

# Homegoing Service for Deacon Robert E. Stephens

**Sunrise**  
August 5, 1940

**Sunset**  
April 28, 2017



## **Service**

Saturday, May 6, 2017 – 10:00 am

## **Clearview Baptist Church**

341 Hobson Street  
Newark, NJ 07112



# Obituary

## **Robert E. Stephens**

### **Early Years**

Robert E. Stephens (Bob) of North Brunswick was born on August 5, 1940 to Charlie G. and Marietta Stephens of Spartanburg County South Carolina. He entered his eternal rest on April 28, 2017. He graduated from New Bethel High School(Now Woodruff High School) in 1958 and then matriculated to Johnson C Smith graduating in 1963 earning a Bachelor degree in Social Science and Economics. His first job out of college was as an Economics teacher at Georgetown High School in Jacksonville, NC. August of 1965 was a special time for Robert. Not only did he begin a new job with Hercules Chemical Co., he also married his childhood friend and love of his life, Wilma Pearson. Two years later, Robert and Wilma would make the decision to relocate to Newark, New Jersey where he was able to put his education to use by working for the Essex County Welfare Board in 1967.

### **Family**

In October 1970, Robert and Wilma expanded their family by adding a bouncing baby boy, Marcus I. Stephens(Marc). Three years later, The Stephens Family would move from their apartment in Newark, NJ and settle into their first house in the progressive suburb of Hillside, NJ. Robert and Wilma only had one child however, the memories that they created would sustain them for a lifetime. Although Robert had one child, he established relationships with young boys and girls, men and women that resulted in him being a surrogate parent to many.

### **Career**

In the fall of 1973, in a bold move, Robert took an educational sabbatical from The Essex County Welfare Board to attend Rutgers University in New Brunswick where he graduated with a Masters of Social Work degree that was completed in May of 1974. Upon completion of an internship with the New Jersey Department of Corrections, he was chosen to head the Newark House Program in 1975, the only adult male half-way house facility, operated by the New Jersey Department of Corrections. Due to his relentless work ethic, in early 1982, Robert, a young, rising talent in The Department of Corrections, was chosen to serve as the Asst. Superintendent at Mid-State Correctional Facility. Two years later in 1984, Robert was promoted from Assistant Superintendent to Superintendent where he served until 1986. In 1986, Robert was hand-selected to run a brand new, state of the art facility, located in Newark New Jersey called Northern State Correctional Facility.

While there, Robert created many jobs and opportunities for the residents of Newark and surrounding areas, as well as mentored and counseled

many individuals as they traversed their respective careers. His tenure there lasted until 1993. In July of 1993, another promotional opportunity knocked. He was promoted to the roll of Deputy Director of The Department of Corrections. His new position gave him oversight for three institutions. Just as he thought that his career had peaked, in 1994, he received yet another promotion. Serving, at the time, as the highest ranking Black person in the department, in the capacity of Director of the Division of Operations, providing oversight over Chaplaincy Services, Youth Boot Camp and the Academy and Staff Training. He enjoyed a well-deserved retirement in 1999 after a successful 32-year career.

### **Church**

Robert accepted The Lord as his personal savior at an early age. He was a dedicated and active member of Clear View Baptist Church for 43 years. He was a member and longtime Chairman of the Trustee Board, using his leadership skills to lead the church through good and unsettling times. Robert utilized his former teaching experience to teach Sunday School, as well as new members at Clear View. In May 1992, Robert reached the pinnacle of his layman calling, as he was ordained as a Deacon and worked diligently in "...His father's vineyard". Robert also had a special affinity working with the men of Clear View and the youth, serving on the Scholarship committee. He also served on many other committees and Boards.

### **Service**

Throughout his lifetime, Robert was committed to the self-less act of serving others through many avenues. While attending Johnson C. Smith University, Robert was initiated as a brother of the Rho Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He also dedicated his life and time to The Orange-East Orange Optimist Club, in 2015, Robert received the O.A.R (Offender Aid and Restoration) Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication to healthy re-entry of former inmates into society. He also served on many boards of Professional organizations, such as, the Board of Trustees of the Middle Atlantic Correctional Association, a member of the Board of the North American Association of Wardens/Superintendents and a member of the National Black Law Enforcement Executives. Robert leaves to mourn, his wife of 53 years, Wilma Stephens. His son and daughter-in-law, Marcus and Helen Stephens. His two Grandchildren, Summer and Miles, who were his pride and joy.

He is survived by his Aunt Bernice Good and Aunt, The Rev. Deborah Williams and her husband Bennie Williams. A host of Cousins, nieces and nephews and especially, his Brothers and Sister, Alar Higgins (Letha), Lewis Stephens (Katherine), Nadine Smith and Fred Stephens (Mary). He has joined in Glory his Mother and Father, Charlie and Marietta Stephens, and Brothers Percy (Lilly Ruth), Grover and his Eldest sister, Queenie.

# Order of Service

Musical Prelude .....Musician

Opening Words .....The Rev. Curtis Belle, Jr.

Opening Song .....Choir

Scripture

Old Testament .....Rev. Samuel Johnson

New Testament .....Rev. Ivy McCord

Prayer of Comfort .....Rev. Tommy Miles

Special Tributes/Presentations

Acknowledgements..... Jo-anne Johnson

Obituary .....Shaunda Lumpkin

Solo .....Ronald Browning

Eulogy .....Reverend Eric M. Beckham  
Zion Hill Baptist Church, Marietta, GA

Closing Prayer .....Rev. Curtis Belle, Jr.

Recessional

**-Interment-**  
Franklin Memorial Park  
North Brunswick, New Jersey

# Safely Home

I am home in Heaven, dear ones; Oh, so happy and so bright!  
There is perfect joy and beauty In this everlasting light.

All the pain and grief is over, Every restless tossing passed;  
I am now at peace forever, Safely home in Heaven at last.

Did you wonder I so calmly Trod the valley of the shade?  
Oh! But Jesus' love illumined Every dark and fearful glade.

And He came Himself to meet me In that way so hard to tread;  
And with Jesus' arm to lean on, Could I have one doubt or dread?

Then you must not grieve so sorely, For I love you dearly still:  
Try to look beyond earth's shadows, Pray to trust our Father's Will.

There is work still waiting for you, So you must not idly stand;  
Do it now, while life remaineth - You shall rest in Jesus' land.

When that work is all completed, He will gently call you Home:  
Oh, the rapture of that meeting, Oh, the joy to see you come!

## Acknowledgement

Perhaps you sent a lovely card or sat quietly in a chair.

Perhaps you sent a floral piece If so, we saw it there.

Perhaps you spoke the kindest words as any friend could say.

Perhaps you were not there at all just thought of us on that day.

Whatever you did to console our hearts, We Thank You,  
Whatever the part.

### Professional Services Provided By

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