



## Mrs. Ruth Helen McCray

December 1, 1929 - July 1, 2016

Ruth Helen McCray was born on December 1, 1929, the oldest child born to Clifton and Irene (Baylor) Gardner in DeKalb County, Mississippi. Her childhood home in Decatur, Mississippi is still the family's homestead. Ruth and her six siblings shared in the farming chores on the land that her father and mother purchased. Following the death of her father, her mother, Irene, and the children kept and maintained the property and the raising of chickens, hogs, cows and crops for over fifty years after which Irene lived on the family homestead and worked the crops of potatoes, greens, yams, and other goods herself. It was this lived example of her mother and father that gave Ruth her own strength, faith, drive, determination and productivity.

Ruth was baptized at nine years of age. She grew and developed in her Christian walk through her parents' example and teaching of Christian discipleship and service to God by helping others and through her active participation at church.

At a very early age, Ruth was challenged with a serious illness, Rheumatic Fever. She experienced the pain and paralysis that her illness wrought her. At twelve years old the doctors said she would never walk and likely wouldn't make it. That was when her mother and father took her home

and nursed her themselves. Ruth was healed of her illness, walked and lived a very active and productive life to the glory of God.

Always interested in education and learning, Ruth completed her early education in the Kemper County education system. She attended high school in Meridian, Mississippi, but left early to work and assist her mother in the care of her younger siblings. At the age of nineteen, Ruth left Mississippi for Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she joined with her great aunt, Lennie Jones. It was then that she united with Calvary Baptist Church under the pastorate of Rev. Dr. Melvin J. Battle.

On November 24, 1949, Ruth married James McCray. Their union continued until his passing twenty-five years ago. They were blessed with three children, Arnold Glenn, Linda Arnell, and Trinette Vernel!. Ruth and James were very active and engaged parents who gave their children very well rounded family experiences of home life with parakeets, cats and dogs; weekends filled with lake front sleep outs, Sunday drives and custard stand visits; Major League Baseball games to watch the Braves play; vacations to Mississippi, New York, Chicago, Gary, and weeklong cabin stays in Wisconsin Dells. Top on the list were the fishing trips the whole family would take, including time spent together cleaning the catch. Ruth enjoyed bowling and was a member of the bowling team at work. Her example led to her daughters Linda and Trinette also becoming league bowlers.

Ruth was a diligent and faithful employee. She worked as a sales clerk and store security for Boston Store; worked for Johnson Controls; was a clerk in the County Executive's Office under William O'Donnell, and lastly, worked

for Kohl's Food Store first as a checkout clerk and later as the bakery department manager, where she introduced the coconut pineapple cake to the Teutonia and Capitol Kohl's Food Store's Bakery.

Ruth returned to school attending the Milwaukee Area Technical College to complete her high school diploma in her 40's, even as she was working full-time and raising her youngest children. She graduated walking in cap and gown to the cheers of her husband and proud children.

Ruth attended worship and Sunday School regularly. She was a founding member of the Esther Circle and participated in American Baptist Women's ministries and programs. Ruth represented the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin during the 1982 Biennial Convention in Puerto Rico. A progressive leader, she was among the Calvary team that formed the Calvary Housing Development, Ltd, and was a member of the founding board serving as the Chair of the Membership Committee. Ruth was humbled to have been asked to serve on the Deaconess Board where she served faithfully until her health challenges prevented her. She was designated Deaconess Emerita under Pastor John R. Walton, Jr. She was also a member of the Gospel Choir and later enjoyed the Golden Heirs senior ministry, and deeply enjoyed attending the annual women's retreats. In 1990, Ruth was selected to be Calvary's Honored Mother.

:

Ruth gave freely from her heart and was known to her multitude of cousins and relatives as someone on whom they could depend to lend a listening ear, life tips, assist with transitions, and "do" their hair using her skill with the pressing comb and hot curlers. She was entrepreneurial and ran her own Tupperware and Jewelry businesses, and successfully started her own

carpet cleaning franchise called EZ-Way Carpet Cleaners. Ruth served as a member of the Milwaukee Branch NAACP and was active in the Wisconsin Business and Professional Women's organization, the Meridianites Social Club of Milwaukee, and the Chatterbox Club and their annual Ball.

Ruth H. McCray was called from labor to reward early Friday morning, July 1, 2016. She transitioned peacefully into her eternal rest. She was preceded in her transition by her husband, James, her son, Arnold; her father and mother, Clifton and Irene Gardner; sister Polly and brother Edward who passed away as children; and her sister Evelyn Gardner Wisdom. She leaves to lovingly cherish her memory, two daughters, Linda A. Brantley and Trinette V. McCray; two grandchildren, David McCray and Alexandria Jeannine McCray; three great grandsons, DaShaun McCray, Alexander and Gabriel Burnette; a faithful daughter in love, Audrey Moore; two sisters, Eloise (Connie) Anderson (Sylvester), Bronx, New York; and Vale an Welch (Roger), Decatur, Mississippi; three brothers, William Gardner, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Edgar Gardner, (Rosalyn), Long Island, New York; and Walter Gardner, Decatur, Mississippi. She is further embraced and loved by a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Ruth loved family, friends, her church, and her community, but so much more she loved Jesus, her Lord. In the end she prayed, "Lord, have mercy." He answered her prayer and sweetly called her home. "Welcome home, Ruth. Welcome home."

# Cemetery Details

## Wisconsin Memorial Park

13235 W. Capitol Dr.  
Brookfield, WI

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL 7. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel  
6630 W. Hampton Ave  
Milwaukee, WI

## Service

JUL 8. 11:00 AM (CT)

Calvary B.C.  
2959 N. Teutonia Ave  
Milwaukee, WI

# Tribute Wall

CH

“ Aunt Ruth, this late evening memories of you come to my mind, invading my thoughts. I recall how zen and calm you were. I remember your soft chuckle and smile. You were always so kind and sweet to me. I thank the Lord for you and your generosity. You meant a lot to me. It's weird how memories come and so does a tear or two.

Thank you for showing me gentleness, grace and womanhood.  
Love you dearly, Niece Chrystal

---

**Chrystal** - September 10, 2019 at 10:09 PM

LI

“ Love You Mom. Always have always will. Its been 6 months since you went home. Miss you much. It was rough for me but getting better as time goes on. Just thought I'd write you this note as I look into your beautiful smiling face. The tears arent as frequent, but when they come, they come. Then I tell myself, STOP, Mom would not want YOU TO CRY BUT BE HAPPY. She is with HER lord. FREE AT LAST FROM ALL PAIN, SUFFERINGS AND GRIEF. To hurt no more. Linda (your sunshine)



---

**Linda** - January 11, 2017 at 03:32 PM

TE

“ Theron & Glenda, Lemuel, Helen & Erica purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Mrs. Ruth Helen McCray.



---

**Theron & Glenda, Lemuel, Helen & Erica** - July 07, 2016 at 10:25 AM

CC

“ *To the Family -  
Please be comforted in knowing that friends care and are here for  
you. She is at eternal peace with the only one who can make it so.*

*Love,  
Celeste Campbell*

---

**Celeste Campbell** - July 07, 2016 at 09:14 AM

JB

“ *Judith, Yolanda and Dawn Baity purchased the M  
edium Dish Garden for the family of Mrs. Ruth  
Helen McCray.*



---

**Judith, Yolanda and Dawn Baity** - July 07, 2016 at 05:07 AM