

A Legacy of Faith, Dignity, Courage and Love



*Ruth*  
MARIE WORDLAW  
*James*



# *A Legacy of Faith, Dignity, Courage and Love*

REFLECTING ON THE LIFE OF

## *Ruth Marie Wordlaw James*

She was always a feisty, sassy little thing.

Ruth exemplified the kind of person you always wanted on your side. She was a fiercely loyal and compassionate friend, cousin, sister, aunt, wife, grandmother, and mother—always. Believing that you should “never leave a loved one alone in a hospital,” she would sit faithfully by your bedside, hunt down the doctor, ask the hard questions, roll up her sleeves, and orchestrate the best care you ever received. The hospital and staff never knew what hit them—and she did it all with dignity.

Her spirit did not understand the words “no” or “can’t.” She refused to give way to injustice, dishonesty, or mediocrity. Kindness, truth, and your very best were what she required—of herself and of others.

Ruth Marie Wordlaw James, of Mesquite, Texas, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on Tuesday, November 10, 1931, to Clarence, Sr. and Theodora Arvella Wordlaw, joining her sisters Viola Mae and Birdie Rose. After her family moved to Chicago, Illinois during the Great Migration, three sons were added to the family. Ruth became the proud big sister to three brothers—Clarence Jr., Theodore, and Robert—and never let them forget it.

All who knew Ruth marveled at her boundless energy, compassionate care, and abiding love for people. She never met a stranger. Ruth possessed a natural gift for nursing and a lifelong concern for those often overlooked by society. This calling led her to become a registered nurse and to earn a master’s degree in public health from the University of Illinois–Chicago.

While training to become a nurse, Ruth met and fell in love with Clarence James. Their love story blossomed into marriage in 1954. A couple of years later they welcomed their firstborn, Cheryl. A few years later, their loving family grew with the birth of Debra, and then Bruce.

As devoted and godly parents, Clarence and Ruth personally led their three children to the Lord. Together,

they trained as lay leaders with organizations such as Scripture Press, the Baptist General Conference, and various overseas missions, honing their skills in teaching, leadership, and discipleship.

Wherever they lived, they served faithfully in their church and community. They stood as examples of the kind of people the world needs—honest, compassionate individuals who walked humbly with God and loved others deeply.

Until the Lord wrapped her in His embrace and carried her home, Ruth lovingly mourned Clarence’s passing in 2010. As her family, we believe that when she closed her eyes for the final time on earth, she opened them in heaven to see Clarence and a host of family and friends waiting to welcome her home—a joyful celebration filled with love and reunion.

Ruth went home to be with her Lord Jesus Christ on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, at 8:40 AM. She is survived by her three children: Cheryl (Jerry), Debra (Clarence), and Bruce (Joe); eleven grandchildren—Jerry Redfield III, Angela (Charles Jr.) Oldham, Philip (Carter) Redfield, Joshua (Stephanie) Redfield, Jermill Thompson-James, Amon Baldwin, Nathaniel Baldwin, and Sariah Thompson-James; two great-grandchildren—Mikayla and Callie Oldham; one brother—Clarence Wordlaw Jr. (Pearline); and a host of brothers- and sisters-in-love, nieces, nephews, and cousins who will forever cherish her memory.

Immediately following the homegoing service, the interment will take place at Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, where she will be laid to rest beside her beloved Clarence.

Ruth’s legacy of faith, dignity, courage, and love will live on in all who were blessed to know her.

