

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Visitation: 10:00 AM – Narthex

Funeral: 11:00 AM - Sanctuary

Alfred Street Baptist Church

301 S. Alfred Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Senior Pastor

A Celebration of Life

A portrait of Barbara Patterson Sparks-Keller, an elderly Black woman with a warm smile. She is wearing a white crocheted hat with a veil and large hoop earrings. The portrait is set against a light blue background with a floral wreath of white and blue flowers and greenery framing it. The background of the entire card features a subtle floral pattern and a dark blue section at the bottom.

BARBARA
PATTERSON
SPARKS-
KELLER

sunrise: August 3, 1932 – *sunset:* January 20, 2023

Barbara Keller

On January 20, 2023, Barbara Lucille La Ha Patterson Sparks-Keller, 90, of Badin, North Carolina, found rest in the arms of the almighty.

Barbara, affectionately known as the “hat lady” or simply, “Barbara Keller,” was born on August 3, 1932, becoming number 11 out of 13. Barbara was proud to have never missed a day at West Badin High School. For one year, Barbara attended Shaw University before studying nursing at Kate Bitting Memorial Hospital.

In the 1950s, Barbara moved to Alexandria, VA and gave birth to her only child, Ellanor Jean Sparks in 1958.

Her career as a nurse was a historic one—being the first Black woman to work at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), being the first Black nurse at Navy Hospital in Bethesda, MD, and being one of the first Black school nurses in the newly integrated Alexandria Public School system, working at Francis C. Hammond Middle School for 35 years.

Even after retirement, Barbara still remained committed to serving others, acting as a caretaker, resource, and friend in times of need.

For over 60 years, Barbara was a member of Alfred Street Baptist Church, serving as a Deacon and Missionary. She worked with Homeless Outreach, the Family Bereavement Ministry, Helping Hands, Pastor’s Aid, and was a Lay Leader. With Deacon William Willis, Barbara began the program to deliver Christmas baskets to families in the community, taking money out of her own pocket to ensure families had a happy holiday. She also was a member of Psalms of Praise, attending choir practice regularly.

Her mission to God was recognized with numerous accolades, including her service as President of the Virginia Baptist Convention between 1989–1991, where she also received the Prestigious President’s Award in

2011. In 2022, Barbara was recognized as being a “Pillar of the Church” by Rev. Howard-John Wesley.

Barbara was an avid traveler with her “posse” (you know who you are), visiting every continent besides Antarctica. Her first mission trip for the Lord was to Jerusalem with Rev. John O. Peterson. As the president of the Baptist General Convention, she visited 125 churches all over Virginia, representing the Lord. Her travels with Lott Carey led her to be recognized as Woman of the Year in 2017.

Her love of sports also took her around the country—visiting 32 stadiums across the United States. Beginning in 1988, Barbara started having her world-renowned Super Bowl parties that still are happening today.

Barbara was an avid reader. Every morning, she would go outside to grab her copy of *The Washington Post*, read her bible, and sit in her favorite chair with her beloved Roxy by her feet. One of her favorite activities was sitting down to do a puzzle (for the last few years, she limited herself to a 300-piece count). Every night, Barbara would watch CNN (especially Anderson Cooper) to put herself to sleep.

As a generous giver, Barbara left a legacy on all who knew her. The best advice she gave her daughter was to accept every prayer because you never know what prayer enters God’s ears first. She prayed for us, and started us on our way.

Barbara now peacefully awaits in heaven when she will be reunited with her beloved survivors Ellanor Peck (daughter), John Peck (son-in-law), Anna Peck (granddaughter), Jonathan Peck (grandson), Cozzetta Thomas (sister), Lois P. Dixon (sister), Jennifer & Nadia Berry (goddaughters), Terry Patterson (sister-in-law), and numerous family members and friends. Barbara was preceded in death by her mother, Anna Lipscomb Patterson, and husband, Sgt. Otis Keller.



ORDER OF SERVICE

PreludeInstrumentalist
 Invocation Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
 Hymn of Rejoicing: “Just A Closer Walk with Thee”

Scripture Reading

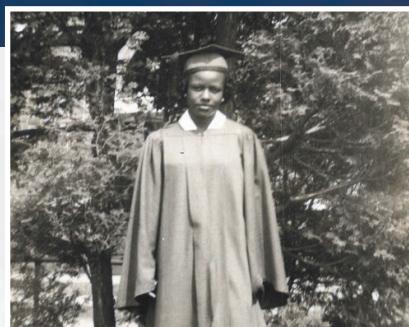
Old Testament: Psalm 23.....Rev. Marla Hawkins
 New Testament: John 14: 1–6..... Rev. Marcia Norfleet
 Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 4: 13–18Deacon Patricia Johnson
 Prayer of Comfort Deacon Bessie Johnson
 Musical Selection: “His Eye is on the Sparrow” Lynda Prioleau, soloist
 Acknowledgements..... Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
 Tributes/ReflectionsDeacon Patricia Wallace, Deacon Tribute

Rev. Emmett L. Dunn, Lott Carey
 Polly Jones-Mason, Baptist General Convention of Virginia
 Jonathan Peck, Grandson

Musical Selection: “I Don’t Feel No Ways Tired”. Ralph Herndon, soloist
 Eulogy..... Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
 Closing Prayer and Benediction..... Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
 Recessional: “Going Up Yonder”

God's Garden

God looked around his garden
 And saw an empty place.
 He then looked down upon the earth
 And saw your tired face.
 He put his arms around you
 And lifted you to rest.
 God’s garden must be beautiful,
 He always takes the best.
 He knew that you were suffering.
 He knew you were in pain.
 He knew that you would never
 Get well on earth again.
 He saw the road was getting rough,
 And the hill’s hard to climb.
 So he closed your weary eyelids,
 And whispered, Peace Be Thine.
 It broke our hearts to lose you,
 But you did not go alone.
 For part of us went with you
 The day God called you home.



INTERMENT

Will be held at Arlington Cemetery
at a later date

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

We ask for donations to the Alfred Street
Baptist Church Missions Department

PALLBEARERS

Michael Peck	Duane Callis
Curtis Thomas	Derrick Barber
Kenneth Klutz	Hayward Middough

SERVICES ENTRUSTED TO

Greene Funeral Home
814 Franklin Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

REPAST

Immediately following service:

Hampton Inn & Suites
5821 Richmond Highway
Alexandria, VA 22303

Acknowledgments

The family of Barbara S. Keller is truly appreciative of
the many acts of love and kindness during this time
of bereavement. We thank everyone for the prayers,
phone calls, and other acts of service.

