

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

JOAN ELSA SIRLEAF

September 6, 1963 – October 1, 2026

Saturday, November 14, 2026
2-5pm
Marietta, Georgia

A Memorial Gathering In Loving Remembrance

ORDER OF SERVICE

Prelude & Gathering ..... Instrumental Music

Welcome & Opening Prayer ..... Pastor Troy Hall

Scripture & Reflection ..... Pastor Troy Hall

A Celebration of Joan's Life ..... Tribute Video

Tributes & Memories ..... Family and Friends

Musical Tribute ..... Amina Sirleaf

Closing Reflection & Prayer ..... Pastor Troy Hall

Butterfly Release .....Outdoors, Weather Permitting

Fellowship & Refreshments..... Following the Service

HER LIFE

Joan Elsa Sirleaf was born Joan Elsa Phelps-Cole on September 6, 1963, in Monrovia, Liberia, to Agnes Woodson and Joseph Boayue. She was raised by Oretha E. Phelps-Cole and Samuel B. Cole.

Joan began her education at B.W. Harris in Liberia. She later moved to the United States with Oretha E. Phelps-Cole, initially making her home in New Jersey. She also spent part of her early years in the United States in Waco, Texas, before returning to New Jersey, where she attended Caldwell College.

On June 27, 1987, Joan married Charles Eugene Sirleaf in East Orange, New Jersey. They then moved to Georgia, where their daughters, Jenelle and Berylene, were born and raised.

Joan spent many years working in accounts payable and accounts receivable. Most recently, she joined U.S. Cabinet Depot in April 2025, where she worked as an Accounts Receivable Specialist.

Those who knew Joan knew her as a gentle and soft-spoken woman with a quiet strength. She was kind, patient and steady, and her faith in God was an important part of her life. She cared deeply for the people she loved. She did not seek attention or need to be the loudest person in the room; her strength showed itself through her consistency and the quiet ways she cared for her family.

Nowhere was Joan's love more evident than in her relationship with her daughters. She believed in Jenelle and Berylene, encouraged their ambitions and celebrated their accomplishments. She gave them the freedom and confidence to build lives of their own while remaining a constant source of love and support. No matter where life took them, they knew their mother was always in their corner.

Joan also found happiness in the simple things she enjoyed. She was a wonderful cook, and food was one of the ways she brought her family together. When her daughters were young, she made cookies from scratch, and Thanksgiving meant a table full of food, including her sweet potato pie, coconut pie, and especially good stuffing. She also loved taking her daughters to different restaurants, introducing them to foods and cultures from around the world.

Joan enjoyed music and dancing, and in quieter moments could often be found watching the Korean and Chinese dramas she came to love.

Joan passed away on October 1, 2026, in Marietta, Georgia, at the age of 63, with her daughters by her side.

She is survived by her daughters, Jenelle Sirleaf and Berylene Sirleaf; her siblings, Harriet Woodson, Rev. Dr. Joseph Boayue Jr., Rev. Yhenpu Boayue, Rev. Irving Boayue, Dr. George Boayue, Bendu Boayue, Pawon Boayue, Julien Boayue, Kebbe Boayue, Yanay Boayue, Minisiah Boayue, Zoadah Boayue, and Miento Boayue; as well as a large extended family of relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her siblings, Granville Boayue, Maxwell R.H. Phelps, Charlotte Mae Phelps, and Luvinia Borland Cooper.

Joan will be remembered for her gentle spirit, her faith, her quiet strength and, above all, the steadfast love she gave her daughters and those closest to her.

TRIBUTES & REMEMBRANCES



My mother is the reason for so much of the woman I am today.

When Berylene and I were little, Mom made sure we had different opportunities and experiences even when I didn't always appreciate everything she was doing at the time. She made sure to take us to piano practice every Wednesday and tennis practice every Saturday. She also would make us practice at home until eventually we both got tired and told her we didn't want to anymore. When I became interested in singing, she encouraged that too. She entered me into singing competitions and gave me the confidence to get on stage and perform. Whatever I wanted to explore, she gave me the opportunity to try.

