

Mrs. Catherine Spearman Ferrell

Mrs. Catherine Spearman Ferrell (108 years old) was born Oct 10, 1912. She is an inspiration to her family, her friends, and to all who meet her. She is noted for her love and faith in God; encouraging words, advocate for education, and for her warm smile. She was born in Warsaw, North Carolina, and graduated from Frederick Douglas High School in 1931 as valedictorian of her class. She also played on the school's basketball team. Her mother, Callie Spearman, only completed the third grade; but instilled in her children (Catherine and Mary) the importance of going to school and getting an education.

Catherine was involved in the church at a very early age, as her mother made sure that she was in Sunday School every Sunday. Her mother began each morning with prayer on her knees, and ended every night with prayer on her knees, and she led her children to do the same. Catherine has continued this tradition all of her life, beginning every morning with a prayer on her knees at her bed, and ending every night with a prayer on her knees. Upon moving to Durham, NC, she made sure that she did not take a job that required her to work on Sunday, as she wanted to be involved in Church.

Catherine aspired to be a teacher, but did not have the funds or resources to attend college. However, she devoted her life to working with children, and encouraging and supporting them to get an education. However, she devoted her life to being an official teacher by home teaching her children, family and other community children that were in her care until they were school age. She says, "I made sure that all her children were well prepared and ready for school." She also used her love of teaching and taught Sunday school class for most of her life.

Even in her later life she has volunteered and given motivational speeches to young children and students at several Durham Public Schools, and to a graduate class at North Carolina Central University, and to other community organizations. Mrs. Ferrell loves children, and encourages all to "love God and put your trust in God." She encourages children to do their best, to get an education, to attend and participate in church, and love, honor and listen to their mother. Her philosophy is that "I am here because God is not through with me yet." She often says "If I could complete high school under the conditions that I came through such as reading by the fireplace or lantern, walking or riding a horse and buggy to school, using old second hand-books, etc., children today should at least complete high school and strive to get the best education that they can. There are so many opportunities that children can take advantage of now that were not available during my time." She encourages children to stay in school, learn all they can, and to always to do the BEST that they can.

Catherine Ferrell has been very active in her church and community. She is currently a member of Mt. Gilead Baptist church. Before Covid, she attended Sunday School and Church every Sunday. She now listens and views Church via Zoom on the computer every Sunday, and also now all during the week, as she enjoys listening/viewing church services throughout the community. She says computer and phone technology is really a blessing, as it keeps us connected.

At church, she has served as Sunday school teacher, President of the Sr. Missionary Department, church van driver, chairperson of Senior Citizens, Chairperson of Van Ministry, Chairperson of church District, Director of Baptist Training Union, Co-Chairperson of the Building Fund, Youth Choir leader and served on many other committees. She has supported the Mt. Gilead Scholarship program since its inception in the 70's, and donated \$1,000 in 1995 in memory of her deceased children, Margaret Smith, and David Ferrell, Sr. There is

now a \$10,000 Scholarship in her honor, which assists college students. She has received many honors from the church and community.

Prior to her membership at Mt. Gilead Church, she lived in the East End community and was active member of Orange Grove Baptist Church, where she worked with the youth. She remembers the many church children programs that she helped lead, and the many youth gatherings in her yard, serving kool aid and cookies. While residing in the East End community, she was instrumental in working with the Lamplighters Club which was responsible for getting street lights, and bus service to that community. Once she moved to City, and not being a driver, she felt that she needed to join a church where she could walk to church, as she is strong believer in attending Sunday School/Church each Sunday.

Later in life, she learned to drive, use the computer, and even at the age of 100 she took a trip to the Holy Land. She cherishes visiting the many buildings, and biblical historical places there. She was also re-baptized in the Jordan River.

In the community, she is a long time member of the National Council of Negro Women, AARP, Durham Seniors Traveling Group, lifetime member of Elks organization. Prior to Covid, she exercised twice a week at the Durham Senior Center and the Durham C.A.A.R.E center. She supports many of the local agencies in Durham such as Urban Ministries, Meals On Wheels and Rescue Mission. She believes that people need a helping hand, just as many have given her and her family a helping hand along the way.

She has a strong faith in God, and attributes her long life to God's grace, and she says, "God is keeping me here because HE MUST STILL HAVE SOMETHING FOR ME TO DO". She begins each day with prayer ON HER KNEES or as far down as she can go, and she ends each day with prayer ON HER KNEES as far down as she can now go. She says that she loves everybody, and that she does not let things worry her. When obstacles come, she says, "I do what I can and I turn it over to the Lord".

Mrs. Ferrell has a host of children, grandchildren, great grands, and great great-grands. She loves family and friends.