# *Ruth Marie Wordlaw James*

Friday, March 13, 2026 | Viewing: 9-10:00 AM | Service: 10-11:30 AM  
Mount Hebron Missionary Baptist Church | 1233 State Highway 66 | Garland, TX 75040  
REV. ANDRE' A. KIRKLAND, *Senior Pastor - Officiant* | REV. LEONARD O. LEACH, *Pastor Emeritus*

## *The Celebration Worship Experience*

**Processional** *The Family of*  
RUTH MARIE WORDLAW JAMES

**Processional Song** Mount Hebron M. B. Church Musicians  
*Sweet Sweet Spirit*

### **Family's Parting View**

**Prayer** PASTOR ANDRE' A. KIRKLAND  
*Senior Pastor, Mt. Hebron MB Church*

**Song** Mt. Hebron M.B. Church Choir  
*Total Praise*

**Old Testament Reading** MS. LINDA LEE  
*Psalms 23*

**New Testament Reading** DEACONESS KELLY BUFORD  
*1 Corinthians 15:51-53*

**Solo** B. AMON JAMES

### **Resolutions**

**Interpretive Presentation** DEBRA LYNN BALDWIN  
*1 Corinthians 13*

**Reflections** LAMAR WILDER  
ZAGER WORDLAW  
DEACON & DEACONESS ED & DORIS CHARLES  
MRS. KIM MCFARLAND  
AMON & NATHANIEL BALDWIN

**Solo** CHERYL JAMES REDFIELD

**Eulogy** REV. LEONARD O. LEACH  
*Pastor Emeritus, Mt. Hebron MB Church*

### **Invitation to Discipleship**

**Recessional** *The Family of*  
RUTH MARIE WORDLAW JAMES

**Recessional Song** Mt. Hebron M.B. Church Choir  
*Going Up Yonder*

*The family humbly asks that all guests remain at their seats until the family has exited the sanctuary. For those joining the procession to the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery for Ruth Marie Wordlaw James' interment, please note that we will depart the church promptly at noon. We invite you to join the line of vehicles as we escort her to her final resting place. Thank you.*

## *My Sister Ruth - A Brother's Tribute*

My sister Ruth was sweet, strong, and deeply loved the Lord.

I remember one day when she was on her way home from the movies with her boyfriend. A young man, who appeared to be carrying a gun, stopped them and demanded their money and Ruth's purse. As her boyfriend slouched behind her, Ruth stepped forward and began telling the young man about Jesus. She just laid into him about the Lord and turned the whole situation around on him! After her holy berating, he called her "crazy" and ran for the hills. Even at an early age, Ruth was boldly and fearlessly standing on the promises of God. Suffice it to say, Daddy was not very happy with Ruth's *former* boyfriend.

Ruth was my sister, my friend, my protector, and our family's "physician." She never met a situation that couldn't be overcome or a person she couldn't love. Everyone she came to know became family—and nobody had better mess with her family!

I love and miss you so much, sis. I thank God for blessing me with your presence and for giving us an inseparable bond.

God bless.

**CLARENCE WORDLAW, JR.**



## *Always and Forever*

(A poem **B. Amon** wrote to his parents many years ago)

For most of a year I was her burden of flesh.  
For most of my life I've been her burden of mind.  
And all of the while she loved, watched, and scolded me.  
And all of the while she was my friend.  
She was my everything.

For a part of his life I was his small duplication.  
For most of my life I've been his clay for to mold.  
And most of the time he irked, bugged, and loved me;  
he having the manhood I had not yet attained.  
He was my idol.

Now having passed through childhood's small stretch of life  
they are my loves for what they are,  
no longer my everything  
no longer my idol.  
And as my love is shared with others  
they seem to fear replacement.

But oh my parents don't you fear.  
For I shall ever need you.  
You are more than just a toy thrown to the trash.  
You are my beginning.  
And within me  
You shall live forever.

Within my thoughts I hear your words.  
Within my actions I feel your hand.  
And within my children shall I see you.

And if time, tide or Jordan's chilly river ever lie between us,  
Remember you are always with me.  
No more than a thought, memory, or prayer away.

