

In Loving Memory and Celebration



Vivien Cornelia Godfrey

February 5, 1929 – February 29, 2020

Service

Monday, March 9, 2020 – 11:00 am

Bethany Baptist Church

460 Marcus Garvey Boulevard
Brooklyn, New York 11216

Reverend Dr. Adolphus C. Lacey, Officiating

In her own words

While commemorating the 50th year of her music studio, and in her own words:

“I was born on Tuesday, February 5, and they tell me that Tuesday’s child is full of grace, but you can judge for yourselves. I only know that I was born into a wonderful and special family. My father, the late Rev. Henry W. Mariner gave me the necessary courage in my pursuit of becoming a piano teacher or whatever else I wanted to do. My mother, Mrs. Annie B. Mariner, was at my side to help, encourage and inspire me in every way. They were a blessing and a joy. I can’t leave out my brothers – all five of them. It just so happens that there are also 5 lines to the music staff. My children were brought up in a home where the piano was in use most of the time. Donna often has been my right hand as student teacher and pianist for my Junior Choir at Fenimore United Methodist Church (UMC) or my Senior Choir at Greater St. John’s Community Church.

My life has had ups and downs but, with each experience, I was able to learn, grow, and overcome. Teaching music has taught me to be constant. Children like to be around a pleasant and kind person that shows them love. Often after a student lesson, I had to give thanks to God for giving me the right answers.

To me, it is about working hard to bring out the best in a student - inciting excitement about learning and accomplishing something, never saying, ‘I can’t’. They have learned to say ‘I will try’. Through experience, I’ve learned that if you don’t love the student, it is hard for you to teach the student. I have been asked if you had your life to live again would you have spent 50 years teaching and giving recitals? My answer is simple and a true, ‘YES! I loved what I was doing’.”

Obituary

Vivien was educated in Brooklyn’s public school system. After graduating from Franklin K. Lane High School, with honors in English, she attended both The Juilliard School of Music and NY College of Music. Shortly after school, she married William D. Vance on June 3, 1950 then started a family, later moving to Hollis, Queens. She was remarried on August 1, 1979 to Carol Godfrey.

Early in her career Vivien worked at the United States Coast Guard where she developed great relationships. This was evident when on one of her many trips to Bermuda (to visit her dear friend Sonia Gilbert) she was invited to bring her family to lunch on a docked Coast Guard ship. She later worked in the Textile industry, at a compliance testing company, in an administrative role before following her passion, and dedicated her working life to the Vivien Vance piano studio launched in 1959.

Led by her parents who organized the Brooklyn Community Club (BCC), she learned at an very early age the virtue of charitable and selfless giving. She remained dedicated to BCC, and had a remarkable ability to draw people together, bringing in her best friends, Vera Edwards and Fannie Peterson, as members to support the mission of helping those less fortunate. They held annual Spring musicales at the Brooklyn Home for the Aged with a program of music featuring performances by her students and family. Her brothers, Joseph and Henry, recited poetry, and Morris and Donna offered selections of music.

Her largest and most joyful service to the community was through her music studio that welcomed her students and also their siblings. It was often called an ‘after school’ program as she gladly hosted entire families after school no matter whether students were scheduled for lessons, and without knowing the families ability to pay. Her motto, proudly displayed in her studio for 50 years, was “Music builds character”. Later, she began a senior learning focus where she taught senior and often elder students. She also had separate annual recitals for the seniors in her studio while maintaining the year-end recital for her regular students, where recognition and diplomas were given to every student. She was proud of her students – many of whom became highly credentialed professionals and one who was a finalist on ‘American Idol’. We also recognize that among her favorite students were two that became student teachers in her studio; Tarsha Sylvester and Mrs. Helenica Yusuf, who created a studio of her own.

Altruistic at heart she was always giving never taking. Loving never hating. Inclusive, showing bias to no one, demonstrating that she was a woman of deep faith. Vivien is remembered for believing in having the faith of a mustard seed, and was tireless in her service and weekly presence at more than one faith institution. Initially at Greater St. John Community Church for 40 years, also at Fenimore United Methodist Church, she was responsible for organizing the Junior Choir in 1959 which she led until her health failed. She also served as a member of United Methodist Women, at Fenimore where she was recently honored for her long service. Vivien remained a member of her family church - Bethany Baptist Church, where she was honored for over 75 years of membership, often attending on her ‘off’ Sundays. Bethany is where she was raised, married, and where she and other family members have served on the Scholarship Council and the Senior Choir. Most recently she was a part time organist at Cuyler-Warren UMC. To maintain her musical talent, she looked forward to attending for many years the Hampton Choir Directors and Organists Guild Workshop at Hampton College in Virginia, often with her brother Morris Mariner.

