



Rev. Dr. Gwyndolyn Allen

June 1, 1938 - September 21, 2025

In Short Form – This was my Life

I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, the third child to Pansy L. Ervin and Jessie Kemp who preceded me in death. My early education was acquired in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I graduated from Girls High in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and delivered the Valedictorian message for my graduating class. I continued my education at New Jersey State College earning a B.S. in Accounting; a Master's in Biblical and Human Studies from Lincoln University; a Doctor of Ministry from Lancaster Seminary; and a Doctor in Psychotherapy from Bowie State College.

In my early years, I had no use for the church and had a very difficult time believing in God. So I was in my early thirties before I was saved and allowed the Lord to be head of my life. I became a faithful member of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. My life was totally changed as I began to work in the church as a youth leader. I was called to preach while working with the youth. I took a while but eventually I answered the call on my life. God then blessed me to be ordained as an Itinerant Elder in the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the AME Church.

I worked in various secular jobs, and before I became full time pastor, I worked for the Governor of Pennsylvania (Governor Shapp). I was a Budget

Analyst, managing budget of over seventy-five million dollars. I pastored for over thirty-eight years before I retired from the pastorate. For three and a half years, I pastored three churches at one time. Two were in the mountains of Pennsylvania, (Bethel – Mercersburg, Bethel – Cito, and Ebenezer – Middletown). The first church was 110 miles from the second, the only time I missed a Sunday was when the weather was too severe to travel over mountains.

In addition to pastoring these three churches, I was given the opportunity to Pastor Ruffin Nicholas, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Bethel – Willow Grove, Pennsylvania and Mt. Sinai A.M.E. Church, Edgemont, Pennsylvania, where I served until the AME Church said it was time for me to rest from my labors. In addition, I served as Chaplin for the Tri-County Prison Systems (Dauphin, Cumberland and Perry Counties). I served as the Executive Director of Self Help Inc AME Church, First Episcopal District.

I served as the first connectional secretary/treasurer of Women in Ministry (WIM) of the A. M.E. Church. I also ran for secretary/treasurer of the Department of Mission at the 1992 General Conference. My love for missions led me to be involved with mission work in Africa. I taught for eight years, one semester each year in a Girls School in Ghana, West Africa.

I was Dean of Students and as Associate Professor of Counseling and Church Polity at Lancaster Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In addition, I served as the Dean of the Harrisburg District Ministerial Institute (Philadelphia Conference A.M.E. Church) for 21 years. My love for God and the A.M.E. Church was the driving force which caused me to give my gifts and talents wherever they could be used for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom. I used my God given gifts any place or in any way that would help ease the burdens of others.

My son, James H. Simmons III; my brother, Douglas Lee; my granddaughter, Laura L. Moore; goddaughter, Nadine Duffin; and Jahmair Simmons preceded me in death.

I thank God for those left living: my son, H. Nathaniel Swaringen Jr. of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; my grandchildren, H. Nathaniel Swaringen III, Johnathan-Michael, Sayvon and Tahila Shai Simmons, Dakota Swaringen, Dondre Robinson and Laurette Dunstan; my great-granddaughter, Tiezamiera Swaringen, all of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; my sisters, Lonnie Brewer of Detroit, Michigan, and Dyanne Garner of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; my daughters, Chyrel Simmons, Karen Swaringen, Karen Jenkins, all of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Patricia Griffin of Atlanta, Georgia; my nieces, Robin Robinson (James) of State College, Pennsylvania and Nikki Brewer; my nephews, James A. Brewer (Jenny) of Detroit, Michigan, and Jerry Garner (Kelly); my godson, Edward Harbison (Rogerlee); my many great-nieces and nephews, cousins, Church Family and Florida Friends.

Cemetery Details

Paxtang Cemetery.

490 North Paxtang Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Previous Events

Viewing

OCT 3. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Mt. Sinai A.M.E. Church
2334 Highland Street
Harrisburg, PA

Viewing

OCT 4. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethel Village A.M.E. Church
1721 N. 5th Street
Harrisburg, PA

Service

OCT 4. 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethel Village A.M.E. Church
1721 N. 5th Street
Harrisburg, PA

Tribute Wall

RL

“ To Rev Allen’s Family,
This wonderful lady married me, Regina Marks-Lee and my husband, James Lee on 9/21/1996. I got to know her well during her time at Bethel Mercersburg. She was very special to me and am so sorry I am just finding out she passed. My thoughts are with you and yours.

Regina Marks- Lee - October 07, 2025 at 09:02 PM

KP

“ Rev. Allen, a great lady, who will be remembered among other things but especially by me for her infectious smile and laughter. She was a ray of light.

Karen Porter



Karen Porter - September 29, 2025 at 06:26 PM

NR

“ Nikki Robinson purchased the Simply Elegant Sp
athiphyllum for the family of Rev. Dr. Gwyndolyn Allen.



Nikki Robinson - September 29, 2025 at 12:09 PM