*I love you Mama! I'm so glad you get to be with Daddy again.*

*Your son,*

**BRUCE**



## *Momma Ruth*

What can I say? She was the mother I never had.  
She showed me what a mother's unconditional love could be.  
She was fiercely devoted to her husband and children.  
This tiny woman had a presence much larger than her tiny frame.  
She showed what dignity and grace were about.  
Thank you for being that divine feminine spirit in my life.  
Loving you always.  
Your Son-in-Love  
**JOE**



## *My Dearest Nana, Thank You!*

Thank you for filling this family with the love it took for us to persist and thrive in such a grand way. Thank you for raising our parents into the pillars of love, acceptance, strength, and guidance they are today. Every piece of goodness in us comes from the seeds you and Papa planted.



I think every one of your grandbabies has at least a dozen distinct and vivid memories with you to look back on—from family holidays and vacations to your gentle (and sometimes not-so-gentle) guidance and structure.

One memory I will always treasure is when you flew all the way from Texas to be at my high school graduation. You stayed with us for that week, and we were able to spend so much time together during such an important transitional moment in my life. When I finally got past my petty teenage feelings about sharing my bathroom, I remember sitting and listening to your stories about your life as a young woman, and the wisdom you shared with me during that time.

You gave me so much confidence in the woman I was becoming and in my ability to shine brightly and touch the lives of others—the way you always have.

You touched so many lives, Nana, both within this family and far beyond, with your boundless life and energy. Your handprint will remain on our hearts and in our souls forever.

I hope you and Papa are having a wonderful time together again.

Love,  
**SARIAH**

Granny, you were and still are a top inspiration in my life.  
From how you carried yourself in public,  
to the connections you so easily made,  
and your unwavering faith and godliness that you had.  
Not to mention those legendary after school sandwiches!

While you watch over me now,  
I'll show you how strong you made your children.  
Plus you won't miss out on anything now!

I love you Granny!  
**NATHANIEL**





When Nate and I were young kids, grandma would take us to the movies. Sometimes she didn't like the assortment of snacks and candy the theater offered, so she'd bring food from outside.

Grandma stopped at Popeyes once and bought us a five piece box of chicken with red beans and rice AND a biscuit and somehow got it into her purse before walking into the theatre. I remember telling her: "Grandma I don't think they're going to let us in here with all this food" to which she replied, "Well they can't kick us out, we already paid for our tickets".

And she was right, no one said anything to us. But I know they smelled that chicken Grandma!

Love,  
**AMON**



*Dear Nana,*

I thank God for using your womb to "...knit me together so fearfully and wonderfully..." (Psalm 139:14)

You and Papa moved here because I needed you. Later, you needed me. Now that you are gone, I realize how much I really needed you and still do. But, I would not take you back for anything. You are so much better off where you are. Congratulations mommy! You "...endured to the end..." (Ecclesiastes 9:11). You have gained your reward. "Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her." (Psalm 31:28). Your family celebrates you and we expect to see you again.

Love and miss you mommy.

Your daughter

**DEB B**



*Mom*

From the first flower you gave me to the last one you planted, a renewed childhood interest in botany blossomed again over the years.

Flowers and plants exude a beauty that reflects not only the face and nature of God, but also the character of a godly woman whom I have been truly blessed to call Mom throughout the years.

I will continue to see you in the beauty of God's creation of nature all around us, day by day.

Love,  
**CLARENCE**



Throughout my 15 years of life, I've made TONS of memories, but one memory that's especially vivid, and very funny, plays through my mind all the time. Every summer when we were younger, Callie and I would stay with Nana and Papa for two to three weeks so that my mama and dad could spend some extra time together. One such summer, Nana and Papa took us to Texas to spend time with Aunt Debra, Uncle Clarence, Nate, Amon and, of course, Great Nana Ruth. We were pretty young, and we were going through a big video game phase and didn't fully understand how important it was to put the tablets down and spend time with family.