My mom and I didn't always get along. In fact, we argued a lot during my teenage years. I was strong-willed, and so was she. But even then there was one thing I never questioned: whether my mother loved me and my sister. She was always attentive to us. I remember being bullied in elementary school and my mom sitting me down in her bedroom and reading Psalm 6 with me. As I got older, she remained the person I knew I could call—whether it was two o'clock in the morning because I was stressed about school or because I needed to cry over some knucklehead boy. Whatever was happening in my life, I knew I could call my mother.

You don't realize all the ways someone has shaped your life until they are no longer there and you begin looking back. My mom introduced Berylene and me to the world in so many ways. She exposed us to different cultures and different foods long before either of us really began traveling. I remember her taking us to a Moroccan restaurant with belly dancers and how she introduced us to Brazilian food, Ethiopian food, South African food and Korean barbecue. Looking back, I realize that some of my own curiosity about the world started with her.

And as my world got bigger, she kept showing up. She and I went to Paris for my graduation trip after college. When I lived in Dakar, she came to visit me, and I got to take her to the attieke place I had become obsessed with. When I moved to Arizona for my first job after grad school, she came to help me move into my apartment. Through all the different stages of my life, whether we lived hundreds or thousands of miles apart, she was there. Distance never changed the certainty that my mother was someone I could call home.

Going through her things after she passed away, I found an ultrasound from when she was pregnant with me. She had kept it all these years and I never knew. There was something special about holding that image and realizing that before I had any memories of her, before I knew her as “Ma,” before I had taken my first breath, she already knew me. And from that beginning through every version of me that came afterward, she was my mother.

Life did not always give my mother a fair shake, but she made the most of it and never felt sorry for herself. Even when she was diagnosed with cancer, she told us, “We can't give up.”

Ma, I don't know what life without you is supposed to look like yet. I don't know how I'm supposed to get used to not being able to pick up the phone and call you.
You spent my entire life teaching me how to keep going. So I will. I will carry with me everything you gave me, and I will try to face whatever comes with the same determination you showed throughout your life.



You told us, “We can't give up.”

So, Ma, we won't.

I love you.

- Jenelle Sirleaf

My mother brought so much joy, laughter, and kindness to so many people's lives. Even though she is now in heaven, she will forever be present with all of us.

- Berylene Sirleaf

A Woman Whose Worth Was Far Above Rubies

Proverbs 31 says of the virtuous woman: "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." (Proverbs 31:25), a caring mother! That was Joan!

We often think strength is loud. But Joan showed us another kind of strength: the strength of patience, of prayer, of showing up every day and doing what needs to be done with love. Her strength was in her consistency.

Joan's works are standing here today. Her works are Jenelle and Berylene. Her works are the lives she touched, the faith she planted, and the love she poured out without ever asking for anything in return.

Jenelle, Berylene, there is no way to ease this loss. Grief is the price of great love, and you loved deeply because you were loved deeply.

May Joan’s soul rest in eternal peace! Now & forever more! Amen

- Her brother Rev. Dr. Joseph Whama Boayue, Jr.

I met Joan when her girls were toddlers. She was always quiet and kind. We spent so much time together early on after I had Jamell and those days were fun visits while Jenelle and Berylene attempted to babysit Jamell. I remember how much fun she and I had when we went to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta to see the USA basketball team play. I still have the ticket stub. Joan was a very private person and she loved her daughters very much. She will be missed.

- Helen Joseph



Dear Joan,

Let me begin by saying two things: I am sorry and thank you. I am sorry for assuming there will always be another tomorrow. I am sorry for believing I had more time—more time to hear you say, "I don't have time for those people." More time for birthday wishes and holiday gatherings and greetings. More time to hear you laugh and say, "I'm making it, girl—what to do." More time to hear you remind me, whenever I complained, "That's their business." More time to hear your voice, to share a moment, to share a laugh.

I called you on your birthday, and you didn't answer. I told myself we would talk next time. I had no idea there would be no next time. If I had known our last conversation was already behind us, I would have called sooner. I would have called more often.

