

*My Sister Friend* **By Elizabeth Samuel**  
Charlotte, North Carolina

## *Mrs Gussie Kelley*

*M*esmerized by her talents and skills

*R*esources on her were bestowed by God's Will

*S*urely one realized she was stylish and genteel

*G*ussie and Pastor Ben Kelley are being reunited once more

*U*ndoubtedly waiting eagerly at Jesus' heavenly Door

*S*arano, Jay, Arketa, nine grands and thirteen great-grands from those three

*S*urpassed their dreams and increased their family

*I*ntelligent and Prayerful my Beautician was she

*E*ver ready to do mostly anything for me

*K*neeled and prayed for goodness and peace every day

*E*ver ready to assist so many in her own special way

*L*oved her Church, her family, a Community Activist and still

*L*ived her life, overcame illness, yet her determination and will

*E*ncouraged this Cosmetologist, Entrepreneur, and Mother to do her part

*Y*esterday, tomorrow, in the future, these memories shall always remain in my heart.



Celebrating the Life of

MOTHER

*Gussie Mae  
Kelley*

September 2, 1941 February 15, 2022

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2022**

Viewing 5-6pm | Service 6pm

**First Baptist Church of Brownsville**  
**357 Chester Street, Brooklyn, New York**  
**Bishop D.A. Sherron, Officiant**



Sunday February 27th, 2022 6:00PM

*Service in Memory of the Late Mother Gussie Mae Kelley*  
*"The Jewel of Brownsville"*

Processional  
Organist .....Pastor Darren E. Butler, Sr.  
The Call to Worship  
Prayer of Comfort  
Opening Hymn ..... "We'll Understand It Better By and By"

*We are often tossed and driv'n  
on the restless sea of time,  
somber skies and howling tempest  
oft succeed a bright sunshine;  
in that land of perfect day,  
when the mists have rolled away,  
we will understand it better by and by.*  
*Refrain:*  
*By and by, when the morning comes,  
when the saints of God are gathered home,  
we'll tell the story,  
how we've overcome,  
for we'll understand it better by and by.*  
*2 We are often destitute  
of the things that life demands,  
want of food and want of shelter;  
thirsty hills and barren lands;  
we are trusting in the Lord,  
and according to the Word,  
we will understand it better by and by.*

Scripture.....Psalm 90

John 14:1-7

Ministry in Song.....Sister Nakia Cook "Take Me to the King"

Ecumenical Reflections:

Sister Lois Delk  
Rev. Karl A. Delk  
Rev. Eddie Karim, Jr.  
Dr. Deborah Pettigrew  
Pastor Joanne Hollis  
Apostle Shirley Holman  
Apostle Mary Ann Walker

Ministry in Song.....Pastor Travis T. Haynes

Family and Friends Reflections:

Mother Sadie Barnes  
Bishop Keith Chambers  
Bishop James T. Mitchell  
Mother Jeanne Adams  
Deacon Earl Kelley  
Pastor Arketa Kelley-Fiumano

Ministry in Song.....Sister Nakia Cook "Total Praise"

Acknowledgment of Condolences.....Sister Katrina Grant

The Obituary.....Sister Victoria P. Cooper

Sermonic Selection .....Mother Shirley Griffin

The Eulogy.....Pastor Joshua N. Sherron

Final Viewing

Benediction

Recessional

*Interment*

Calverton Memorial Cemetery

*Letters*

Dr. Merrill White

My Mom, Mother Merrill B. White and I met Mother Gussie Mae Kelley and Pastor Benjamin S. Kelley when they registered their precious two year old daughter, now Pastor Arketa Kelley-Fiumano, at my preschool. I found Mother Kelley to be a person of exceptional character. Over the years, she was a stronger supporter of the preschool and a major component of the Brownsville community. She became the First Lady of the church I attended and in time, her grandsons now Bishop D. A. Sherron and Pastor Joshua N. Sherron were also registered at my educational facility. Her kind and gentle demeanor was well known by all those she came in contact with. She was a prominent business owner who not only provided hair care services, but provided a safe haven for community families. She had the ability when community residents needed to be heard. I worked with Mother Kelley and Pastor Benjamin Kelley for many years on various projects in the Brownsville community. I consider my privilege to have known Mother Gussie Mae Kelley, a true friend, a confidant, and the genuine Jewel of Brownsville.