One day, Great Nana called us over to do daily stretches with her. Callie and I just wanted to keep playing our video games, but we went and sat down next to her anyway. I was a little older than Callie, so I put my iPad down straight away. Callie, however, to, and to be fair, she probably didn't



video game phase and didn't fully understand how important it was to put the tablets down and spend

the living room to do some of her stretches. Callie and I were a little confused and honestly didn't want to stop playing our video games, but we went and sat down next to her anyway. I was a little older than Callie, so I put my iPad down straight away. Callie, however, wasn't very aware that she needed to put the tablets down and spend time with family.

We started doing the stretches, although Callie wasn't really participating. Then, right in the middle of everything, honestly we couldn't have done more than a couple of stretches, Callie suddenly screeched, "Are we done yet?!"

At the time it didn't seem funny at all, I was scared for how Great Nana would react and both Nana and Mama had told us several times to be good listeners and be respectful. But Great Nana just shook her head slowly and said we could go back to our room. She did not yell, she was patient, and kinder in that moment than we deserved. My sister and I silently giggled as we quickly walked back to the room. We shared a moment together as sisters that was gifted to us by Great Nana's kindness and understanding that I have never forgotten.

Now that I'm older and can look back on it, the moment makes me laugh every time. It's one of those memories that reminds me of how special those summers were, how much we've grown, and how much time we spent together as a family.

Love,  
**MIKAYLA**

### *Three Lessons from My Grandmother*

My grandmama had a way of teaching life lessons that you never forgot. She was so relatable. Sometimes they came in the form of a joke, sometimes just by the way she lived her life, and sometimes through a story she told again and again. The impact of her, is that unbeknownst to me there are at least three lessons that still guide my life today.

The first lesson came when I was in college. She traveled to Wheaton to meet Chuck for the first time and before meeting him took my best friend and me out to Red Lobster. As we got out of the car and headed into the restaurant, she threw one arm around me and loudly whispered "Y'know, every girl should be dating more than one guy at once." I laughed out loud in the moment, because of course I knew everything, and she had not yet met Chuck. And, what I knew she meant was to convey the wisdom from a life lived: *Know your worth*. But now, as a mother parenting two teenage girls, who funnily enough also know everything, I think of how brave she was to deliver her truth and wisdom in such a relatable way. So relatable that my friends and I still laugh about it to this day. In my own way, it's also the way I parent my girls today, trying to balance Grandma's recipe of honesty, humor and love and meeting them with my wisdom exactly where they're at in life.



The second lesson formed what my husband and I affectionately call "hot chocolate moments." One day in my college cafeteria, my grandfather returned to the table with a steaming cup of hot chocolate, and, without missing a beat, my grandmother looked up at him, thanked him for bringing her the cup and asked him where his cup was. Without hesitation, he handed her the cup and went back to get another for himself. It was a small moment, but it showed something lasting. It was like watching a secret language being spoken between them -- my grandmother quietly reminding him how she wanted to be taken care of and my grandfather reminding her that she was always his first priority. Both of them taught us as a new couple that even after decades of

marriage, there's still room to teach each other how you want to be loved, and how important it is to continually choose one another every day -- even in the "hot chocolate" moments.

The third lesson was to always put the walnuts in before the rice. At Christmas time my grandma would tell a story with a mason jar, walnuts, and rice. The walnuts represented the most important things in life: faith, family, and taking care of yourself. The jar would start with the rice in the jar and she would begin to put the walnuts in one by one, but before she could get even half of them in, the jar would be full. At that point she would begin to empty the jar and would remind us that when you feel like you're burning the candle at both ends, when life feels like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole, when you've given it all you've got and feel like you still have no gas left in the tank, never be afraid to reset. Then she would remind us, as she began to put the walnuts back into a now *empty* jar, that when you put the important cornerstones of life *first* -- your relationship with the Lord, time with family, selfcare, etc. -- there will always be room for the rice. At this point, she would take the jar now filled to the brim with walnuts and begin to pour in the rice, and like magic, the rice would find its way into all of the nooks and crannies left by the walnuts and it would all fit into the jar. When you prioritize the most important things in life, the things that keep you grounded and whole, the rest of life will always find its place. The story is one I tell to this day, to every single law student I meet for coffee, to every 1st year associate trying to navigate big law for the first time, to my friends becoming new mothers, all wondering how I am juggling it all. I tell them, "My grandmother tells a story ...." and let her wisdom live on. **Whenever life feels too full: take the rice out, reset, and put the walnuts in first.**

Thank you Grandma.