Growing up, it was always the three of us—you, Bufus, and me. We wanted to be bigger girls like you, and we made so many jokes about it. You looked out for us, watched over us, and protected us. Whenever we messed up, you were the one willing to take the heat. And we know Mama Pepper did not play. You stood in the gap for us, sometimes taking the blame so we didn't have to bear it alone. That was the kind of big sister/auntie you were—protective, loving, and loyal.

You never needed to raise your voice to make your point. You spoke with wisdom and conviction, firm yet gentle. You knew how to correct without tearing down. When I wanted something and you didn't agree, you didn't simply say no—you would say, "I'm not comfortable with that." You had a way of being honest without making me feel bad. Quiet, yet powerful. Soft-spoken, yet strong. Your presence spoke volumes, and your principles were never compromised.

Thank you for being my big sister. Thank you for being the coolest auntie. Thank you for loving us, protecting us, and helping to make right some of the wrongs we created along the way. Thank you for the memories, the lessons, the laughter, and the love you gave so freely. Thank you for the beautiful children you brought into this world—your living legacy. Through them, a part of you will always remain with us.

Your love was a gift, and I will never take for granted the blessing of having you in my life. As you take your rest, please say hello to all our people for me. I can only imagine the reunion on the other side. Until we meet again—in the sweet by and by, on that beautiful shore—I will carry your memory in my heart and cherish every moment we were blessed to share.

I love you, Joan, more than these words can ever express. But I know God loves you best. Farewell to my big sister, my auntie, and my Joan.

With all my love, **Baby Rita.**

Saying goodbye to someone who's been part of your life is never easy. Joan, our cherished little sister, was a precious gift to our family and a woman whose quiet goodness touched everyone who knew her.

We grew up under the same roof, nurtured by our parents' sacrifices, creating bonds that distance and time couldn't erase. As children, Joan and I attended B. W. Harris Episcopal High School in Monrovia, Liberia. We were often late for school, and as a big brother, I was punished for both of us. Even then, I knew her to have a gentle spirit and a kind heart.

As life unfolded, we each followed our own paths. I became a Catholic missionary priest, and I was joyful that faith remained an important part of Joan's life. After her marriage, she became a faithful Methodist, devoted to God, her family, and the family values that shaped our lives.

Joan was a gentle, soft-spoken woman with a quiet strength. She was kind, patient, and honest. Though she rarely expressed her feelings openly, she cared deeply for those she loved.

Her devotion to her daughters, Jenelle and Berylene, was evident in the freedom, confidence, and encouragement she gave them to become their own persons. She always talked about them with unwavering love and pride.

We mourn her passing but also give thanks for the gift of her life. We will forever remember her gentle presence, generous heart, and the ways she enriched our family. Though her voice is now silent, the love she shared continues to live on in our hearts, her children, her extended family, and in all who were blessed to have known her. Joan, little sister, rest in peace and may perpetual Light shine upon you. We now have an angel in heaven.

Let us pray for her gentle soul: Loving and merciful God, we entrust Joan into Your Eternal care. Reward her for all the goodness, love, and kindness she shared throughout her life. Grant her the joy of Your Presence and eternal rest in Your heavenly kingdom. Comfort Jenelle, Berylene, and all who grieve her loss. Give them strength, peace, and the assurance that your love is stronger than death. She is now with our departed parents, aunties, uncles, cousins, brothers, and sisters. "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

- From her brothers Harry, Gedeh, and Rev. Father Matthew Abu Boakai Cole

Auntie Joan was a great woman, I appreciated how straightforward and honest she was about everything even if it was something you didn't like, she wouldn't ever lie to you and if she didn't like something her signature"look" came right after. But for those who she held close saw a side of her that was filled with love and care that couldn't be measured but will be surely missed.

I will miss her, I will miss her embrace, our talks and I will miss my Auntie. Long live Auntie Joan.

- Ose Ayewoh

Aunty Joan was one of the kindest, gentlest people I've known. She was quiet, caring and her presence came with comfort. Around her, I always felt safe and at ease being exactly who I was, and that is a rare and precious gift.

