

Pallbearers

Nephews and the Francis Burns United Methodist Church, United Methodist Men

Floral Bearers

Nieces and the Francis Burns United Methodist Church, United Women in Faith

Participants

The Reverend Geneva Stafford, Pastor, Francis Burns United Methodist Church  
The Reverend Edward H. McDowell, Jr., Retired United Methodist Church Pastor

Scriptures: Elle J. Edens and Emory L. Edens, Granddaughters

Musicians: Alicia Graham, Organist and Michael Sumter, Pianist

Instrumentalists: Leevette E. Malloy, Pianist and Chantis Edens, Flautist, daughters and Audrey Harris,  
Violinist

Soloists: Raphael D. Sligh, Bass and Kim Aiken Cockerham, Soprano, Former Students

Francis Burns United Methodist Church Adult Choir

Remarks: Barbara Harper-Tucker, Friend; Dr. Kwakiutl Dreher, Former Student; and Brendon M. Barber,  
Family, Sibling-Cousin;

Richland County School District One (RCSD 1) Memorial Resolution, Jamie Devine, Parliamentarian, RCSD  
Board of School Commissioners and Dr. H. MiUndrae Prince, (RCSD 1) Executive Director of Schools; and

A Resolution from the South Carolina Senate, Senator Gerald Malloy, District 29

Poem: Khrystyan A. Edens, Granddaughter and Moses M. Malloy, Grandson

Expressions of Gratitude

With the most sincere and heartfelt compassion, the family of Conchita Bessellieu Edens acknowledge and appreciate all expressions of gratitude from her family, friends, neighbors, students and their families, colleagues, fellow musicians, former church choir members, members of the Columbia SC Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and members of the Francis Burns United Methodist Church and Adult Choir for your prayers, your presence, and your phone calls/texts/social media posts. We continue to pray for peace and comfort as we treasure our memories. May God continue to bless each one of you.

**Services Entrusted To:**

**Taylor Street Chapel**

1831 Taylor Street  
Columbia, SC 29201  
(803)771-7799

I. S. Leevy Johnson  
-Owner & Director-

**Leevy's**

F U N E R A L H O M E

Chris Leevy Johnson  
-President & Managing Director-

**Lower Richland Chapel**

9120 Garners Ferry Road  
Hopkins, SC 29061  
(803) 776-6922

Leverette A. Williams, II  
-General Manager-

*A Service of Remembrance  
Celebrating the Life*

*of*

*Mrs. Conchita Veronica Bessellieu Edens*



*"Connie"*

*Saturday, October 21, 2023*

*11:00 a.m.*

*Francis Burns United Methodist Church*

*5616 Farrow Road*

*Columbia, South Carolina*

*The Reverend Geneva Stafford*

*-Pastor-*





*Reflections of the Life*  
*of*  
*Mrs. Conchita Veronica Bessellieu Edens*

Our Mother, a loving wife, a devoted mother, an affectionate grandmother, a protective daughter, a warmhearted sister, a compassionate aunt, a loyal friend and a dedicated educator came to life on August 2, 1942, into the loving hands of our grandparents, the late Deacon Fredrick “Freddie” Douglas Bessellieu and Ethel Elizabeth Moses Bessellieu, at the Historic Kelly Memorial Hospital in Kingstree, SC. She transitioned from this life on October 15, 2023, at the Lexington Medical Hospital in Lexington, SC. Mommy was preceded in death by her parents and siblings: her brother, Fredrick “F.D.” Douglas, Jr., sister Sandra and half-sister Nancy.

Mommy was the selfless anchor who always put family first. She was our everything - our air, our breath, our support, our inspiration, our best friend, our rock. Not only did she truly love her family, but she loved others as well, and if she had the power to help anyone, she always did. She cherished talking on the phone to catch up and check on everyone. She adored spending time with family and friends or just sharing a meal enjoying her favorite seafood, vegetables and sweets. She loved talking and spoke with her sister, Sandra, daily, as well as facetimeing with her grandchildren on the phone where she often gave lessons, listened to concerts, and heard about everything going on in their daily lives. She loved reading the newsfeed on her phone and keeping up with current events. Any afternoon, she could be found watching Hallmark Movies, a favorite pastime.

Conchita grew up in Georgetown, SC, on “The Block” as it was affectionately called – a block on Emanuel Street where our family and extended family dwelled: Her Mom and Dad (Nana and Granddaddy) and sister, Sandy; Aunt “Me-Me” Camille, Uncle Barber and her sibling-cousins, Uncle Eli, Aunt Shirley, Uncle Brendon and Dwayne; Uncle Tom and Aunt Vivian; “Aunt Kitty” and Vonnie and the extended families. She was educated in the Georgetown County (SC) School System, and an honor graduate of Howard High School, Class of 1959. She earned the Bachelor of Arts degree from Fisk University, Nashville, TN, and completed her teacher certification from the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY. She received her master’s degree from the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

Her love, faith and trust in God took root at an early age. Mommy received the foundation of her religious training in the home. At a young age, she joined Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church in Georgetown, under the pastorate of the late Reverend Frank K. Sims. Here is where she was active in the Sunday School, youth choir, youth programs, and began her journey as a church musician, becoming the assistant to the church organist at just 12 years old. While in college, Connie spent her summers sharing her love of music, teaching music lessons at home to her family members and children within the community, as well as serving as the pianist in the Charles Williams Combo where they played for special parties and occasions.