Love you,

**ANGELA**

A while back, we called to check in on Grandma,  
and shared with her about a recent fast food stop at Arby's.  
She replied "I like Arby's...(pause)

I like Denny's." Very matter of fact.

I don't know why we were so tickled by this exchange,  
but we still talk about it now.

Sweet grandma.

Every time we spoke to her she was full of life.

Love you,

Grandma Ruth!

**JOSH & STEPHANIE**



### *I Remember Grandma*

I still remember the last time Grandma bought me clothes. Happy memories fade, but the humiliating ones stick with you. "Grandma, I've told you ten times. I don't want any new shirts." Grandma ignores my objections, eyes alight as she appraises racks of men's clothing. "Well why not? I'm paying for it."

*Why not? Because I'm months from my 40th birthday and I can buy my own clothes, thank you very much. Why not? Because I've been following you from store to store for FIVE hours and I'm ready to go home. Why not? Because...*

I come out of my reverie to see Grandma's eyes on me, waiting for a reply. "Why not? Because...I traveled here from China with just a carryon. I just don't have room for extra clothes." I allow myself a congratulatory smile for my grownup use of tact and logic -- on

the inside, of course. I still need to survive until my 40th birthday after all. "Hmph." Grandma destroys my logic in her usual way -- by ignoring it completely. She holds a shirt to my chest and smiles. "I think this one would fit wonderfully." "But Grandma..." "If you need help packing, I will help you pack."



On the embarrassment scale of men near 40, even worse than having one's grandma pick out your clothes would be having Grandma stuff your socks, underwear, and Rogaine into your backpack. I abandon logic for silence. Grandma smiles again. "I think your grandfather would have liked this on you." And of course, with that, the argument is over.

When we arrive back home, I am the proud (if not willing) owner of four shirts, three ties, and minus one cubic foot of luggage space. Which, if you knew my grandma, was the only way this story was going to end. Or...I should say, I wish that's where the story ended. Frustrated with having to argue my own clothing choices, I left behind everything but two of the shirts. Like any rational, mature, almost-40-year-old, I hid the rest – back of the closet, under the bed, all the most logical places, you know. It was bad enough I had to leave behind a pair of Adidas just to fit those two shirts.

*Can you imagine anything as frustrating as having to pack things you don't need in the first place?*

Fast forward some years, and I get the news that my grandma has passed. In my initial sadness, I took small comfort in the fact that I could wear the very last set of clothes she bought for me. I dumped out half my closet before I remembered that I left most of that gift behind. And the two shirts I did bring? Gone to who knows where.

*Can you imagine anything as frustrating as not being able to pack the things you need because you were too childish to know you were going to need them?*

I'm firmly on the other side of 40 now. No one would ever think to argue with me about my own clothing choices. Somehow, I don't feel the better for it. May we all be blessed with people who stubbornly love us enough to buy us things we don't need, and further blessed with the wisdom to treasure them.

I miss you, Grandma. Next time I go shopping for clothes, I'm sure you'll be looking over my shoulder, pointing out shirts I don't think I need. I promise I'll be wise enough not to argue.

Love,  
**TRES**

### *In Loving Appreciation Of Mom*

From the very first day of my marriage to Cheryl, Mom and Dad went out of their way to make me feel appreciated, loved, and truly a part of the family. Even more so after my own mother passed away from cancer less than nine years into our marriage. Mom never allowed me to feel motherless, because her love stepped in and filled the huge void that had been left in my heart.