From Dr. Carolyn James Cooper

I thank God for allowing me and Gussie to have crossed paths for forty years or more. She was my mentor, my friend, and most of all my sister in Christ. We shared raising a young girl (Nicky) together. We were very close and shared our life experiences together. She encouraged me to go to Bible College and Seminary where I received by Doctorate in Theology. I will never forget the love and the patience she showed to me and my children. I loved her but God loved her best and took her out of pain and suffering. Sleep on my sister take your rest, we will meet again. My love, my prayers are with you, Arketa, your husband, Mr. Charles Fiumano, and your children.

From Mother Codine Kelley, her best friend and sister in law

Dear Gussie, I'm so sorry to hear of your passing. We were very close friends, more or less like sisters. She would help me with anything that I needed. I will miss Gussie. She would help me if she could and I would help her. We never had an argument and we never had a dispute in over 50 years. I would keep the boys Sarano and Jay in Springfield, Massachusetts and when Arketa got old enough I would keep her also. I will hope to meet her one day.

*Acknowledgments*

The family wishes to acknowledge the overwhelming outpouring of support and genuine love. We ask for your continued prayers for strength and courage to face the days ahead. Your many expressions of sympathy and condolences will be cherished forever.

*Expressions of Love can be sent to:*

Global Fire International Church  
c/o Benjamin and Gussie Kelley Children's Scholarship Fund  
404A Willoughby Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11205  
All giving can be sent online [www.Globalfirenow.com](http://www.Globalfirenow.com)

We are establishing a permanent educational scholarship in honor of Mother's legacy of love for children.

*The Celebration will conclude on*

**Monday February 28, 2022 10:00 AM**

Calverton Memorial Cemetery  
Riverhead, New York

Followed by a repast at 2PM

The Gethsemane Baptist Church of Deliverance  
144 Newport Street  
Brooklyn, New York

*Professional Services Entrusted to*

Heritage Memorial Chapel  
665 Blake Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11207  
718-495-4900

<https://www.heritagememorialchapelbklyn.com/>

## Thank You

On behalf of the entire Kelley Family, Pastor Arketa Kelley-Fiumano would like to say a special note of thanks to the following people:

To My beloved Husband Charles Fiumano, Thank you for standing alongside me to care, for your Mother in Love, for the past five years. You have been loving, patient, kind, generous, compassionate, and I appreciate it!

To her beloved next door neighbor and entrepreneur. Dr. Deborah Pettigrew for over 30 years. You were her spiritual daughter and confidant. She loved your husband the late Dea “Man” Pettigrew along with your children Tanasha and Mel.

To the family of the late Alberta George. Our mothers were best friends for over 50 years. It was Mrs. Alberta George, who took my mom to Brooklyn Cosmetology school alongside her as a student. Those two were the greatest hairstylists of all time. We love you Michael whose her god-son, Wendy and Edwina and their father Mr. Timothy George.

To her traveling partner cousin Jessie Keith. My Mom loved to travel and she took me to Paris, Germany, Hawaii and many other vacation destinations. Her favorite cousin to travel with was cousin Jessie Keith. Their last adventure was a trip to Hawaii in 1991.

To our Beloved Chester Street Family. The Haynes Family, the Walker Family, The Minnots, The Jack Family, Valerie Moore, The Reid Family, Mrs. Vera Reid and Family, Ricky Hood, Natalie, Renee and Lamont Simpson.

Also her neighborhood God-son Pastor Herman Hampton, Sr.

To her dedicated niece Aretha Kelley-Brown whom she spoke to weekly. Also her dedicated nephew who also cared for her Dea. Earl Kelley

Pastor Joshua N. Sherron, Primary Caregiver and Mother Sadie Barnes.

My Godparents: Mr. Gary and Mrs. Dorothy McNeil, Mrs. Lee Carson, and spiritual father, Bishop James T. Mitchell.

A special sister from another mother, Mrs. Ilene Balsamo

Her Chester Street Family: The Late Betty Gladden, Ernestine, Dennis “Dip”, Danny, and Vicky Gladden who lived there for over thirty five years as our second floor family.

Melvina Haynes and Charlie Crawford, her babies, who saw about her faithfully for the last eight years since her husbands passing.

To the Sherron, Fiumano, Kelley and Butler families, we love you all!

On behalf of her oldest son, Sarano’s College friends, we would like to thank the Vassar Boys! Your support and calls have been constant for many years: Matt Fenton, Matthew Cavalier, Emil Gottschlich, Herman Daniel Farrell III and in loving memory of Michael Cesta and Adam Wachtel.

Her beloved spiritual son, Bishop Keith Chambers of South Carolina.

All of the classmates who have reached out to us from The Trey Whitfield School (formerly Bethlehem Baptist Academy), the LaGuardia High School of Music and the Performing Arts, Public School 41, and Jean Nuzzi Intermediate School, Ms. Vicky Cooper, Ms. Glover, and Ms. Sarah Woods.

