

I'm Free

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God has laid you see.
I took His hand when I heard His call
I turned my back and left it all.
I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work, or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found the peace at the close of the day.
If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joys
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with times of sorrow,
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I savored much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart, and peace to thee-
God wanted me now; He has set me free.*

Pallbearers

Family and Friends

Floral Bearers

Family and Friends

Acknowledgement

We, the family of Mrs. Willow Gilyard Blocker, would like to thank everyone for their acts of kindness shown to us at our time of bereavement. May God continue to bless each of you with His love, grace and mercy.

Homegoing Service Celebrating the Life of

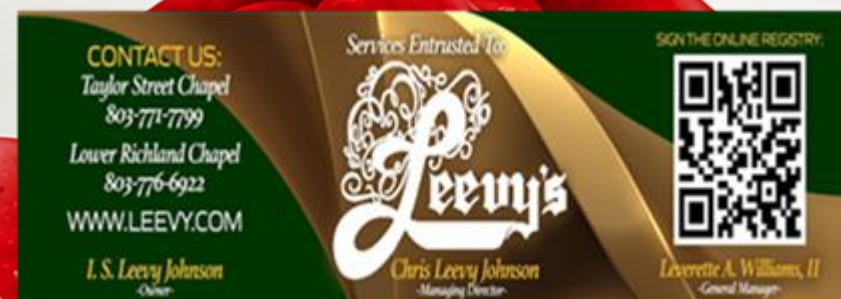
MRS. WILLOW GILYARD BLOCKER



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026
12:00 NOON**

**EMMANUEL AME CHURCH
2130 BARHAMVILLE ROAD
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**REVEREND ERTHA BOWMAN
-PASTOR-**



Obituary

Mrs. Willow Gilyard Blocker, affectionately known as “Dootsie” to family and close friends, was born on July 12, 1942, in Orangeburg County, SC, to Willie and Sallie Stokes Gilyard. She was the ninth of eleven children. On September 19, 2026, she peacefully transitioned at the Collection at Harmony in Columbia, SC.

Willow was educated in the Orangeburg County School System and attended Wilkinson High School. Upon graduating, she attended South Carolina State College, now South Carolina State University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in education. While at South Carolina State, she joined the “Devastating Divas” of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. After completing her undergraduate studies, she later earned a master’s degree in education from Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond, Virginia.

Education was a lifelong passion for Willow. Throughout her career, she taught students at all levels within the public school system, from gifted and talented education to special education. Shortly after relocating from Richmond, VA to Columbia, SC, in 1980, she taught at Waverly Elementary in Richland County School District One. Later, she taught at Wardlaw Middle School, which was also in Richland School District One. Later in her career, Willow became an administrator and focused on her greatest professional passion; special education. She served as a placement specialist and, just as importantly, as a mentor to newly minted teachers entering the profession. Although she retired from teaching full-time in 2005, she never strayed far from her calling, occasionally returning to work in special education for the district.

Willow’s faith and service were always central to her life. From an early age, she was a member of Felderville African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Santee, SC, where she served faithfully until she moved to another state. Upon returning to South Carolina, she joined Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Columbia, SC. At Emmanuel, Willow was a dedicated and active member who served in numerous capacities, including president of the Lay Organization, Church Financial Secretary, Co-Chair of the new Sanctuary Construction Committee, and chairwoman of several church directory publications. She also served on the Steward Board, the local Missionary Society, and the Emmanuel Women’s Club.

Above all, Willow was a loving and devoted mother and grandmother, a caring and nurturing sister and aunt, and a fiercely loyal friend. She was always full of spirit and never missed an opportunity to tell you how proud she was of her son and grandchildren, whom she adored and doted on constantly. Her family and friends knew they could always rely on her for advice, guidance, encouragement, and a helping hand whenever needed.

In addition to her parents, Willow was preceded in death by her brothers and sisters, Samuel “Bubba” Gilyard, Catherine Fogle, Rose Gilyard, Evelyn “Nook” Sumpter, Alberta “Moot” Jones, Cora “Coot” Stinson, Sallie “Tootsie” Fairnot, and Glenn “Pet” Gilyard.

Mrs. Willow Gilyard Blocker leaves behind a loving family and many dear friends who will miss her deeply while forever cherishing the memories they shared with her. She leaves to cherish her memory: one son, Benjamin Blocker, Jr., of Columbia, SC; three grandchildren, Benny, Brooklyn, and Dallas; her loving sister, Sarah “Beep” Ross; her loving brother, Willie “Bugs” Gilyard, Jr.; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family members, and lifelong friends.

Memories



Order of Service

- Prelude
- Processional
- Viewing.....Funeral Directors
- Opening Hymn.....Hymn #448
“When Peace, Like a River”
- Invocation.....Mr. Drayton Gilyard
- Old Testament.....Ms. Brooklyn Blocker
Psalm 23
- New Testament.....Mr. Benny Blocker
1 Corinthians 15:51-58
- Solo.....Mr. Clarence Sumpter
- Remarks.....Mrs. Viola McCants
Mr. Ben Blocker, Jr.
- Solo.....Ms. Latisha R. McCanic
- Words of Comfort.....Reverend Ertha Bowman
- Recessional.....Hymn #511
“Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus”
- Postlude