As she journeyed into married life, motherhood, and a career, Mommy viewed and cherished her role as an educator so much more than someone who simply provided instruction to a class. In her words she believed, “*Within the haven, the classroom, we are entrusted with precious minds of students of varied races, creeds, colors, and patterns of behavior, religions and social status. We must be dedicated to the advancement of each student. We must encourage and inspire. We must help students to strengthen their inner values, to filter out the evils, to nurture the good, and to build high self-esteem. Our role extends beyond simply teaching.... It is our mission to project joy that will help students to receive messages of beauty, of cheer, and of the joy of learning.*” Mommy formed special and long-lasting bonds with her students and so many others through a philosophy expressed in her own words: “*In performing our roles [as teachers], we must have built-in tools which are known as caring, sharing, praising, preparing and being models of selflessness, positivity, integrity and sincerity.*” She used music as her tool of choice to plant seeds for students to grow into trees of wisdom, hope, history, courage, and belief in themselves. Connie’s composition tapestries watered and nurtured those seeds into melodious blossoming possibilities. She strived to instill motivation, courage, and a sense of pride in her students and everyone with whom she interacted. And it is that sense of pride that flourished in every student chorus member and church choir member she educated and directed. She felt music in its purest form allowed everyone to take down their barriers in order to connect and build community. Mommy continuously instilled those same core values and morals into her children: daughters Leevette and Chantis; sons Lee and Shaun, her grandchildren, her son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandson-in-law, sibling-cousins, nieces, nephews, and countless others.

Mommy continued to expand her passion for teaching, becoming the chorus teacher at Fairwold Junior High School in Columbia, SC. In 1971, she was hired as the first African American chorus teacher at Columbia High School, where she taught for 36 years and simultaneously taught at St. Andrews Junior High for a few years. While at Columbia High School, she established herself as an outstanding teacher, teaching courses such as Chorus, Guitar, Piano Keyboarding, and Teacher Cadet. The singers were often praised for their beauty of tone, artistic technique, and innovative programming. Many of her students auditioned and were selected as choir participants for the South Carolina Music Educators Association National Conference All-State Choirs.

*When Tomorrow Starts Without Me*

*When tomorrow starts without me, and I’m not here to see,  
If the sun should rise and find your eyes, filled with tears for me.*

*I wish so much you wouldn’t cry the way you did today,  
while thinking of the many things we didn’t get to say.*

*I know how much you love me, as much as I love you,  
and each time you think of me, I know you’ll miss me too.*

*When tomorrow starts without me, please try to understand  
That an angel came and called my name and took me by the hand*

*The angel said my place was ready in heaven far above  
And that I’d have to leave behind all those I dearly love.*

*But when I walked through Heaven’s gate, I felt so much at home  
When God looked down and smiled at me from His great golden  
throne.*

*He said, “This is eternity and all I’ve promised you.”  
Today my life on earth is past, but here it starts anew*

*I promise no tomorrow but today will always last  
And since each day’s the same day, there’s no longing for the past.*

*So when tomorrow starts without me, don’t think we’re far apart,  
For every time, you think of me, I’m right there in your heart.*





# Memories



Mommy believed in the importance of sharing the gift of music with others. Under her direction, her choirs received local, district, state, and national recognition, performing in Florida (Walt Disney World) and throughout South Carolina, to include the South Carolina Governor's Mansion, the South Carolina School Board Association Performance at Hilton Head, SC, The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, the VA Hospital, Fort Jackson and Bull Street Mental Hospital. Her choirs also performed for annual Black History, Easter and Winter/Spring Holiday programs at various churches, feeder schools and Columbia Mall. One of her greatest joys was teaching piano lessons in our home. Her students not only learned piano techniques, but they were showered with her love and joy while also acquiring the values and morals that she cherished.

In addition to her natural talent for teaching and working with children, Mommy was blessed with an innate talent for decorating. She loved transforming spaces into whatever she could imagine, creating beautiful experiences through collaborations with students, faculty, staff, friends and family. Spending that time outside the classroom became an essential element to the family environment she created, fostered and nurtured. Connie took time to get to know everyone and she could call every student by name whenever she would see them out in the community. Conchita B. Edens was the ultimate beacon of planning, organizing and directing various events from weddings, funerals, concerts, and pageants, to any special occasion where people came together. Conchita's "Touch of Class" was unique and could not be replicated.