Special Thanks to all customers of The Kelley’s Beauty Shop, “Home of the Old Fashioned Press N Curl” which served the community for nearly fifty years.

Also to our faithful and devoted workers: the late Ms. Gladys Nimmons, the late Ms. Hattie, Robin Benjamin, Tiffany Ladson, Cynthia, Ms. Liz, Ms. Azeline, and Sheila Graham.

To Our Church Families

Global Fire International Church Family

The First Baptist Church of Brownsville

The Gethsemane Baptist Church of Deliverance

The Gideon Knights Freedom Church of Jesus Christ

Pastors Darren and Patricia Butler and the International Good News Fellowship

Bishop James T. and Mother Gwenae Mitchell and Holy Trinity Universal Church

Bishop Raymond Higgins and Beulah Temple Church in the Bronx

Pastor S. Roser and Howard Beach Assembly of God

Archbishop Dennis Golphin and the Global Conference of Bishop’s

Bishop Frank Dupree and Metro Apostolic Network

Pastor Travis Haynes and the St. Matthew Church of Christ.

Pastor Gia Alexander, Prophet Amze White, Apostle Dion and Pastor Janice Nesmith

And we want to especially thank Brother Nafar and Mrs. Pugh for their exceptional service in caring for us at the Heritage Funeral Chapel. We love you family.

## The Obituary of Mother Gussie Mae Kelley

You may write me down in history. With your bitter, twisted lies, you may trod me in the very dirt but still, like dust, I'll rise. -Maya Angelou

On Tuesday September 2, 1941, history was made as the Royal Air Force began their heroic conquest in Northern France. On this same day, a jewel was born to Arshell and Eva Bryant named Gussie Mae. Gussie was born in the red clay hills of Bellwood, Alabama in Geneva County, where she began working in the fields picking peanuts and cotton, longing for a life of adventure where she could spread her wings and fly.

Growing up, she joined the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church and served as a faithful member while matriculating at Bellwood Junior High School. On May 26, 1960, she graduated from Coppinville High School in Enterprise, Alabama. After this, she applied for College in her hometown but due to the atrocities of Jim Crow, she was rejected and denied. With a broken spirit but a determined attitude she was finally "old enough" to court and she married her teenage sweetheart, Benjamin at the tender age of twenty on September 30, 1961. Together they had a dream: leaving the country behind and building a life for themselves in the City that Never Sleeps.

As the 1960's Civil Rights Movement began, Gussie relocated to New York City with her new husband and a toddler and they began a brand new life. Gussie's family was at the forefront of the movement as the legendary Emmett Till was kin to her family in neighboring Mississippi. Her husband had recently been honorably discharged as a Cold War Veteran and they embarked upon Brooklyn without much means but willing hearts.

In 1963, they settled upon their beloved Chester Street and Gussie attended Brooklyn Beauty School with her best friend, the late Alberta George, to become a Licensed Cosmetologist. After receiving her license, Gussie channeled her entrepreneurial work ethic and started the legendary Kelley's Beauty Salon, “Home of the Old Fashioned Press N Curl,” she and her husband became one of the first Black families to own and operate their own Beauty Salon, Supermarket and Barbershop in the community. During the turbulent sixties, while many people were fleeing Brownsville, they were committed to rebuilding the walls and they served their community with dignity and distinction. For over fifty years, thousands of customers would come to 113 Hegeman Avenue for prayer, counsel and wisdom. Kelley’s Beauty Shop became a haven of hope for hurting and battered woman, a shelter of support for the elderly and a place where love was available for anyone in need. Her expertise was so respected that she taught a semester in a Cosmetology Course at the prestigious New York University.

As a lover of food and culture, on a trip to France, Gussie prayed for her husband to be saved and when she returned back home, God had answered her prayer. This birthed the slogan that she lived by, “God is a right now God!” With their newfound spiritual fervor, they joined the Gethsemane Baptist Church of Deliverance under the leadership of the Reverend K. L. Williams. They later relocated to the Greater Cross Road Baptist Church under the dynamic leadership of the late Reverend B. L. McCray. At Greater Cross Road, their zeal for God expanded as they served in various auxiliaries of the church. In 1979, the Lord called her husband into the Gospel ministry and Gussie followed and supported his evangelistic ministry as he traveled around the city preaching tent revivals, crusades and conducting services.

