

Pallbearers

City Light Men on The Wall

Floral Bearers

Esther Women of Influence

Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little, but not for long
And not with your head bowed low
Remember the love that once we shared
Miss me, but let me go.
For this is a journey we all must take
And each must go alone.
It's all part of the master plan
A step on the road to home.
When you are lonely and sick at heart
Go the friends we know.
Laugh at all the things we used to do
Miss me, but let me go.

Acknowledgement

The family expresses deep gratitude for the outpouring of love, prayers, and support and asks for continued prayers as they give thanks for a life fully poured out in service to God and humanity.



Bishop Redfern, II

October 27, 1949 – January 16, 2026

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I. S. Leevy Johnson
-Owner-

Services Entrusted To:

Leevy's
Chris Leevy Johnson
-Managing Director-

SIGN THE ONLINE REGISTRY:



Leverette A. Williams, II
-General Manager-

Monday, January 26, 2026 – 11:00 a.m.

Trinity Baptist Church

2521 Richland Street

Columbia, South Carolina

Reverend Dr. Thurmond Bowens, Jr., Pastor

Prelude

Processional

Viewing.....Funeral Directors

Opening Hymn.....Trinity Baptist Church Choir
“Glory to His Name”

Old Testament.....Reverend Perry Oliver

New Testament.....Reverend A.A. Dicks

Prayer of Comfort.....Reverend Dr. Monique Singleton, MD

Musical Selection.....Reverend Barrien D. Henderson
“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

Reflections.....Mr. Randy Redfern
Mr. E.W. Cromartie
Reverend Dr. Gwendolyn Byrd
Representative Leon Howard

Musical Selection.....Trinity Baptist Church Choir

Words of Comfort.....Reverend Shelton Blue, Son

Recessional.....“I’ll Fly Away”

Postlude



Committal, Benediction, and Interment

Crescent Hill Memorial Gardens

2603 Two Notch Road

Columbia, South Carolina

A pioneer in Black-owned media, Bishop Redfern II was the founder, president, and publisher of Juju Publishing Company, which produced a national literacy magazine and community newspapers in seven South Carolina metropolitan markets. He also served as publisher of the Carolina Tribune Weekly Newspaper, the South Carolinian News Magazine, and later Catalyst Magazine, preserving Black history, amplifying community voices, and promoting civic engagement.

Bishop Redfern II was preceded in death by his parents, James Melvin Redfern, Sr. and Gertrude W. Redfern, and his brother, Gregory A. Redfern. He is survived by his loving wife Bishop Dr. Luella Redfern and his children Jasmine Jones, Shelton Blue (Elisabeth), Cedric Blue (Angela), Justin Redfern, Brandon Redfern, and Bryan Redfern; his brother Randell Redfern; his sister Tondalaya Redfern; grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.

Bishop Redfern II devoted his life to constructing more than physical structures. He built churches, schools, universities, nonprofits, leadership systems, prayer networks, and platforms for Black history and excellence. His work in historic preservation ensured that the stories of historically segregated Black schools, churches, educators, and civil rights pioneers would not be lost to time.

While hearts are heavy, we rejoice in the assurance that he has heard the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and in the promise of Scripture: “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15). He leaves behind a legacy of faith, leadership, justice, and love that will continue to bless lives around the world.

of Cross Style, he helped develop a strategic plan for 125 Bible training centers in 22 countries to advance theological education, leadership development, and infrastructure worldwide.

In 2012, Bishop Redfern founded The Ecumenical University. The University trains pastors, missionaries, and lay leaders in Cross Style Theology while providing a strong liberal arts education.

Beyond ministry, Bishop Redfern was a nationally recognized nonprofit executive and fundraiser. He was the founding Board Chair of the National Association of Nonprofit Organizations & Executives (NANOE), a lifetime member of the NAACP, a board member of the United Black Fund, and a founding member of the 100 Black Men of South Carolina. He was named Volunteer Fundraiser of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals and received United Way's Alyce Kemp-DeWitt Award.

A 30-year volunteer and former board member of the United Way, Bishop Redfern held several executive volunteer campaign positions and set a record with 345 donor presentations in a single year. He led the negotiating team that successfully merged the United Way with the United Black Fund and was named United Way of the Midlands' Volunteer of the Year. He also served as president of two community-based organizations, substantially increasing funding, service delivery, and organizational efficiency in each.

