

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
DEACONESS

Arndra Lisa McDowell
"Lee-Lee"

Sunrise
November 12, 1964

Sunset
August 10, 2026



CELEBRATION OF LIFE AND LEGACY
Sunday, August 30, 2026 - 5:00 p.m.

Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church
163 Autumn Street, Passaic, New Jersey

Reflections Of Life

Deaconess Arndra Lisa McDowell, affectionately known as Lisa and lovingly called “Lee Lee” by her immediate family, was born November 12, 1964, to the late Rev. Dr. W. Louis McDowell and Sanella McDowell. Born and raised in Passaic, New Jersey, Lisa grew up alongside her beloved younger sister, Rev. Dr. Pamela Denise McDowell-Sallie. Faith, family, and church remained at the center of her life.

Lisa was educated in the Passaic Public Schools and graduated with the Class of 1982. Her Christian foundation was established at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Passaic, where she accepted Jesus Christ and was baptized at an early age. As a preacher’s child, Lisa was raised in the church—Sunday School, youth ministry, choir, worship, and countless hours serving alongside her family. Church was not simply somewhere Lisa went; church was part of who she was.

Growing up on Linden Street also gave Lisa treasured memories of family, friends, laughter, and the simple joys of life. Saturdays often meant shopping with her mother, Sanella, followed by cooking and preparing for Sunday. Summers included time in Hawkinsville, Georgia, with her grandparents, Missie Lou and Curtis “Wee” McDowell, and visits to Pittsburgh with her grandmother, Maude Esther Burnham. Those experiences gave Lisa a lifelong appreciation for family, tradition, and remembering where she came from.

Lisa’s greatest joy was being the mother of her two beautiful children, Dr. Tamarra Denise McDowell, affectionately called “Tee Tee,” and Theodore “Teddy” Hill, Jr. They were her heart and two of the greatest blessings of her life. She celebrated their accomplishments proudly, but her love for them went far beyond anything they achieved. She loved them simply because they were her children.

Lisa genuinely enjoyed being their mother. Together they traveled the world, celebrated milestones, shared adventures, laughed, ate good food, and created memories that neither time nor death can take away. When they were apart, Lisa stayed connected through regular phone calls and FaceTime. No matter how grown or accomplished they became, Tee Tee and Teddy were still her babies.

And then there was that familiar Lisa expression: “I did the best I can.” The way she said it, usually at just the right moment, could have the family laughing for days. It became one of those uniquely Lisa expressions that those who knew and loved her will never forget.

That same fierce love extended to her little sister. No matter how grown Pamela became, she was still Lisa’s little sister. Being the big sister was a role Lisa took seriously. She was protective, loyal, and always concerned about those she loved. Lisa could be quiet, but she was never timid. She could be reserved, but she was never afraid to speak her mind. When it came to her family, her church, or something she believed in, Lisa would tell you exactly where she stood. She had a strong personality, but an even bigger heart.

In 1984, when her father, Rev. Dr. W. Louis McDowell, founded Mt. Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, Lisa was there from the beginning. She was not simply the pastor’s daughter; she became a faithful servant in her own right. Over the years, Deaconess McDowell served through the Deaconess Ministry, as church secretary, Pastor’s Circle, Women’s Ministry, and on numerous church and pastoral anniversary celebrations. Mt. Pilgrim was her church family, and she took great pride in the ministry and legacy her parents sacrificed to build.

The passing of her beloved parents left a tremendous void in Lisa’s life. Yet she knew the God her father had preached about for so many years. Lisa learned that grief and faith could occupy the same space—that she could miss her parents deeply and still trust God; shed tears and still believe, and grieve what had been lost while finding strength to keep living.

Her sister became an important part of that journey. Lisa and Pamela shared history, family traditions, laughter, travel, shopping, and the unique bond of being the daughters of W. Louis and Sanella McDowell. Following their father's passing and the pastoral transition to her sister, Lisa remained committed to Mt. Pilgrim and became a trusted confidante to Pastor Pamela as they worked to preserve their parents' legacy while carrying the ministry forward.

God also surrounded Lisa with family and friends who helped bring laughter and joy into her life following tremendous loss. Lisa never stopped missing her parents, but she discovered that moving forward did not mean forgetting. Life could hold grief and gratitude, tears and laughter, old memories and new experiences all at once. And through it all, Lisa kept going.

Lisa enjoyed watching her "stories," listening to gospel music, traveling, spending time with family and, of course, shopping. Cato and Belk were among her favorite stops, and even during the pandemic there always seemed to be a package arriving at the house. She treasured family traditions, especially returning to Hawkinsville and gathering at the family ranch for Thanksgiving. For Lisa, traditions represented connection, history, love, and home.

