



Donna Gayle Venable

February 14, 1955 - November 7, 2024

In His infinite wisdom the Lord welcomed Donna into her eternal reward of comfort, joy, and peace on November 7, 2024. Donna was the second of four children born to the late Deacons Mary and Benjamin Spencer, Sr.

Born in the Almagro section of Danville, VA, Donna received her primary school education in the Richmond, VA public school system where she graduated from the John Marshall High School as Salutatorian in 1973.

Fueled by a commitment to children and uplifting her community, she prepared for a career in education at the College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia where she received an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education. She later received a Masters Degree in Education from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). It was also at VCU that Donna became a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc, which introduced her to community service and expanded her joy in sisterhood.

Donna had a fruitful career as an interventionist, special education advocate, and administrator. She adored the children and families she served and was particularly insistent on helping those who needed it the most. Initially she worked in the Fluvanna County School System, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. Her lengthy tenure in public service was primarily spent serving in the Chesterfield County School System with leadership positions in

Head Start, Assistant Principal of W.W. Gordon Elementary School, and Principal of Hopkins Road Elementary School where she retired.

In addition to her commitment to children and families, Donna always felt a strong call to serve God and her community. After many years as a member of Mt. Tabor Baptist Church, she went on to serve at First Baptist Midlothian, First Baptist Centralia, Bon Air Baptist Church Midlothian and most recently, Donna led the Women's Ministry at New Elam Baptist Church of New Kent County, VA as the First Lady supporting her husband Les in his Pastorate. Donna's reverence to the Word of God also included her ritual of daily prayer and study.

Throughout her life, people were instantly drawn to Donna. She had a special gift for connecting with people at a very deep and personal level. Donna also had a big heart. She received many letters and cards from people such as this one which encompasses her professionally as well as personally:

"I see a woman who has passion for her job as well as for her co-workers. She does her job with poise and confidence. She is gentle but firm when necessary. She listens to gain understanding. She is sympathetic to all our needs, whether we are a co-worker, a parent or one of the children. She is loyal and trustworthy to all, and if she ever has a bad day you would have to look hard to notice as she never loses control. She is someone we can all learn from, a great leader, boss and friend. We are all blessed that she came into our lives."

Donna was always encouraging and inspiring others to expand their horizons, making them feel loved and important while she did it. She was an incredibly devoted wife, mother and grandmother, sister, daughter, and friend who was always concerned for the betterment of others.

She was a lifelong learner, which included a long history of daily viewing of Jeopardy and competing alongside both the contestants and whomever was watching with her. As both her children and her husband Les know well, she wasn't shy about celebrating her correct answers!

Donna was a wonderful baker and enjoyed exercising at several different gyms over the years, especially boxing at Apex Physical therapy where she had many friends.

Among her great joys were welcoming the sunrise and sunset daily as well as weekly trips to Dairy Queen. She adored trips to the beach and was always up for a game of putt-putt, scrabble, or words with friends. Above all Donna loved God, her husband, her family, and her Virginia Cavaliers. Wahoowa!

Preceding Donna in death were her parents Deacon Benjamin L. Spencer, Deacon Mary N. Spencer, and brother Benjamin L. Spencer Jr.

Memories of Donna's remarkable life will be cherished by her devoted husband of 24 years, Rev. Les C. Venable and her large, loving family: son, Eric S. Cooper, Sr. (Laila) of Oakton, VA; daughter Michelle Grayson (Brett) of San Francisco, CA; stepsons Malcolm Venable of Los Angeles, CA and Martin Venable of Newport News, VA; grandchildren Emera S. Cooper, Eric S. Cooper, Jr., Elijah S. Cooper, and Kason G. Venable; sisters Cynthia S. Hampton (Shelby), Michele "Mikki" Spencer, sister-in-law Lavern Berry (Waynard); nieces Leslie Berry and Kathryn Bowman; lifelong cherished friends Gloria Hinton and Christa Coleman; bonus daughter Amber Hawker, and a host of cousins and friends.

