10, 2021 at 04:21 AM



“ We the March Family and Marshall-March Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

Marshall-March Funeral Homes - August 04, 2021 at 02:49 PM

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“ *Marta, Christian, Michaela & John-Michael purchased the Blessed Heart for the family of Henry III and Sharon Fordham.*



Marta, Christian, Michaela & John-Michael - August 04, 2021 at 01:45 PM