



Pastor Eric A. Holder

November 19, 1964 - February 15, 2025

A Life of Faith, Service, and Love

ERIC ARA HOLDER was born to the late O'dell T. Holder Sr. and Dorothy Bell Holder on November 19, 1964, in Washington, D.C. He departed this life unexpectedly, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and unwavering faith.

His Life and Legacy

During his childhood, Eric's family moved to the Palmer Park Community in Prince George's County, Maryland. He was educated in the Prince George's County Public School System and graduated from Parkdale High School, where he excelled as a three-sport athlete. Known for his talent and dedication, he played basketball, football, and baseball, earning the nickname "Varsity" for his impact on the teams. His kindness and thoughtfulness made him beloved by many.

In the fall of 1982, Eric entered the University of Maryland, College Park, on a football scholarship, where he played wide receiver and contributed to three ACC Championship teams. In 1985, he joined Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Epsilon Psi Chapter, alongside six other young men. In the spring of 1987, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice.

Following his graduation, Eric began his career with the Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia. He dedicated 27 years to the agency, rising through the ranks and retiring as the Program Director for Supervision Programs. His passion for mentorship extended beyond his profession – he served as an offensive coordinator for the Pop Warner Football League, coaching the Woodlawn Falcons (1997-1998) and the Northwest Bulldogs (1999-2007) helping to lead the team to two state championships in 2001 and 2004. As both a coach and mentor, he helped shape the lives of many young men.

A Love Rooted in Faith

In 1985, Eric met Toni Downey on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park. Several years of friendship blossomed into a deep love and admiration. Eric and Toni were united in covenant marriage on December 24, 1992, sharing a bond built on faith, love, commitment, and service to God and His people. Their marriage was blessed with four children: Taylor (who preceded him in death), Jalen, Emmanuel and Ryan. Eric was their biggest cheerleader. Always reminding them to be their best, do their best and “Holders don’t quit”. In 2018 a daughter-in love was added to the bunch and Eric embraced her as his own and his grandbabies were his greatest gifts. He loved when they would run to him yelling, “Babu”.

A Servant of God

Eric committed his life to Christ and joined Garden of Prayer Baptist Church in 1991 under the leadership of Rev. Melvin Tuggle II. After being baptized, he served faithfully in various ministries, always willing to do whatever was needed for his church and Pastor. His servant’s heart did not go unnoticed, and the Lord quickly elevated him in church leadership. Pastor Holder preached his initial sermon in 2004 and was ordained in 2007.

In November 2009, he was elected as the Pastor of Grace Baptist Church and installed in March 2010. Under Pastor Holder's leadership, lives were transformed, and disciples were trained. His vision led to the establishment of an annual prayer vigil, which grew to include additional churches. His commitment to community outreach resulted in food and clothing giveaways, partnerships with non-profit organizations, and a thriving annual Community Day, partnering with two additional churches. There was not a role in the church he was not willing to fill, from shoveling snow, to moving furniture to serving food at an event. He was a true servant leader. Pastor Holder's passion for service extended to mentoring newly elected pastors, ensuring they had the guidance and support necessary for their ministries.

A Legacy of Love and Leadership

Pastor Eric Ara Holder was a leader who served with humility, patience, and compassion. He loved unconditionally, led with wisdom, and worked tirelessly to uplift others. He loved life and was always good for a laugh. On occasion he could be caught singing the incorrect lyrics to a song, when called on it, he would sing his version of the song louder. You knew you were family when he said, "we have to find a nickname for you". He was real. He said what he meant and meant what he said, with the love of Christ. He was encouraging to everyone he met. It was not uncommon for him to talk to or pray with strangers. His "stash" that was hidden in his wallet was for those in need. He has given the shirt off his back and watches off his wrist. One of his mantras is, "If he could help somebody as he traveled along the way, then his living was not in vain". It was not unheard of him to show up at sports games for young church members to surprise them and cheer them on. His presence will be deeply missed, but his legacy of faith, love, and service will continue to

inspire all who knew him.

He is preceded in death by his parents O'Dell T. Holder and Dorothy Bell Holder and daughter, Taylor M. Holder.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his wife, Toni Holder; sons, Jalen, Emmanuel (Jordan) and daughter, Ryan; three grandchildren, Ava, Ari, Emmanuel Jr.; In-Laws, Donald and Rose Douglas Sr.; one brother, O'dell T. Holder Jr.; two sisters, Sherease Doublin (Tony), Lisa Thompson (Bill); three brothers-in-law, Calvin Williams Jr. (Charese), Donald Douglas Jr. (Annette), Warren Williams; two sisters-in-law, Rachel Williams, Michelle Williams; five godchildren, several nieces and nephews, many children of his heart and a host of other relatives and friends.

“Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your Lord.”—
Matthew 24:23

Cemetery Details

Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens

200 E. Padonia Rd.
Timonium, MD 21093

Previous Events

Public Viewing

FEB 27. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Grace Baptist Church
3201 The Alameda
Baltimore, MD 21218

Wake

FEB 28. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Huber Community Life Center
5700 Loch Raven Blvd
Baltimore, MD

Funeral Service

FEB 28. 11:00 AM (ET)

Huber Community Life Center
5700 Loch Raven Blvd
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall

SH

“ To Toni Holder and family Keep looking up to Jesus

*And remember EARTH has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal. Friends for life
Stephanie TAFFY Harrison*



Stephanie harrison - February 28, 2025 at 08:37 PM

MA

“ Thanks Pastor Holder for allowing me to facilitate a virtual prayer workshop for your members during the pandemic. My prayers and condolences are extended to your family and all who were attached to your life. Sister Maxine Rush

Maxine - February 28, 2025 at 01:59 PM

SH

“ Sharon H. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Pastor Eric A. Holder.

Sharon H. - February 28, 2025 at 10:43 AM

SK

“ Sam, Wanda, Kendall and Kamryn purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Pastor Eric A. Holder.



Sam, Wanda, Kendall and Kamryn - February 26, 2025 at 07:04 PM

BL

“ Baltimore Lady Panthers For Life! planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Pastor Eric A. Holder.

Baltimore Lady Panthers For Life! - February 26, 2025 at 06:47 PM

BL

“ Baltimore Lady Panthers For Life! purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Pastor Eric A. Holder.



Baltimore Lady Panthers For Life! - February 26, 2025 at 06:47 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Pastor Eric A. Holder.

February 25, 2025 at 12:20 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Pastor Eric A. Holder.



February 25, 2025 at 12:20 PM

C'

“ *Cyndi Brown-Miller Class Of '82 lit a candle in memory of Pastor Eric A. Holder*



Cyndi Brown-Miller Class of '82 - February 21, 2025 at 07:36 PM



“ *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 - February 19, 2025 at 01:35 PM

RB

May the PEACE of GOD be with you and Church Family.

Rosetta R. Burrell - February 21, 2025 at 08:39 PM