In lieu of flowers please consider making contributions to The Peter Paul Development Center at 1708 N. 22nd St. Richmond, Virginia 23223.using this

link : <https://peterpaulrva.org/get-involved/donate/>

They will be greatly appreciated.

Cemetery Details

Forest Lawn Cemetery

4000 Pilots Lane
Richmond, VA 23222

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 18. 9:30 AM - 6:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home-Laburnum Ave.
2110 E. Laburnum Ave.
Richmond, VA 23222

Celebration of life with live streaming

NOV 19. 1:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home -Laburnum Chapel
2110 E. Laburnum Ave.
Richmond, VA 23222

Tribute Wall



“ *March Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Donna Gayle Venable*



March Funeral Homes - November 14, 2024 at 12:01 PM

AA

May the sorrow you feel in your heart lighten by the love that surrounds you. Russell and Ann Abrams

Ann Abrams - November 18, 2024 at 11:43 AM

RB

“ *Dear Rev. Venable,
Please accept our sincere condolences and prayers on the loss of
First Lady Venable. We truly admired her.*

Racy and Harriett Bennett - November 20, 2024 at 02:00 PM

SS

“ *Dear Mikki & Family,
I offer my deepest sympathy on the passing
of your sister.
Know that love is forever!
Respectfully,
Shelia Spurlock - Shaw*



Shelia Spurlock-Shaw - November 19, 2024 at 02:49 PM

MH

“ *Michelle Hataway lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable*



Michelle Hataway - November 19, 2024 at 11:57 AM

RS

“ *Our deepest and most heartfelt is extended to the Venable family. God bless.
Robert and Barbara Sayles*



Robert & Barbara Sayles - November 19, 2024 at 11:30 AM

TW

“ *I am Mrs. Donna hairstylist . I've been doing her hair for about four years. I send my condolences to the family. Mrs. Donna was a sweet lady. Very intelligent. We had a lot of laughs together talks together and she shown that she's a very sweet lady and she liked looking good ! she would truly be missed .I appreciate the advice she gave me and my other clients in the shop I will miss you mrs Donna !*



Tracey White - November 19, 2024 at 07:52 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



November 18, 2024 at 09:39 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Donna Gayle Venable.

November 18, 2024 at 09:39 PM



“ *I have known Donna since elementary school and I was delighted to see her at our class reunion in 2023. I have always admired her strength, intelligence and majesty. I am sure her new assignment in Glory will have her using all these qualifications plus others. Family and friends will miss you but knowing God has called you up -is consolation*

Corliss williams - November 18, 2024 at 09:15 PM



“ *Brother Les,*

I extend to you my sincere condolences. I will continue to pray that you and family members will receive the comfort that God so generously provides in times of sorrow.

J. Frederick Mitchell

J. Frederick Mitchell - November 18, 2024 at 07:46 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



November 18, 2024 at 05:45 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Donna Gayle Venable.

November 18, 2024 at 05:45 PM



“ *Our sympathies are extended to Rev. Les Venable and his family in the loss of such a saint in his family. May the Lord of all bless you and keep you in his care as you go through this time of loss.*



Deacon Willie Crump Anderson - November 18, 2024 at 04:34 PM



“ *Ann Abrams lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable*



Ann Abrams - November 18, 2024 at 11:44 AM



My condolence to the family

Jeffery Fells - November 18, 2024 at 12:21 PM

JF

jeffells54@gmail.com

Jeffery Fells - November 18, 2024 at 12:21 PM

LH

“ *Lisa H. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



Lisa H. - November 18, 2024 at 08:13 AM

YF

“ *Your Stanford CAP Family purchased the Sweet Tenderness for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



Your Stanford CAP Family - November 18, 2024 at 01:13 AM

DP

“ *Diane L Powell lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable*



Diane L Powell - November 17, 2024 at 05:05 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.



November 17, 2024 at 04:48 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Donna Gayle Venable.