Instead of referring to me as her son-in-law, Mom would always introduce me as her "son-in-love." That simple phrase meant more to me than words can express.

I am extremely blessed to have experienced the love of two mothers in my lifetime. Mom, even though I am happy for you that you can now experience the love of Jesus face to face, I will miss you so much. Thank you for sharing your mother's love with me.

Love,  
**JERRY**



## *He is My Home*

by Cheryl James Redfield

*(This poem imagines Momma sharing with me)*

Peering through space for a bit of light to seep in,  
I see billowing rain clouds gather; a storm is brewing.  
I hear wind howling— angry, loud and strong,  
And, I feel a sense of fear begin to rise up in my lungs.

But...  
I close my eyes, and take a breath,  
The noise strangely dims,  
Sheltered by His wings I know  
I am safe with Him.

**Refrain:**  
I am in my refuge,  
For that I am so grateful.  
The place I go,  
to hide in shadow,  
my fortress,  
a place I trust.

It's never far away  
No matter the hour, nor the day.  
God is there  
He hears my prayer,  
My God, He is my Home.

Listening to reports of war, crime and pestilence  
I get the sense that mankind is lost to selfishness.  
Stories of disaster prevail and evil goes unthwarted,  
Makes me long for a place where goodness is rewarded.

But...  
I close my eyes, and take a breath,  
The stories, strangely dim.  
He softly brings to my remembrance  
That I am sealed in Him.

*Love you, Momma. And, thank you for the grace and peace your words bring.*

### **Refrain:**

I abide in my refuge,  
For that I am so grateful!  
The place I go,  
to hide in shadow,  
my fortress,  
a place I trust.

It's never far away  
No matter the hour, nor the day.  
God is there  
He hears my prayer,  
My God, He is my Home.

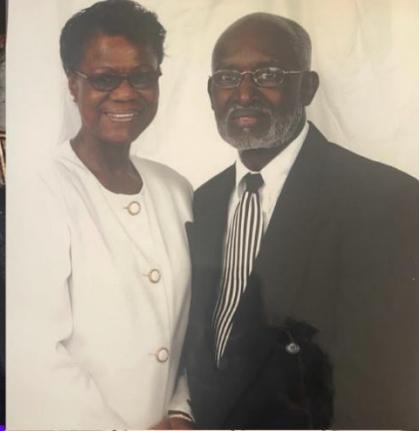
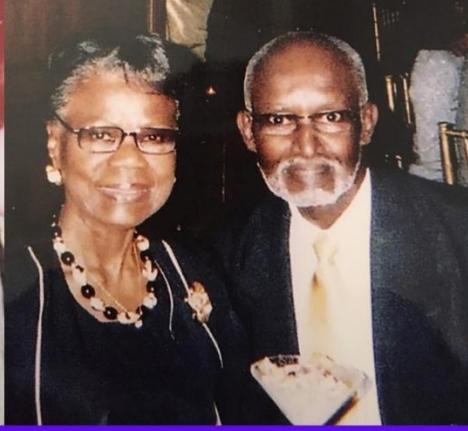
Throughout my life I've learned, death lurks everywhere.  
At ev'ry turn, on any day, I too will be snared.  
Yet, death's sting is lost to me, for I know what He's done—  
Prepared a radiant, everlasting place where we're forever one.

So...  
I close my eyes, and take my *last* breath,  
Things on earth grow dim.  
He paid the price to rescue me  
Now, I am present with Him.

