



IN LOVING MEMORY OF



LEONARD JOHN JAMES

Sunrise
December 21, 1923

Sunset
March 21, 2021

Service:
Saturday, March 27, 2021 - 9:30 am

United Moravian Church
200 E. 127th Street • New York, New York 10035

OBITUARY

Leonard John James was born on December 21, 1923 to parents Jonathan Elcanah James and Ellen Wilhemina Matthews James. While he was born in New York City, his parents returned to their beloved Bermuda to build a life as the Great Depression hit the United States. And it was in Bermuda where Leonard spent his formative years falling in love with island life.

Leonard loved to swim, play soccer and cricket, and he developed a real talent as a trumpeter at the Salvation Army. His dad, known to most as Johnny James, made sure that Leonard and his brothers did well in school and developed life sustaining skills. Leonard's chosen vocation was carpentry and he performed quite well in his studies at Central School. In fact, he and his brothers- proud, smart, talented "Pond Dogs"- clearly followed in the footsteps of their dad and uncles as they developed the skills and knowledge not only to build houses from the ground up, but also to become scientists, master plumbers, businessmen, surgeons, and political leaders!

Leonard so loved this work that he planned to pursue architecture. But alas, World War II broke out and Leonard was drafted by the United States Army in his last year at Central School. He served honorably until the War ended in 1945. During his service, Leonard experienced terrible racism and witnessed firsthand the cruelty and disrespect shown to African Americans and to Black people all over the world. Even while being forced to be served from the back door of restaurants in Alabama or being assigned tedious tasks far below his intellect, skills, and abilities in battle, Leonard maintained his dignity and excelled in all of his duties. Determined never to accept the racist ideologies that still permeate society even today, Leonard took full advantage of every opportunity to deepen his knowledge and learn new skills so that he could continue to build upon the legacy and foundation set forth by his father.

After being honorably discharged from the Army, Leonard chose not to return to Bermuda, but instead to make a life for himself in New York City. There he put his skills and knowledge to work at Jack Frost Sugar Company where he once again faced racism being assigned menial roles under the supervision of wholly unqualified white men. And again Leonard rose above, demonstrating his abilities so successfully that he was promoted to foreman. Never to be deterred from accomplishing his goals, Leonard continued the legacy of home ownership by paying off his mortgage in 1977! He retired from Jack Frost as a supervisor and continued his life-long love of learning by acquiring professional certificates in electrical, heating, cooling, and plumbing. Armed with those additional skills, he went on to serve residents of The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) in The Bronx and Harlem. He rose to become one of the first African American Assistant Superintendents at NYCHA and proudly retired in 1986.

Leonard not only had vocational and musical talents, but also had immense charm and a warm, winning smile. It was that smile that won the heart of his beloved Shirley whom he married in 1947. Together they lived a wonderful life full of faith, laughter, music, good food, family and friends. Leonard and Shirley absolutely loved to travel, cruising all over the Caribbean, and travelling to Europe and Asia- crossing 5 continents and 4 oceans. Through their travels Leonard and Shirley built an even greater extended family and instilled in their many nieces and nephews an enthusiastic zest for life, a diligent work ethic, and an enduring love of God. Though his beloved Shirley passed in 2013, he loved and called out her name with adoration throughout their 66 years of marriage right up until his last day on Earth.

Leonard's love of God was manifest in his daily life and in his service to his beloved church family at United Moravian Church. He joyfully played trumpet in the band and was a member of the Men's Fellowship, Maintenance Committee, and Friends of Bermuda Group. He could always be found participating in All Islands rallies, dancing up a storm at church celebrations, and enjoying all of the food and loving attention from the church sisters. He loved singing traditional hymns, listening to contemporary gospel and jazz, and sharing wisdom with young people, supporting them in all of their endeavors especially the music ministries and college success.

A proud member of Allied Lodge No. 1170 since 1985, Leonard served the Masons as Honorary Past Master and supported an array of leadership development, community engagement, and society enhancing efforts.

In addition to the Brothers of Allied Lodge, Leonard leaves to mourn his passing and celebrate a life well lived his brothers, Claude (wife Yvonne), Conrad (wife Mavis), and Winfield (wife Dorrett); sister in law, Shirley; a host of nieces and nephews in New York, Maryland, Washington, DC, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Bermuda, and Canada; his entire United Moravian Church family; and countless friends and extended family members.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Musical Prelude: Jerusalem the GoldenMr. Fabio Alvarez

Opening Sentences & Processional.....Rev. Desna A. Henry Goulbourne

Opening Hymn # 410 (Celebration Hymnal).. “Standing on the Promises”

Liturgy for the Memorial Service

Prayer of Invocation.....Rev. D. A. Henry Goulbourne
Eternal and Almighty God, we praise you for your everlasting love which is evident in so many areas of our lives. As we grieve in this solemn of this hour, help us to wait upon you with reverent and submissive hearts. Through this thanksgiving service today speak to us of eternal things; that through patience, and comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tributes

Dance Jasmine Aska (Grandniece)

Music..... The Men’s Choir

Obituary..... Jennifer Aska (Niece)

Offertory Hymn # 728..... “Lead Me, Guide Me”

Dedicatory Prayer

1st Scripture Reading: Romans 8:35-39Cathy Jenkins-Tait (Niece)

2nd Scripture Reading: Revelation 14:13-16..... Kelly Nicholas

Selection: There is a Redeemer..... Chancel Choir

Sermon: The Blessing of Death..... Rev. Desna A. Henry Goulbourne

Hymn of Response #775 (Celebration Hymnal)..... “Beyond the Sunset”

Prayer for the Family Rev. D. A. Henry Goulbourne

Funeral Director’s Comments

Benediction..... Rev. D. A. Henry Goulbourne

Recessional Hymn..... “The Trumpet”

Musical Postlude..... “It is well” - Mr. Fabio Alvarez

INTERMENT

Rose Hill Memorial Park
Putnam Valley, New York

THE MASTER CALLED

I'm sorry I had to leave you.
My loved ones, oh so dear.
But you see, the Master called me,
His voice was very clear!
I had made my reservation
A heaven bound ticket for one,
And I knew that He would call me
When He felt my work was done.
I know that your hearts are heavy
Because I have gone away,
But when the Master called me,
I knew that I could not stay.
Yes, I'm sorry I had to leave you
My loved ones, oh so dear,
But, you see, the Master called me
And, now I'm resting here.
Yes, I've crossed on over to glory
And to you all I say
Just stay in the hands of Jesus
And we'll meet again someday.
-Author unknown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The family would like to express their deep appreciation and sincere thanks for all acts of kindness shown to them during their time of bereavement.

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