Our families spent many holidays and vacation time together. I loved when we would travel to Georgia to visit. Those memories are some of my most treasured. We played games, put on skits, made up dance shows, filled her home with laughter and would sometimes fall asleep by the fireplace. She let us be silly and loud, and she watched with a warm smile. I remember when I took my first flight alone. Traveling to visit her and my cousins. I was nervous, but I knew who was waiting for me on the other side. That trip helped me to grow and become more independent and wouldn't have happened without the love and attention from Aunty Joan.

Life has a way of pulling people apart, the years and miles sometimes grew between us. But the love she gave never faded. It remains with me, and it always will.

Thank you, Auntie, for your gentleness, your warmth, and for making me feel at home wherever you were. I will carry you in my heart forever.

- Love Varrita

When you have shared a friendship of over 30 years, it can be hard to find the right words to honor someone who meant so much to you. I was blessed to have Joan as a friend. Through the years, we shared memories, laughter, and conversations that I will carry in my heart forever.

One such memory was about 25 years ago when my daughter had asked me how babies were made. I said I had to go to the bathroom, but I would be right back. I proceeded to go upstairs to the master bedroom and called Joan from the landline. Her two daughters were several years older than mine so I asked her what I should say. She chuckled and said tell her the truth. Then after a brief conversation, she reminded me to flush the toilet before going back downstairs.

Another fond memory is one where my three kids and I had just arrived at Joan's house to visit. I was busy taking off all our coats and shoes when I started looking all around me for my first son. He was around 6 years old at this time. Even though he was always big for his age, I couldn't see where he was, so I stood up. That's when I saw him. He had found his Auntie Joan. He was asking if she had any rice he could eat. Everyone started laughing cause all he could think about and all he wanted to do was eat Auntie Joan's rice!

There are plenty of other memories, but those are two of my favorite. What began as a friendship at work grew into a meaningful part of my life. I am so grateful that our paths crossed and that I had the privilege of calling Joan my friend. Her presence in my life made a difference. I'll always remember her.

- Belinda Goodman

A loving tribute to my niece, Joan
It is with a heavy heart and deep sorry as we remember and celebrate Joan's life.
I always referred to her as my little niece. She always exhibited a kind and peaceful spirit with a beautiful smile. Always so pleasant to be around.
One of the greatest honors she gave me was naming her daughter, Berylene, after me.
That was such a special gesture of love and it is something I will always cherish.
Joan was not only a devoted mother, but an extraordinary woman who cared deeply for her girls, Jenelle and Berylene. She loved them with every fiber of her being.
Although we are saddened by her passing, we thank God for the time we shared with her.
We will miss you Joan but you will never be forgotten.
May your gentle soul rest in perfect peace until we meet again. We love you deeply.

- Aunty Beryline Togba

It's hard to find the right words when someone you once worked alongside is no longer here. Although we may have started as coworkers, the time we shared created memories, laughter, conversations, and a connection that went beyond the workplace.

I will always remember your kindness, your personality, and the way you brought your own special presence into the lives of those around you. Working together was more than just completing tasks—it was sharing experiences and becoming part of each other's journey.

You may no longer be here with us, but the impact you made and the memories you left behind will remain. I'm grateful our paths crossed, and I feel blessed to have known you.

Rest peacefully. You will be missed, remembered, and forever appreciated.

- Franchikisk Crowe

A Short Remembrance of Joan Cole Sirleaf. In a world that is often too loud, she was a quiet, steady comfort. She didn't need to shout to be heard. She didn't seek the spotlight. Her gentle spirit was a comfort to everyone who knew her. Her kindness did not only speak volumes it was a soft light that warmed everyone around her. Her love and her strength were found in her gentle spirit. The world is a little less bright without her quiet grace. We will carry her peace with us always. Though we say goodbye to her today, the quiet beauty of her life will never be forgotten.

- Dorothy Richards

THE STRENGTH OF A MOTHER'S LOVE

By Chuku (Joseph Whama Boayue, Jr.)



