Celebrating
THE LIFE, LEGACY, AND SPIRIT
OF
The Honorable
Emma I. Darnell, J. D.
MARCH 1, 1935 - MAY 5, 2019
“THE LORD IS MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION
WHOM SHALL I FEAR?
THE LORD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY LIFE OF WHOM
SHALL I BE AFRAID?”
Psalms 27:1

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2019
11:00 A.M.
Jackson Memorial Baptist Church
534 Fairburn Road, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30331

The Reverend Dr. Gregory A. Sutton
Senior Pastor
Emma Ione Darnell
SERVANT • LEADER • TRAILBLAZER

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”

For Emma Ione Darnell, the answer to that question defined her life’s work and mission, Emma devoted her professional and personal endeavors to ongoing efforts to improve the lives of those she encountered.

Her journey began in her beloved hometown of Atlanta, Georgia on March 1, 1935 as the daughter of Dr. Milner L. Darnell, a Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) pastor and eventual President and Dean of the Phillips CME School of Theology, and Mrs. Harriett G. Darnell, the Director of Ours Senior Center. A life of commitment to others was instilled in Emma Darnell at an early age by her loving parents who demonstrated that Christian obligation and set high moral examples that she would follow for the next eight decades of her life. She was preceded in death by her parents and sister Endie Louise.

Emma’s studies in the public schools of Tyler, Texas, led her to a life of service as a student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she became a member of the Alpha Beta Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Her quest for knowledge led her to several other notable institutions of higher learning.

Upon graduation from Fisk and while serving as National Director for Citizen Action for Church Women United, Inc., she earned a Master of Arts degree from Teachers College at Columbia University in New York, and was selected for membership in Pi Lambda Theta, the national honor society for educators. Emma soon after headed to the Howard University School of Law, earning a Juris Doctor degree in 1962. At Howard, she assumed the mantle of leadership, serving on the Student Bar Association, Board of Governors and was the senior class secretary.
Emma returned to her hometown of Atlanta to teach psychology at Atlanta University and Morris Brown College, where she also served as advisor to Delta Sigma Theta’s Gamma Zeta Chapter. Like many young people of the civil rights era, the quest for social justice became a passionate pursuit, which led to her working as an activist on behalf of the marginalized in society. Emma's work as Executive Director of Equal Opportunity of Atlanta, Inc., focused on improving citizens' lives by advancing anti-poverty initiatives.

Known for her astute mind and strong leadership abilities, Emma was appointed the first woman to head a department in the City of Atlanta as Commissioner of Administrative Services. A professional in the field of Public Administration, she authored Atlanta's Minority Participation Plan including the minority contractor utilization strategy for the expansion of Atlanta's airport. She also served as Special Assistant to the Mayor for Intergovernmental Affairs and Chair of the Grant Review Board. Ms. Darnell's concerns about social justice played a huge role in her position in the Atlanta Regional Office of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

This life of activism led to the pursuit of civil rights and social justice in another public service role, as a Fulton County Commissioner. In a special election in 1992, Emma Darnell was elected to the Fulton County Board of Commissioners where she would serve for 27 years. Commissioner Darnell was highly respected because of her steadfast representation and concern for her community. She was a tireless advocate of communities in need in metro Atlanta and fought for causes as varied as environmental justice and efforts to combat homelessness. Leading with a heart of compassion and a determined spirit, Commissioner Darnell fought for and brought millions of dollars into her district for projects and programs that raised the quality of life for her constituents, Fulton County and the region at large. To close the gap on preventative illness among seniors, she secured funding for new services at Grady Memorial Hospital. Grady's oversight board - the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority - later named its new geriatrics unit, the Emma I. Darnell Geriatrics Center at Grady Hospital, in 2003.

Perhaps her greatest public advocacy was done on behalf of the region's seniors. Emma's efforts contributed to the creation of four senior multipurpose facilities that demonstrate the County's commitment to this population. Among these facilities is the Harriett G. Darnell Multipurpose Facility, which bears the name of the Commissioner's late mother who volunteered and fought for the dignity and self-sufficiency of area seniors. Together, with the community, Commissioner Darnell provided leadership in the development and construction of the numerous Fulton County facilities including the Northwest Regional Library at Scotts Crossing, Adamsville Regional Health Center, South Fulton Library, Trammell Crow Park, Southwest Arts Center, the Aviation Community Cultural Center and Fulton County Fire Stations #11 and #23.

In addition to her fierce commitment to equity in government for the “least of these,” Commissioner Darnell was also a woman of deep, abiding faith—a product of the parsonage of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. Citing her work in government as a “public moralist,” in June 2000, she was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree, honoris causa by the Board of Trustees of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta.

Commissioner Darnell was an active member and trustee at the West Mitchell Street CME Church of Atlanta, Leadership Atlanta – Class of 1971, and Church Women United. Previous volunteer service includes the Board of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change where she participated in the planning, design and construction of the Center, Board of Trustees of Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, Atlanta Branch of the NAACP, Butler Street YMCA, Phyllis Wheatley YWCA and the Judicial Council of the General Conference of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, serving eight electoral terms as board member and as the first female president of the body, 1990-98.

Emma was featured on the cover of Jet magazine and recognized as one of the “10 Most Outstanding Women in the U.S.” by Black Enterprise. Filmmaker Henry Hampton highlighted her groundbreaking minority business development work in his award winning, “Eyes on the Prize” documentary.