Lisa faithfully served Passaic County for more than 27 years, developing meaningful relationships with colleagues, community leaders, and county commissioners. Her commitment to service also extended to the Philo Affiliate of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., Newark Alumnae Chapter, where she served as Vice President. In 2020, Lisa was honored as Woman of the Year during Women's History Month in recognition of her leadership, service, and commitment to others.

Lisa's life carried many titles daughter, mother, sister, aunt, cousin, friend, Deaconess, servant, colleague, and leader but her greatest legacy cannot be captured by titles alone.

Her legacy lives in the children she loved so deeply the little sister she protected so fiercely, the church she faithfully served, the community where she spent decades working and giving, the friendships that brought laughter into her life, and the family traditions she refused to let disappear.

Perhaps one of the greatest reflections of Lisa's life is simply this: Lisa loved deeply. If she loved you, she protected you. If she believed in something, she stood for it. If something needed to be said, eventually Lisa was going to say it. And if her family needed her, Lisa was going to be there.

Deaconess Arndra Lisa McDowell leaves to cherish her memory her beloved children, Dr. Tamarra Denise McDowell of Hackensack, New Jersey, and Theodore Hill, Jr. of Wilmington, Delaware; her beloved and only sister, Rev. Dr. Pamela D. McDowell-Sallie; devoted brother-in-law, Deacon Barry C. Sallie, affectionately known as "Uncle B"; and her adored niece, Nala Sanella Sallie, all of West Orange, New Jersey.

She also leaves a loving family circle, including her cherished aunts, Mary Ware and Betty Simmons of Atlanta, Georgia; chosen sisters, Rita L. Sallie and Mary Ann Webb; beloved cousins, Donna Hansford (Johnny), Java Parrish (Steve), and Janet Simmons; Mary Lue Hansford, Troy "Munch," Terence (Tay), Alfonso, Leon, Larue (Kent), Alvia, Mary Ann Washington, and many cherished cousins and extended family members.

Lisa was also blessed with treasured friendships that stood the test of time, including her very best friend since childhood, Vanessa Kendricks Robinson, and Sonji Brown, whose relationship with Lisa began as family and grew into an enduring bond of sisterhood and friendship. She also leaves her beloved Mt. Pilgrim Church family, colleagues, and many dear friends who will forever cherish her memory.

Although her earthly journey has ended, the life she lived, the love she gave, and the legacy she helped build will continue to speak for generations.

Order of Service

Officiating
Rev. Staci E. Williams, Pastor
Garden of Prayer Church, Pemberton, NJ

ProcessionalThe Family

Opening Hymn“Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand”

Scripture Readings

Old TestamentRev. Julius B. Hargett, Sr., Pastor
Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Passaic, NJ

New TestamentRev. Thurselle C. Williams, Senior Pastor
New Hope Baptist Church, East Orange, NJ

Prayer of ComfortRev. Natasha C. Rouse, Senior Pastor
St. Mark A.M.E. Church, East Orange, NJ

Musical SelectionMt. Pilgrim Combined Choir

Words of ComfortTrustee Sonya Williams
Deaconess Donna Moreno, Co-Leader
Rev. Mable V. Grier, Associate Pastor
Deacon Michael E. Veal, Chairman

Musical Selection

Words of ComfortJohn Currie, Chairman
Passaic County Democratic Committee

Cassandra “Sandi” Lazarro, Commissioner Director
Passaic County Board of County Commissioners

Louis E. Imhof III, Clerk to the Board
Passaic County

Hector C. Lora, Mayor
City of Passaic NJ

Words of ComfortRev. Craig N. Johnson, Senior Pastor
First Park Baptist Church, Plainfield, NJ

Rev. N. Princess Jones-Curry, Pastor
Koinonia and Christian Ministries, Paterson, NJ

Rev. Andre Milteer, Pastor
Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Newark, NJ
Northeast Region Vice President, NBC, USA, Inc.
Moderator, United Missionary Baptist Convention of NJ, Inc.

Musical Selection

Acknowledgements & ResolutionsReeshemah Sams, Administrative Assistant

Reflections of LifeRev. Ashley C. Lipscomb, Ministerial Staff

Family ExpressionsNala S. Sallie, Niece
Tamarra D. McDowell, Daughter
Rev. Dr. Pamela D. McDowell-Sallie, Sister
Theodore Hill, Jr., Son

EulogyRev. Dr. Kenneth D.R. Clayton, Senior Pastor
St. Luke Baptist Church, Paterson, NJ

Interment

Monday, August 31, 2026 - 11am
East Ridgelawn Cemetery
255 Main Avenue
Clifton, New Jersey





*"Your love will forever be a part of who we are.
Until we meet again, Mom, you will always be in our hearts."*



Acknowledgment

The family wishes to thank all of you for your prayers, messages of comfort and the many other acts of kindness shown during our hour of bereavement. May God continue to bless you in a very special way.

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