While at Columbia High School, she also served as the School Calendar Contact which included booking and running the auditorium, as well as serving as the director and chairperson of the Miss Columbia High School Pageant. She played for Class Nights and CHS graduations along with other high school graduations in the district. She served as the District Lead Choral Teacher for many years and was an Advanced ED-Trained Lead Evaluator, serving on numerous accreditation teams. She mentored 1994's Miss America, Kimberly Aiken Cockerham, and served as her chorus teacher, preparing her for the talent portion where she performed "Summertime," from George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Conchita took an active role in community projects and programs. Our Mommy made a lifetime commitment of service through Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated in fall 1961 at Fisk University in the Alpha Beta Chapter and continued with the Columbia SC Alumnae Chapter. She rendered her talents as Minister of Music/Director at several churches such as Second Calvary Baptist Church and Northminster Presbyterian Church. She was also a well-known Wedding Director/Planner and served the community in many other capacities. She was selected as the Columbia High School Teacher of the Year. Subsequently she was honored as the 1993-1994 Richland County School District One District Teacher of the Year, where she was the first music teacher, district-wide, to receive this honor. Conchita taught in the Richland County School District One for 42 years until her retirement in 2006.

The power of Mommy's love and memories will always be kept and cherished by us: her husband – Lee G. Edens, [Columbia, SC]; her daughters – Leevette Edens Malloy (Johnny) [Columbia, SC] and children: Khrystyan Alona Edens (George) [Cincinnati, OH] and Moses Mumford Malloy [Columbia, SC]; Chantis Fredricka Edens and Lee Antoine Edens [Columbia, SC]; and Shaun Bessellieu Edens (Lia) and children: Elle Jewell Edens and Emory Leigh Edens [Arlington, VA]; her sister Sandra's sons - Donald Childress [Minneapolis, MN]; Freddie Childress (Autumn) [Los Angeles, CA]; Marvin Childress (Erica) [Oak Park, IL]; and Byron Adams [Oshkosh, WI], along with Sandra's grandchildren: Abella Childress, Sandon Childress, Addison Childress, Parker Childress, Javonte Fox, Prayer Childress, and Ivy Childress; her half-sister Nancy's ("Tootsie's") children: Shelia McKnight [Fayetteville, NC], along with Nancy's grandchildren, Junior Burgess, Ellis Gibbs and Kayla McKnight; cousins that were reared as siblings - Eli Barber, III (Azelea) [Columbus, GA]; Shirley Barber James (Robert) [Savannah, GA]; Brendon M. Barber, Sr. (Pamela) [Georgetown, SC]; and Renaldo Dwayne Barber [Norfolk, VA]; "Aunt Kitty" (Karthalina B. Harper) and God-sister, Vonnie H. Ephriam [Charleston, SC]; and God-brother, Willie James Addison [New York, NY] along with a host of nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and nephews, cousins, relatives, very close friends, neighbors, parishioners, colleagues, students and community members who will miss her presence in their lives dearly.



# Order of Service

Prelude.....Ms. Alicia Graham and Mr. Michael Sumter  
 Processional Hymn.....“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”.....Hymn 334  
 Francis Burns United Methodist Church Adult Choir  
 Viewing.....Funeral Directors  
 Greetings.....The Reverend Geneva Stafford  
 Opening Hymn.....“God Is”.....Fryson  
 Francis Burns United Methodist Church Adult Choir  
 Prayer of Comfort.....The Reverend Edward H. McDowell, Jr.  
 Old Testament.....Psalm 23.....Little Miss Elle J. Edens  
 New Testament.....1 Corinthians 13:4-8.....Little Miss Emory L. Edens  
 Musical Selection.....“Ava Maria”.....Schubert  
 Remarks  
 Mrs. Barbara Harper-Tucker, Friend  
 Dr. Kwakiutl Dreher, Former Student  
 Mr. Brendon M. Barber, Sr., Family  
*Richland County School District One Memorial Resolution*  
 Mr. Jamie Devine, Parliamentarian, RCSD 1 Board of School Commissioners  
 Dr. H. MiUndrae Prince, RCSD 1 Executive Director of Schools  
*A Resolution from the South Carolina Senate, Senator Gerald Malloy, District 29*  
 Poem..... *When Tomorrow Starts Without Me*.....Romano  
 Khrystyan A. Edens and Moses M. Malloy  
 Selection.....“Deep River”.....arr. by Burleigh  
 Raphael D. Sligh, Bass  
 Words of Comfort.....The Reverend Geneva Stafford  
 Selection.....“His Eye Is On The Sparrow”.....Gabriel/arr. by Boyer  
 Kim Aiken Cockerham, Soprano  
 Recessional.....“Goin’ Up Yonder”.....Hawkins  
 Francis Burns United Methodist Church Adult Choir  
 Postlude



## Committal, Benediction & Interment

Lincoln Cemetery  
 4900 Farrow Road  
 Columbia, South Carolina

# Memories

