



## Bertha (Smith) Burkes

September 1, 1933 - February 2, 2026

Bertha Louise Smith Burkes passed away at the age of 92 at home on February 7, 2026 after declining health for the past few years.

She was employed by the former Emhart Corp. for 42 years before retiring in 1995. During retirement, Bertha dedicated her life to volunteerism, serving as a volunteer at the New Britain Youth Museum, a tutor for math and reading at elementary schools, and a volunteer at The Hospital of Central Connecticut. She served on several boards and commissions including on the community advisory board of the New Britain Museum of American Art and the Commission on Aging and the executive committee of the New Britain Branch - NAACP. She was a graduate of Tunxis Community College, and attended Fort Valley State College, Central Connecticut State University, and the Hartford Seminary. She relished the numerous opportunities she had in fulfilling her dream of traveling throughout the United States and to other continents including Africa, Asia, Europe and the Caribbean.

She was a member of St. James Baptist Church and a founding member of Second Baptist serving as its church clerk during its early years. Starting in her youth, she served as an usher and continued as a church usher as an adult. She was also an active part of the Usher's Unit for the greater New Britain area. In addition, she also served on the board of the United Church Ushers of Connecticut Association. She was previously in the choir, the

missionary society, a trustee, and attended Sunday School.

She was part of the Mothers' Club at Smalley School while her children were in elementary school. She was active in various women's organizations embracing the motto "lifting as we climb". Those organizations included the former Labelles' Civic Club, White Rose Court - Order of Calanthe, Every Woman's Club, and the Naomi Chapter - Order of Eastern Star. Other community involvement included the Mary McCloud Bethune Club, Friends of the Amistad, and numerous local, state, and federal political campaigns.

She was born September 1, 1933 Soperton, Georgia and moved to New Britain at the age of 16. She was predeceased by her husband, Eddie Burkes, her parents, Lillie Mae and George Robinson, Sr, her son Robert Smith, her brother, George Robinson, Jr. and her aunt Maggie Holley. She is survived by a son, Kevin Smith of Massachusetts, three daughters, Kim Burkes of Windsor, Tere Blessings of Bristol, and Valeria Burkes of New Britain, daughter-in-law, Joyce Smith of Florida, two grandsons, Joirob Smith and Royce Smith of Florida, and one great-granddaughter, Aaliyah Smith of Florida. She also leaves special cousins Ida Gay of Texas, Jannie Berry of Bloomfield, and Frances Aponte of New York. In addition, she leaves many nieces and nephews and numerous cousins.

Funeral service will be held at St. James Baptist Church, 45 Daly Ave, New Britain, CT Thursday morning with visitation from 10-11 and homegoing service at 11. Service of comfort is provided by Carlson Funeral Home. Burial will be at Fairview Cemetery, New Britain.

# Cemetery Details

## Fairview Cemetery

120 Smalley Street  
New Britain, CT 06051

# Previous Events

## Calling Hours

FEB 12. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. James Missionary Baptist Church  
45 Daly Avenue  
New Britain, CT 06051

## Funeral Service

FEB 12. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. James Missionary Baptist Church  
45 Daly Avenue  
New Britain, CT 06051

# Tribute Wall

MS

“ We're sorry we couldn't attend Ms. Bertha's service, but want to send love and prayers for the family and friends. I met Bertha when she was a student at Tunxis and needed a place to use computers for her homework. She would often come to the Spanish Speaking Center for that purpose. We became friends and we were able to share some community events and other outings. We all were so proud when she graduated from Tunxis! Much love & respect Ms. Bertha, we planted a tree in your honor. Rest in peace 🙏  
Mary and Cecelia Sanders

---

**Mary L Sanders** - February 12 at 02:54 PM

MS

“ Mary L. Sanders planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bertha (Smith) Burkes.

---

**Mary L. Sanders** - February 12 at 02:34 PM

LJ

“ My wife & I had the pleasure of taking Mother Burkes to the first & second inaugural services of Barack Hussein Obama. She was so excited & filled with disbelief at the same time for the first occasion. It allowed me to experience what the occasion would have looked like through my deceased parents' eyes! We will miss her, but we are so happy that she's resting in Jesus arms now.

---

**Lee C Burs Jr** - February 10 at 01:56 PM