Bishop Redfern was a seasoned Chief Executive Officer, leading a diverse array of companies worldwide. He served as president of a land-use development company that he grew from five employees to more than 600, securing service contracts on military installations across eight states. He was also the owner of Alcon Employment Recruiting Services, which facilitated employment for qualified women and minority applicants to work for major corporate employers.

Reflections of the Life of Bishop Redfern, II

Bishop Redfern II, Presiding Bishop of the Ecumenical Church of Christ Worldwide, visionary servant leader of God, global faith leader, educator, civil rights activist, publisher, nonprofit executive, and master builder of faith-based and community institutions, entered eternal rest on January 16, 2026, after a lifetime devoted to God, people, and purpose.

Born on October 27, 1949, in the Town of Liberty in New York's Catskill Mountains, Bishop Redfern II was the eldest child of Gertrude W. Redfern and James Melvin Redfern, Sr. (both deceased). As an infant, his family returned to Columbia, South Carolina, where his life would be shaped by faith, hardship, and an uncommon sense of calling. The family lived in the Valley Park area until the death of his father when Bishop Redfern was just six years old. Thereafter, his mother raised him and his siblings in Saxon Homes, instilling discipline, resilience, and a deep moral grounding that would define his life's work.

From his earliest years at Blessed Martin de Porres Catholic School, Bishop Redfern learned that the Gospel was not only to be preached, but also lived, structured, and multiplied. He was a part of the Inaugural Upward Bound program and graduated with honors from Booker T. Washington High School in 1967. He entered the University of South Carolina College of Engineering on a full scholarship. He later attended Benedict College. His education, faith formation, and lived experience developed a lifelong conviction that faith must be practical, justice-oriented, and generational.

As a student at the University of South Carolina in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bishop Redfern became acutely aware of systemic racism through personal experiences of discrimination and hostility. Rather than retreat, he emerged as a fearless Civil Rights activist in Columbia, South Carolina. He founded and led several organizations dedicated to advancing civil rights and economic opportunity, including Blacks United for Action, where he served as Executive Director and Director of Operations throughout the decade, and Black-On Nation, where he served as President. He also founded and published Black News/Black-On News, using media as a tool for advocacy, accountability, and community education.

Known for his fiery oratory and strategic confrontation of injustice, Bishop Redfern led marches on Columbia City Hall and the South Carolina State House; organized selective buying campaigns under the banner “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work,” and repeatedly appeared before the Columbia City Council advocating for fair housing, voter registration reform, educational equity, police accountability, and employment justice. His leadership resulted in historic breakthroughs, including the hiring of the first Black insurance agent in Columbia by Travelers Insurance Agency and the first Black automobile salesman at Pulliam Motors.

In one of his most consequential acts of protest, Bishop Redfern confronted discriminatory hiring practices in the banking industry by leading the occupation of the C&S Bank branch on Taylor Street in Columbia. This action forced negotiations with senior bank leadership and helped catalyze statewide reform in hiring practices through the All-American City Employment Plan. His activism against the telephone company led to the formation of the Black Caucus of Telephone Workers, which opened pathways for advancement and upward mobility for Black employees.

A vocal advocate for justice, Bishop Redfern was also one of the leading voices in the movement to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday as a state holiday, famously telling legislators in 1975, “You can be racist and hard-line or modern and progressive.” He later participated in the 1976 march that advanced this historic cause.

In 1978, at the age of 28, Bishop Redfern expanded his civic engagement into electoral politics, running for Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina. Campaigning as “the door to City Hall,” he emphasized inclusive government, fiscal responsibility, and citizen participation. Though his campaign had limited financial resources, it reflected his evolving leadership style—strategic, principled, and focused on structural change.

Ordained in 1995, Bishop Redfern founded the Ecumenical Church of Christ Worldwide, serving as its Presiding Bishop and General Overseer. The church was established as a mission-minded ministry in Columbia, South Carolina, focused on reaching the unchurched, homeless, incarcerated, juvenile delinquents, single parents, and their children. Under his leadership through decades, churches were planted and strengthened across 12 states in the United States and throughout India, East Africa, Central Africa, South America, and the Caribbean, including regions where Christians face severe persecution and witness requires uncommon courage.

Bishop Redfern used the innovative concept of using one church building to plant multiple congregations while training pastors in real time for ministry, a model he demonstrated for several years at the Historic Little Prayer Chapel on Pope Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Ecumenical Church has sent and supported missionaries to several Asian and African nations, advancing the Gospel through faith, service, and sacrifice.