

In Loving Memory of



Rosa Lee  
THURMOND

FEBRUARY 8, 1950 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

**Saturday, September 28, 2024**

**12:00 PM**

Hill Chapel Baptist Church • 1692 W. Hancock Ave. Athens, GA

Rev. Benjamin E.V. Lett, Pastor / Rev. Marcus Stroud, Eulogist



# Obituary

## In Loving Memory of Rosa Lee Thurmond

February 8, 1950 – September 17, 2024

On September 17, 2024, Rosa Lee Thurmond, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cherished friend, dedicated community advocate and acclaimed songstress, transitioned from this earthly life at the age of 74. Her life was a shining testament to love, faith, and service, touching countless lives with her kindness, wisdom and God-given gifts.

### A Heart for Family and Community

Born on February 8, 1950, in the Newtown community of Athens, Georgia, Rosa demonstrated a nurturing spirit from a young age, becoming a caretaker for her younger siblings and neighborhood children by the age of 8. Her passion for caring for others naturally led to her first job as a daycare teacher at the Frank C. Maddox Center in the early 1970s, a role she embraced with love and dedication. This commitment to nurturing children and the elderly became a lifelong mission, deeply rooted in her belief in the power of community and compassion.

### A Pioneer in Education and Equality

Rosa was a trailblazer, attending West Broad Street Elementary and being among the first ten African Americans selected to integrate Athens High School (now Clarke Central High School) in 1964. Her participation in this pivotal moment of history reflected her resilience and courage, setting the stage for her lifelong advocacy for equality and progress.

### A Lifelong Advocate for Health and Justice

Rosa's impact extended far beyond her early contributions to education. She became the first African-American receptionist at the Athens-Clarke County Health Department, breaking barriers and paving the way for others. Her career blossomed as she took on roles such as Clerical Supervisor, Switchboard Supervisor and later Supervisor of Vital Records, Environmental Health and Child Health. Her leadership in these roles ensured access to quality healthcare for all, particularly for those facing racial disparities in the system.

Rosa was a respected voice on healthcare panels and boards, using her influence to advocate for fairness and inclusion. She also extended her service to the broader community, serving on the East Athens Development Corporation, the Board of Elections, and the Historic Morton Theater Board. She partnered with Clarke County Schools to present Black History Month programs, sharing her passion for education and cultural awareness.







## A Ministry of Music and Faith

Rosa's faith was central to everything she did. A devoted member of Hill Chapel Baptist Church in Athens, she led the Hill Chapel Youth Choir for 30 years and most recently served as the church historian. Her ministry was one of service, mentoring youth, leading workshops and offering comfort through visits to the sick. Her faith-driven life was a constant source of inspiration to her church family and beyond.

Affectionately known as the "songbird" of Athens, Rosa's voice was a gift to all who heard her. She performed at countless events, including weddings, funerals, the 1996 Summer Olympics in Athens and the WUGA "Once in a Blue Moon" celebration. One of her standout performances was as a soloist for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association at Kenny Rogers' estate, where her talent shone brightly. Rosa was also the first woman to record live at the revitalized Historic Morton Theater, further solidifying her place in the cultural legacy of Athens.

## A Legacy of Love and Service

After retiring in 2012, Rosa continued to share her love for her community as a tour guide for African American Heritage tours at the Athens Welcome Center, where she educated visitors about the rich history of Athens and its African American community.

Rosa was preceded in death by her loving parents, Robert and Jessie Lois Walter. She is survived by her devoted husband of 57 years, James Edward Thurmond; her children, James McIntre Thurmond and Marcy Lavette Thurmond; her grandchildren, Jahmori De'Jon Simmons and Mahogany Simone Simmons; her brothers, John Walter (Sara), Robert Walter (Bernice), James Edward Walter (Elsa), Harry Walter (Teresa), Larry Walter (Angela) and David Walter (Peggy); her sister, Emma Walter; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friends who will forever hold her memory close.

Rosa Lee Thurmond's life was a beautiful example of unwavering love, service and faith. Her legacy will continue to inspire and uplift those she touched, reminding us all of the power of compassion, perseverance and community.







## Order of Service

Prelude Music .....Rosa Thurmond (An Evening of Praise at the Morton Theater)

*Uncloudy Day*

*There is No Failure in God*

*Down Through the Years*

*Move On Up a Little Higher* (Mahalia Jackson)

Processional.....*Jesus Promised Me A Home Over There* (Jennifer Hudson)

Call to Worship.....Pastor Benjamin E. V. Lett

Congregational Hymn.....*Hold to God's Unchanging Hand*.....Choir & Congregation

Old Testament Scripture.....Pastor Benjamin E. V. Lett

New Testament Scripture.....Reverend Clifford Craft

Prayer.....Marilyn Kitchens

Reflection Song.....*Thank You Lord for One More Day* (Rosa Thurmond)

### Reflections

Family .....John T. Howard

Community Member..... Evelyn Reece

Friend.....Jim Hawkins

Family..... Michael L. Thurmond

Daughter..... Marcy L. Thurmond

Choral Selection.....HCBC Former Youth Choir Members

Eulogy.....Reverend Marcus Stroud (God Son)

Acknowledgements.....Jackson McWhorter Funeral Home Staff

Recessional.....On My Way to Heaven (Rosa Thurmond)

Interment at Evergreen Memorial Park

3655 Atlanta Highway

Athens, Georgia 30606

Repast served at Hill Chapel Baptist Church

Catered by Epting Events





# Letter of Encouragement



## Letter of Encouragement

I have been a caretaker for the majority of my life. Caring for younger siblings, neighborhood children from numerous families. I worked at Clarke County Health Department for 33 physical years in front line customer service, supervisor and provided social support to both coworkers and clients; served as youth choir director at my church for 30+ years; Taken care of elderly/sick family members to also include the same in my church and community.

Having been the survivor of cancer x 2, "Through It All", God has kept me. He continues to give me the knowledge and wisdom and strength to persevere. There were and remain times when I get tired and weary but I know the "Rock of My Foundation" is - "Jesus", God the Father and the Holy Spirit that keeps me afloat! All praise belong to them, "The Trinity".

"Hold to God's Unchanging Hand", build your hope on things eternal for that is the ONLY stable strength that will keep you in trying times.

: Underlined are songs of reference, Search the lyrics.

Sincerely,  
Yours in Christ  
Rosa W. Thurmond











## Flower Girls

Rosa's Nieces

## Pall Bearers

Rosa's Nephews

## Acknowledgements

The Family of Rosa Lee Thurmond expresses their thanks and appreciation to everyone who has shared and comforted us during our time of bereavement. May God grant you His richest blessings.



Services Entrusted to:

*Jackson-McWhorter*  
FUNERAL HOME, LLC

Jackson McWhorter Funeral Home

1253 W Broad St., Athens, GA 30606

(706) 543-3623

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