



Rev. Thornton Davis Sr.

May 8, 1928 - August 28, 2025

Thornton Davis was born to the late Marshall and Roxie Davis on May 8, 1928 in Boligee, Alabama. He professed his faith in Christ at an early age, and was baptized at the Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Boligee, AL. under the pastorage of the late Rev. W. Fields.

Thornton was educated at the Greene County Training School, and was employed with Greene County as a School Bus Driver. He also worked in his family's business until 1950. At this time, he decided to relocate to Detroit, MI looking for better employment opportunities. Once he arrived in Michigan, he immediately joined his siblings at the Leland Missionary Baptist Church under the pastorage of the late Rev. H.C. Banks. During this time, Thornton was employed by Hi-Grade and Dodge Main. He was a licensed commercial truck driver holding a CDL and Chauffer Licence with several endorsements. He was a driver for his brother Abraham Knott's trucking company, and also a truck driver for L&M Trucking company owned by Rev. Leon Nesbitt. Thornton could drive anything with wheels! He often bragged about being the best Semi Truck Driver on the earth! On, January 4, 1951. He was drafted into the US Army and deployed to Germany to serve in the actively ongoing Korean War. While there, it was discovered that he had a love for, and met the necessary requirements of defensive driving skills that allowed him to be selected to escort and chauffer the Generals and officers. Thornton's passion for singing afforded him the opportunity to regularly sing at the Non Commissioned

Officers Club. While still serving in the Army, he made the decision to marry and later moved his family to Detroit, Michigan.

When Thornton was honorably discharged from the Army, he was able to return to his place of active fellowship and worship at Leland M.B. Church with his wife and son Thornton Jr. He's always had a love for singing and had a powerful voice. He was a member of the Male Chorus, Triumphant Choir, Gospel Chorus and Mass Choir. He was a spirit filled lead singer with great vocal range ability having an especially deep bass voice. Of the many songs that he sang, "Brighter Day Ahead" and the Dr. Watts responsorial hymn "I Love the Lord He Heard My Cry" was his favorite and most requested to minister. During Ordination Services at Leland and other churches that Leland had an ongoing fellowship with, he was often asked to sing the hymn "A Charge To Keep I Have". Thornton was also a member of the Quartet singing group called the Zion Travelers who toured across many states to perform. The group members were Thornton Davis Sr., Hosey Davis Sr., Marshall Davis Sr., Forest Davis, Abraham Knott, Lovell Knott and Mr. Gilmore. Thornton served faithfully at Leland in various capacities, and was later ordained as a Deacon by the late Pastor, Rev. Eugene Rhodes on May 10, 1959.

Around the same year, an amazing young gospel music group was formed and managed by Deacon Davis calling themselves the Varitone Gospel Singers. Thornton managed the group which included his children Lutricia, T. Davis, Jr., Melvin, his nephew Marvin Dennis Carter, and their childhood friend Leo Wiggins, and later in the 1960's Gary Craig joined.

Thornton began working at Ford Motor Company in 1961, retiring in 1993. At the time of his retirement, he was recognized as having perfect attendance throughout his entire tenure. His military life teachings never changed. He would be 1 hour early, but never a minute late!

After running, running and running some more, Thornton finally submitted to the call to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After taking the necessary courses at The Detroit Bible College, and preaching his trial sermon, he was licensed on May 25, 1986 by the late Rev. Dr. Eugene Rhodes. Thornton continued his Christian education taking classes with Tyndale Bible College receiving several certificates of completion.

It was almost impossible for Thornton to be still in any way shape or form. So, after retiring from Ford Motor Company, he immediately started working for the Visiting Nurse Association of Southeastern MI in 1994, retiring from there in 2014.