Emma Darnell’s disciplined life of faith, leadership and service ended on May 5, 2019, but her legacy lives on in the lives of the many people she touched along the way. She will be deeply missed by her cherished friends Evelyn D. Brown, Andrea L. Boone and Corey Adams as well as a host of colleagues, family members and friends.
CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF EMMA IONE DARNELL, J.D.

Order of Service

Officiating
The Reverend Dr. Gregory A. Sutton
Senior Pastor, Jackson Memorial Baptist Church

The Reverend Dr. Lisa Allen-McLaurin
Senior Pastor, West Mitchell Street CME Church

Prelude

Processional “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name”
Minister Jarvis R. Wilson
Minister of Music

Greetings

Invocation

Hymn “Blessed Assurance” Fanny Crosby/Phoebe Knapp

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 The Reverend Pansy Washington
Senior Pastor, Holsey Temple CME Church

Psalter Psalm 27 The Reverend Dr. Paul Brown
President-Dean, Phillips School of Theology
Interdenominational Theological Center

Epistle Romans 8:28-39 The Reverend Dr. Frederick Braddock
Presiding Elder
Elberton/Gainesville District CME Church

Gospel John 14:1-6 The Reverend Dr. Albert Lee
Senior Pastor, College Park CME Church

Musical Selection

Words of Comfort

The Reverend T. Renée Crutcher

The Reverend Jasper W. Williams, Jr.
Senior Pastor, Salem Bible Church
Prelude
Processional “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name”
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Tributes
The Honorable Robb Pitts
Chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners

The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms
60th Mayor of Atlanta

The Honorable Sam Massell
53rd Mayor of Atlanta

The Honorable William C. Campbell
57th Mayor of Atlanta

Musical Selection
Mr. Henry Porter

Tributes
The Honorable Sharon Beasley-Teague
65th District, Georgia House of Representatives

Mrs. Sandra Horton, Southern Regional Director
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated

Mr. Walter Metze
Business & Civic Leader

Bishop Othal H. Lakey
Retired Bishop, CME Church

Video Tribute

Choir Selection “Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand”
Jennie B. Wilson/Franklin L. Eiland

Choir Selection “Order My Steps”
Glenn Burleigh

Eulogy
Bishop Thomas L. Brown, Sr.
Presiding Bishop, Sixth Episcopal District, CME Church

Acknowledgements
Reverend Gail Sutton
First Lady, Jackson Memorial Baptist Church

Recessional Medley of Hymns
Arr. Wilson
Prelude
Processional "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"
Minister Jarvis R. Wilson
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Senior Pastor, Salem Bible Church

Sisters Endie Louise and Emma Ione

Aretha Franklin
Muhammad Ali

Sisters Endie Louise and Emma Ione
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We, the family and friends of Emma I. Darnell, praise God for the life she lived. We will be forever grateful to God for giving us faithful friends during this time. Your expressions of kindness and thoughtfulness are sources of strength and consolation.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Fulton County Government, West Mitchell Street CME Church and the Jackson Memorial Baptist Church. We thank you for being amazing friends and helping us celebrate the extraordinary life of Emma I Darnell. May the good Lord richly bless each and every one of you.

PALLBEARERS
Corey Adams
Rick Blalock
Dwight Ferrell
Stefan Gresham
Robert Kelly, Esq.
Steven D. Lee
John D. Reed, Jr.
Antavius Weems, Esq.

HONORARY PALLBEARERS
The Fulton County Board of Commissioners
Staff of Harriett G. Darnell Senior Multipurpose Facility

HONORARY FLOWER BEARERS
The Stewardesses of West Mitchell CME Church
The Missionaries of West Mitchell CME Church
Fulton County Council on Aging
Pi Lambda Theta Honor Society
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated
Church Women United
Friends of Darnell, Incorporated

FLOWER BEARERS
June Barnes
The Honorable Sharon Beasley -Teague
Olympia Billings
The Honorable Andrea L. Boone
Carolyn Brown
Evelyn D. Brown
Jan Bryson
Sheryl Ebony Hicks
Joy Jackson
Carrie Clements Johnson
Edith Ladipo
The Honorable Carolyn Long Banks
Vanessa Manley
The Honorable Marie Metze
Parthenia Mitchell
Zaneta Oliver
Ruth Hilson Pace
Mary Parker
Bobbie Powell
Fran Phillips-Calhoun
Rosalynd Rawls
Toni Roberts
Mary Sherrill
Jean Wardlaw

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INTERMENT
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2019
11:00 A.M.
South View Cemetery
1990 Jonesboro Rd SE
Atlanta, GA 30315

REPAST
HARRIETT G. DARNELL
MULTIPOPOSITE FACILITY
677 Fairburn Rd NW
Atlanta, GA 30331

Final Arrangements Entrusted To:
Willie A. Watkins Funeral Home
1003 Ralph David Abernathy
Atlanta, Georgia 30331
Prelude

Processional “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name”

Minister Jarvis R. Wilson
Minister of Music

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“THE WOODS ARE LOVELY, DARK AND DEEP,
BUT I HAVE PROMISES TO KEEP,
AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP,
AND MILES TO GO BEFORE I SLEEP.”

-ROBERT FROST