November 17, 2024 at 04:48 PM



“ Deaconess Joyce Crawford lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable



Deaconess Joyce Crawford - November 17, 2024 at 03:07 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.



November 17, 2024 at 12:49 PM

WB

“ Warren And JoAnne Bell lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable



Warren and JoAnne Bell - November 17, 2024 at 03:12 AM



“ Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.



November 16, 2024 at 12:53 PM

FF

“ From your Stanford NCC family purchased the Heavenly Grace Spray for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.



From your Stanford NCC family - November 16, 2024 at 12:43 PM

WI

“ Willnette lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable



Willnette - November 15, 2024 at 06:17 PM

WI

To Pastor Les and the loving family of First Lady Donna, may our great and loving God continue to bless and keep you in his loving care. My prayers are with you, praying the peace of Christ rest upon you today and always.

Willnette - November 15, 2024 at 06:23 PM

TS

“ *Traci, Tim, Jono, and Samantha. purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



Traci, Tim, Jono, and Samantha. - November 15, 2024 at 04:30 PM

TS

“ *Traci, Tim, Jono, and Samantha. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donna Gayle Venable.*

Traci, Tim, Jono, and Samantha. - November 15, 2024 at 04:30 PM

CD

“ *Mikki and Family,
God Bless.*

*Carolyn Demery
Bethlehem Baptist Church*



Carolyn M Demery - November 15, 2024 at 03:24 PM

DJ

“ Deacon Yvonne M. Jones lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable



Deacon Yvonne M. Jones - November 15, 2024 at 01:36 PM

DJ

*"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4
The Jones Family extends our heartfelt sympathy to Pastor Les Venable and to the family and friends of Sister Donna Gayle Venable. May God's peace surround you in your season of grief.
Yvonne & Herbert C. Jones, Jr.*

Deacon Yvonne M. Jones - November 15, 2024 at 01:40 PM

GG

“ Grandma Susie & family (Brett's Grandmother) purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.



Grandma Susie & family (Brett's Grandmother) - November 14, 2024 at 03:20 PM

PC

“ I am so sorry to hear of Donna's passing. Donna and I worked together at Gordon Elementary School. She was a very supportive administrator who brightened my day with her lovely smile. My condolences to her family. She will be missed.

Phoebe Clarke - November 14, 2024 at 02:04 PM



“ *Heavenly Heights Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donna Gayle Venable.*



November 14, 2024 at 01:36 AM



“ *Our prayers and condolences to your wonderful family, especially your beautiful loving sister , Mikki who is a very special part of our Lottery family.*

M.Gardner - November 13, 2024 at 01:53 PM



“ *The Hathaway Family extends our deepest sympathies to Pastor Les Venable and the family of Sister Donna Gayle Venable. Sister Venable was a light in all the roles she held: a devoted pastor’s wife, a loving mother, a dedicated educator, and the beloved First Lady of New Elam Baptist Church. But beyond her many titles and accomplishments, she was a cherished friend to all who knew her. Her warmth, wisdom, and unwavering faith have left an indelible mark on our lives. May her legacy of love and service continue to inspire us all. We pray for peace and comfort for Pastor Venable and the entire family during this difficult time.*



Dr. Milton & Sylvia Hathaway and Family

Milton Hathaway - November 13, 2024 at 07:53 AM

VB

“ Valerie D. Braxton lit a candle in memory of Donna Gayle Venable



Valerie D. Braxton - November 12, 2024 at 07:16 AM

VB

Our heartfelt condolences to Pastor Venable and family. God has counted every one of your tears, knows your sorrow, and will strengthen and comfort you.

ValerieBraxton & Larry Woodson

Valerie D. Braxton - November 12, 2024 at 07:21 AM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - November 11, 2024 at 03:07 PM

KP

Donna was such a sweet and kind person. We will all miss you Kvenable-Pettyford

kathy venable pettyford - November 18, 2024 at 06:14 PM