Family was everything to Vivien. She was dutiful, whether it was the daily care of her mother, through her 96 years. Delivering the Sunday paper to her brother Edgar, or picking her grandson Bradley up from school or soccer camp, she was there. Her Thanksgivings were ALWAYS spent with her larger family, often in North Carolina, a tradition kept by her cousins and started by their and her parents many years ago. She was able to attend her last family reunion in 2018, in Washington, DC. Among the highlights was selecting a song for the women of the family to sing at Thanksgiving dinner.

Vivien was widowed after the death of her husband Carol Godfrey in 2002, and was predeceased by her son William D. Vance Jr., but leaves many to cherish her great legacy: her daughter Donna M. Vance, along with grandsons Bradley Vance Dunn, William D. Vance III, great grandchild William D. Vance IV, her loving niece and goddaughter Lisa Mariner Stephens, brothers Henry W. Mariner Jr. (Ann), Morris E. Mariner (Barbara), and Edgar Mariner (Diane); and a loving assembly of nieces, grand-nieces, nephews and grand-nephews and a very special bond amongst her 1st cousins. She also leaves her mark on hundreds of students, church pastors and members of both Fenimore St. UMC and especially Rev. Beverly Morris, now of Grace UMC of Brooklyn.

Grateful recognition is given to Anita Barrow, originally her ‘hospice’ nurse, who, for two years that surprised the medical team, expertly nurtured and cared for Vivien until her death.

Order of Service

Organ prelude..... David Cox, Organist
Processional Clergy, Officers and Family
Selection..... Minister Jerome Williams
Scripture Readings
 Old Testament - Psalm 23 Bradley Vance Dunn
 New Testament - John 14: 1-6..... Helenica Yusuf
Prayer of comfort Rev. Beverly Morris
Selection..... Minister Jerome Williams
Family Tribute..... Donna Vance
Song I Want to Give All To God (The Family)
Acknowledgment of Condolences
Resolution United Methodist Women
Reading of the Obituary
Selection..... Babette Mariner
Eulogy Pastor Lacey
The Benediction Pastor Lacey
Recessional

Interment

Maple Grove Cemetery
Kew Gardens, Queens, New York





FIRST PIANO RECITAL

BY

*Students of
Vivien Vance*

AT

FENIMORE METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Ward E. Hemenway, Minister

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 1959

8:30 P.M.



I Want To Give All To God

Words and Music by
VIVIEN C. VANCE

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It consists of seven systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The score includes a main melody, a verse with three verses, and a final chorus. The lyrics are: "I want to give all my love to God, I want to give all my heart to God, I want to give all my soul to God, I Want To Give All To God." The verse lyrics are: "1. He gives me peace all day, day, He gives me; 2. I need Him ever - y the day, day, I'll trust Him; 3. Just praise Him all the way, He'll come to your heart and; far a way, He'll guide till Judge - ment; day stay Day I Want To Give All To God! I Want To Give All To God! I Want To Give All To God!"

I want to give all my love to God, I want to give
all my heart to God, I want to give all my
soul to God, I Want To Give All To God.

Verse

1. He gives me peace all day, day, He gives me
2. I need Him ever - y the day, day, I'll trust Him
3. Just praise Him all the way, He'll come to your heart and
far a way, He'll guide till Judge - ment

day stay Day I Want To Give All To God!
I Want To Give All To God!
I Want To Give All To God!

Afterglow

I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways,
Of happy times and laughing times and bright and sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve to dry before the sun;
Of happy memories that I leave when life is done.

Helen Lowrie Marshall

Donations

Vivien's family would be honored if you would consider a donation to one of the following organizations that are reflective of her great legacy of faith, service, and love:

- Brooklyn Music School Arts Reaching Youth, Att: Piruz Partow, Exec Director
- The Scholarship Council of Bethany Baptist Church
- United Methodist Women of Fenimore United Methodist Church

Acknowledgments

The family of Vivien C. Godfrey gratefully acknowledges the kind care and thoughtfulness during her time at Downtown Brooklyn Nursing and Rehabilitation (DBNY), especially the 5East team of care givers, nurses and social staff. We know you will miss her gentle smiles and personality too. You always said she was a pleasure.



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"Where Your Family Becomes Our Family"