

*"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 3:14)*

***CELEBRATING THE ABUNDANT LIFE OF
Geneva A. Bailey***



*SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2012 11:00 AM
SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH
1824 NORTH ELEVENTH STREET
KANSAS CITY, KS
OFFICIANT, REV. TONY CARTER, JR.*

An Abundant Life

OCTOBER 24, 1925 - MARCH 25, 2012

Geneva pumped the swing harder. She was the oldest of seven children born to Joe and Willie Stephens. But, while most 12-year-olds celebrated adolescence, she grieved her mother's death. If only the swing could carry her beyond reality. Instead, sorrowful thoughts of her past imprisoned her. Just three years earlier, her family fled their home in Conway, Arkansas, boarded a train westward and settled in Kansas City, Kansas. Now, this motherless child must comfort and nurture her younger brothers and sisters: Arnett, Anna Dean, Benjamin, Billy Jean, Betty Jean and Joyce. It was April 1938, and she sang "Higher Ground" to soothe the pain.

*I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."*

On June 5, 1938, she moved toward those higher grounds. During a revival, she committed her life to Jesus and adopted the Eighth Street Baptist Church for her spiritual family. But, a few months later, her family moved to the Armstrong District in Kansas City and she attended Tabernacle Baptist Church while under Watch Care. At Tabernacle she taught the intermediates in Sunday School and began developing a God-given gift.

Despite her school work and her night job, her faithfulness to church never waned. In 1944, she graduated from Sumner High School but desired more wisdom and understanding. Therefore, she continued to juggle work and studies until she graduated from the Kansas City Community College in 1946. Later, she also would graduate from Cosmetology School and pass the State Licensing Boards. In June 1947, she traveled to Leavenworth, Kansas to receive the first-place award for the first Kaw Valley District Oratorical Contest. Today, the state and national conventions have annual competitions patterned from this contest. The call to higher ground beckoned:

*My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My prayer, my aim is higher ground.*

She answered the call July 6, 1947, wed Charles Buford Bailey and in 1948, gave birth to Charles Arnett. Around the same time, her husband experienced a spiritual awakening and announced his call to the ministry. In 1954, after the birth of their second child, Nozella Lee, her husband accepted the pastorship at the Salem Baptist Church. Geneva recognized another call to higher ground:

*I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.*

She enrolled in the Central Baptist Theological Seminary and in 1958, the Baileys welcomed W. Timothy. With typewriter perched on the kitchen table, a preschooler underfoot and an infant in arms, she slowly pressed toward her goal and in 1960, she received her Bachelor of Theology degree.

Geneva intensified her efforts to educate her children and others in the wisdom and knowledge of God. She taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School at Salem and other local churches. God added the last olive shoot, Gelaine Rue, in 1963. Geneva continued looking upward:

*I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray, 'til heaven I've found,
"Lord, lead me on to higher ground."*

In obedience to Jesus' Great Commission to teach all nations, Mrs. Bailey opened a Week-Day Church School that operated from 1963 until 1968. She also taught the Baptist Training Union course in the Kaw Valley District Congress for nine years and in 1970, she became Dean of Christian Education for Salem.

Her burden to meet the educational needs of the community prompted her return to school while substitute teaching. In 1973 she graduated *summa cum laude* from Park College and in 1987 she received her Master of Science degree from Kansas State University. She taught fifth and sixth grade in the KCK school district for 14 years until her retirement in 1987. She then continued to volunteer in adult education programs that help students read and earn their GED.

Throughout her life, her passion was helping others. In her family, she was the matriarch (Jenny, Sister, Mama, Grandma, Aunt Geneva), selflessly investing physically and spiritually in the lives of her husband, siblings, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews. In the Church she was the director of Christian Education, touching many lives through the young adult Sunday School class, vacation Bible school, week-day church school, junior laymen, mission, district, state and national conventions, and excursions to citywide Christian seminars. In the community she was the teacher, student, speaker, prayer warrior, counselor and cook, tirelessly taking meals to the sick and shut in. She taught many to read their books and "the Book". She was quiet, but powerful, patient, yet progressive. When she spoke, everyone listened.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Rev. C.B. Bailey; parents Joseph Aaron and Willie Fair Stephens; brother Arnett Willie Stephens; sisters Lurlee Anna Dean Campbell and Betty Jean Davis. She leaves to cherish her memory: children Charles A. Bailey of Seattle, WA, Nozella L. (David) Brown of Kansas City, KS, W. Timothy (Andrea) Bailey of Kansas City, KS, Gelaine R. (Jesse Jr.) Williams of Stony Point, NY; grandchildren Malisa (Derrick) Johnson, Chrishonda Brown, Timothy Jr. (Traci) Bailey, Catrina Brown, Alexander Bailey, Jesse Williams III; great-grandchildren Ericka and Darius Johnson, Chace Bailey; sisters Billy Jean Patton, Joyce (Othelious) Johnson, brother Benjamin Roy (Susan) Stephens, a host of other relatives, friends, Salemites, and a myriad of lives she eternally impacted.

(Lovingly composed by Nozella L. Brown)