In 1983, they returned back home to Gethsemane where they served as Pastor and Leading Lady for nearly thirty years until the Lord called her husband from labor to reward. Under their stewardship, Gethsemane emerged from a dilapidated building with no plumbing and central heat into a thriving congregation that served hundreds of people through community programs and initiatives for cultural renewal. In her latter years, she served faithfully at Global Fire International Church, under the visionary leadership of her Grandson, Bishop D. A. Sherron. Her voice of wisdom and counsel was respected by all and she led the Mother Board and was the Chairperson for the Annual Black History Month celebrations. She also served as the National Mother and Advisor for the Global Alliance Network, providing much needed counsel for young ministers and their families, and offered support for mission trips around the world.

As a humanitarian, Mother Kelley was an advocate for education. She regularly held back to school drives for school supplies and scholarships for children to grow and expand their knowledge beyond the community. She would often leave the shop and volunteer for lunch duty at P. S. 165 and I. S. 275 to ensure that the children could eat safely and those who didn’t have food she would bring them a warm meal. Mother Kelley believed that those who don't know their history are bound to repeat it and she held annual Black History programs, bus trips and musicals to make sure that the next generation knew who they were. Mother Kelley was an acclaimed and respected cook. Her food was made with lots of love. She was known around the community for making enough food for the entire block! She regularly fed everyone who came to her home, her shop and in her presence. She was known for her biscuits, rolls, sweet potato and pecan pies, squash casserole, fried chicken, collard greens with turkey necks, potato salad and her legendary ice tea. On warm summer months she would crank out her old fashioned ice cream maker and make ice cream from scratch for the children and the neighbors. Her grill was ready and she made hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ chicken and corn for all who wanted some. She was known for saying, "Don't be afraid. We have plenty! Eat all that you can and take some food home." Her passion for cooking and exceptional customer service has been passed on to her Grandson Josh and Daughter Arketa through their soul food catering business, Gussie Mae's, in honor of her legacy of love.

No one was rejected from her home and she prided herself on helping everyone she could. Her legacy of love and faith will never be erased. Mother Kelley was a miracle. Having survived and exceeded her doctors expectations twenty eight years ago after suffering four cerebral aneurysms, where two of them burst, brain surgery and a stroke while on life support and being paralyzed on one side, God raised her back up again! After three tedious years of rehabilitation, she arose from those setbacks with an even greater comeback being ambidextrous, using both of her hands to serve the Master's plan.

Mother Kelley was preceded in death by her husband of fifty-five years, the honorable Reverend Dr. Benjamin S. Kelley. She leaves to cherish her legacy and memory all that she loved, especially her family. Her three children, Sarano and wife, Brooke, from California; her son Janaria from New York City and her loving daughter and caregiver, Pastor Arketa and husband, Charles, her devoted grandsons, Bishop D. A., and wife Pastor Adara, and Pastor Joshua Sherron, who not only served her naturally but also spiritually. In total she leaves nine grandchildren: Chris, Georgia, Angelina, Pharaoh, Jezreel and Grace Kelley, Jamal Jordan, along with thirteen great grandchildren, including her newest Sophia Rose and another great granddaughter on the way, whom she asked about often. She leaves to mourn her sisters: Annette (Marion) Graham of Jacksonville, Florida; Shelley (James) Dawkins of Fayetteville, North Carolina; Alma Watson of Dale County, Alabama; and her older brother, Robert from Bellwood, Alabama. Three siblings proceeded her in death as infants. Her sisters in love and dear friends: Codine Kelley of California; Cora Kelley of New Jersey; Jean Kelley of Brooklyn, New York; Doris Kelley of Atlanta, Georgia; Lucille Francis of Orlando, Florida; her brothers in law: Louis Kelley (Joanne) and Jerome D. (Loretta) Kelley of Slocomb, Alabama. Her godchildren: Mike George, Linda Norwood, Apostle Frank Dowtin, Bishop Keith Chambers, Apostle Herman Hampton, Jr., Katrina Grant, Herbert Clarke, Margaret LeGuille, Dr. Crystal Waiters, the Gladden Clan: Ernestine, Dennis, Danny and Vicky Gladden, Melvina Haynes, Charlie Crawford, and a host of nieces, nephews and cousins. Her dear friends and sisters: Dr. Elizabeth Samuels, Victoria Cooper, Sarah Woods, and caregiver, Mother Sadie Barnes. She also leaves to mourn her beloved Chester Street Family, whom she adored, the Kelley Beauty Shop family, and the Global, Gethsemane and Gideon Knight Church families.

Throughout her life, she lived by this principle, “God takes care of his own.” Surely, the Lord has taken care of her and her story is an example of what Faith, Prayer and Love can do. To God Be the Glory for the Great things He has done!