Strength sounds so dominant
It sounds so compelling
So controlling

Yet The Strength of a Mother's love
Is Never That

It's not intimidating
It's NEVER fearful

It's soothing like a quiet brook
Soothing guided by its natural forces

Yet so methodical
Sounds like a melody to one's ear

So reassuring
Despite the circumstances
Despite the uncertainty of the situation

So calming
Echoing love in every word

Sometimes a hug
Sometimes a smile
Sometimes an expression

Yet like the sound of the brook soothing
Calming
Un-intimidating

There is no roar
Neither is there thunder

Yet there's a hidden
but openly expressed message

A mother's love is
strong
Quietly so

Determined
Forcefully so

Loving
Forever so

A mother's love
It's so special
Till words cannot fully capture it

It's there
Stored in the heart
It's a special place of refuge

It's a message
Of kindness
A message of care

It'll echo throughout time
Throughout our lifetime
Throughout our space and time
Throughout the generations

A Mother's love
Lingers on
In our thoughts
In our minds

It consumes us
It revives us

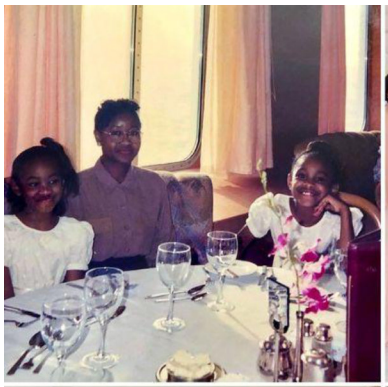
A mother's love is
forever there
With us
By us

It engulfs us

A mother's love is always a part of
us

It stays
It remains with us

It NEVER goes away



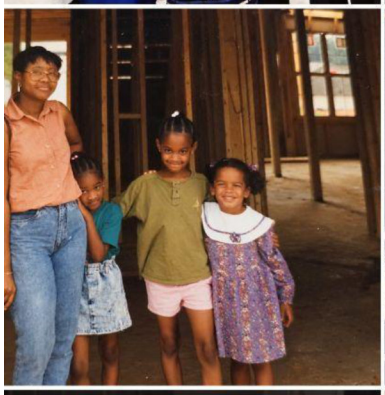


This Love



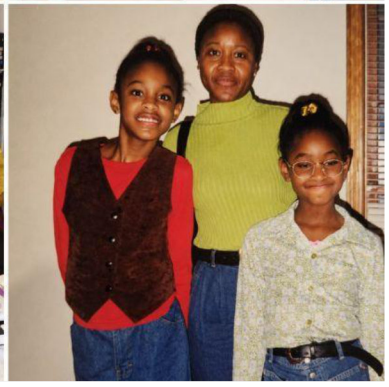






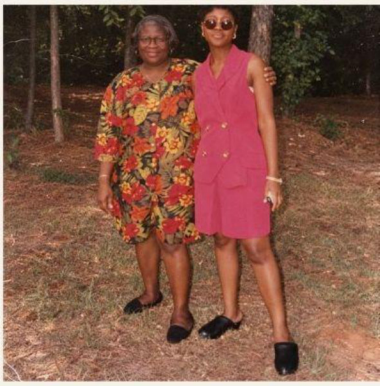









Saint
Vincent
Academy














SCRIPTURES & PRAYERS

HOPE BEYOND THIS LIFE

2 Corinthians 4:16–18 | King James Version

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

LOVE THAT REMAINS

1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 13 | King James Version

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
Charity never faileth.
And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Selected from the Bible passages Joan treasured and recorded in her personal writings.

A PRAYER FOR COMFORT AND PEACE

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the life of Joan, for the love she shared, the memories she leaves with us, and the ways her presence shaped our lives. In the moments when we miss her most, grant us comfort. When grief feels heavy, give us strength for the day before us. Help us find joy in remembering her, peace in the love we shared, and hope in the promise that love endures. Keep us close to one another as we carry her memory forward. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The family of **Joan Elsa Sirleaf** extends our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has offered their condolences, prayers, love, and support during this difficult time. We are deeply grateful for the thoughtful messages, visits, and many acts of kindness that have brought us comfort. Your compassion and generosity have meant more to us than words can express. Thank you for remembering Joan with such love and for keeping our family in your thoughts and prayers.



IN LOVING MEMORY

JOAN ELSA SIRLEAF