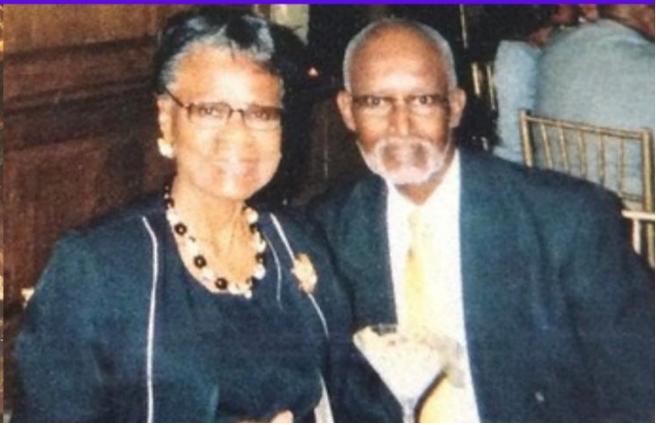
**Refrain:**  
I arrive in His kingdom,  
For that I am so grateful!  
The place I know  
where no shadow  
exists because  
of His light.

Dear one, He's not far away!  
Call Him, no matter the hour, nor day.  
God is here!  
And, He hears your fragrant prayers,  
God, He is our Home!

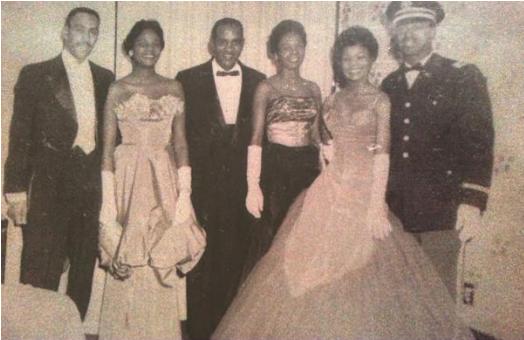




*Mr. & Mrs. Clarence & Ruth James*







## Thank You!

We are truly blessed to have so many people to acknowledge and thank. Our matriarch, Ruth Marie Wordlaw James (Mama), lived as a beautiful example of the scriptural instruction found in Ecclesiastes 11:1: "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again." Mama gave freely and often to many. In return, great love and generosity flowed back to her—and to us, her family.

So many of you visited Mama wherever she was, took her to medical and other appointments, and brought her Communion and food. You called and checked on her, sent thoughtful letters and cards, and included her in your family activities. You welcomed her wisdom and shared yours with her. You helped celebrate her birthdays and stood by her when Daddy passed. In countless ways, you nurtured Mama's body and soul.

You were her family and her friends. And you extended that same love to us—supporting and encouraging us as we cared for her, and more recently as we mourn her passing.

Your support in helping us plan and carry out today's celebration of Mama's life has been comprehensive and deeply loving. The calls, texts, and other expressions of care have encouraged and comforted us more than words can express.

We would love to personally thank each person by name, but we intentionally chose not to list individual names because so many stepped up for Mama and for our family, and we would never want to risk unintentionally omitting someone. Please know that we are deeply grateful and sincerely thankful for each of you.

May God richly bless you all!  
We're Better Together!  
The Family of  
RUTH MARIE WORDLAW JAMES

## Active Pallbearers

AMON BALDWIN | NATHANIEL BALDWIN | CHARLES OLDHAM, JR. | JERRY REDFIELD, III  
JOSHUA REDFIELD | PHILIP REDFIELD | JERMILL THOMPSON-JAMES

### Honorary Pallbearers

Nephews and Nieces  
The Deacons &  
Deaconesses of  
Mt. Hebron M.B. Church

### Flower Bearers

The Usher Ministry of  
Mt. Hebron Church

### Place of Interment

DFW National Cemetery  
2000 Mountain Creek Pkwy  
Dallas, Texas

### Repast

Mt. Hebron MB Church  
1233 State Highway 66  
Garland, Texas

## Final Care

Restland Funeral Home | 13005 Greenville Avenue | Dallas, Texas

*The family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Ruth's name to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, or the Cure Alzheimer's Fund.*

*We leave you with this scripture that momma lived her life by:*  
**Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**  
*Proverbs 3:5-6*