Thornton was given several negative health diagnosis beginning in December of 2019, but his faith, prayer life and trust in God never wavered. The health challenges began to advance causing him to be hospitalized and placed in rehabilitation several times beginning in 2022 until his passing. He never complained, and took a licking and kept on ticking and had testimony after testimony about the goodness, mercy, grace and favor of God. If he couldn't attend church, he still had church. it was definitely in his heart and soul. He sang wherever he was including the hospitals and rehab like he was at church in Sunday Service. He was determined to LIVE while he was living. When his health began to fail in June of 2025, he still believed that Without God, he could do nothing. He sang and even taught some of the nurses and aides what Miter Hymns and Devotion was, and had to let them know that the Dr. Watts he was speaking of was not on staff there! His ministry never ceased. One aide even professed her faith and wanted to be baptized. Even though he wasn't able to attend services, but she told us that she was invited by him to just go to the Leland Missionary Baptist Church, and tell my Pastor, Rev. Frank J. Knolton, Sr. that I sent you!! They will baptize you! A soldier til the end. He was determined that he wanted to get back to church to sing one last

song, and preach one last sermon. He even titled the desired sermon that he was working on "There's Nothing Too Hard For God." Matthew 19:26.

In his 97 years of life, Thornton never met a stranger, loved to laugh, preach, sing, travel, visit various restaurants, read the Bible, study and scheduled everything around Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy, Baseball, Football and Basketball. If you called during that time, he would tell you quickly, "I'll call you back!" if he even answered. He loved the visits, treats and gifts, but most importantly the time given from his grandchildren were priceless. Yes! They spoiled him too! Thornton loved to laugh and often joked that he moved up from a mule's back and a cotton sack to a Cadillac!

Rev. Thornton Davis, Sr. departed this life on Thursday August 28, 2025, and was preceded in death by his parents, 16 siblings of the Knott/Davis Family, daughter, Lutricia Ann Davis, and Son, Melvin Lee Davis. He leaves behind to carry on a lasting legacy, son, Thornton Davis Jr. (Alice), daughters, Elizabeth Washington, Gladys Williams (Rev. Josie Williams)(d), Dr. Willie Esther McAlpine (Alonzo K. Alston)(d), Tanya Denise Johnson (Pierre) Brother, Hosey Davis Sr. (Priscilla)(d), Sisters, Josephine (Pastor Nathaniel Slappey) (d), Armadine (Pastor Charlie Knighten), and Beatrice Barnett (Grady)(d) Godsons, Paul Bradley (Sharon) and Lyndon Brookins (Rhonda), Godchildren (The Knott Family - Children of Elder Lovell & Minnie Knott) GodGrandson, Freddie Davis II & numerous nieces, nephews and Friends.

Cemetery Details

Great Lakes National Cemetery

4200 Belford Road
Holly, MI 48442

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **12**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services
24585 Evergreen Rd
Southfield, MI 48075
(248) 702-5367
info@kempfh.com
<https://www.kempfuneralhome.com>

Family Hour

SEP **13**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Leland Missionary Baptist Church
22420 Fenkell Ave.
Detroit, MI 48223

Funeral Service

SEP **13**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Leland Missionary Baptist Church
22420 Fenkell Ave.
Detroit, MI 48223

Tribute Wall

YJ

“ My condolences to his daughters and the family. I've known Rev. Davis since I was a child at Metropolitan Baptist Church, Ypsilanti, Rev. Dr. S.L. Roberson, pastor. Our church had a loving biannual fellowship with Leland Baptist Church and Rev. Eugene Rhodes, pastor, that began back in the 1960's. As an adult, I worked with him at Ford Motor Company, and he became a friend, "Dave" and not just "Dea. Davis"! He was blessed with many good years of favor, and he will be missed!



Yvonne Johnson - September 13, 2025 at 08:27 AM

VH

“ Rev. Thornton Davis, Sr,

I will always remember the torch of 'GOD LOVE' you embodied and shared during your journey: your touch, smile, laughter, your gift of song and prayer, served as loving deposits!

REV you made a difference in my life, and my toolbox is strengthened thank you again and again REV--AKA my DAPPER DAN!

TANYA, thank you for sharing your Dad with me and you have the will and know how to keep on marching forward...beloved mighty GOOD daughter!!!

Verna Knott-Davis-Hines we are the families of Boligee, and the Celebration continues on higher ground.



Verna Hines - September 13, 2025 at 04:42 AM

DI

“ Dad as I fondly, referred to him was a man with a welcoming smile and a big heart

I can never recall a time during a visit. where he didn't offer up a bite to eat or provided food for the soul! Dad, always made sure you was good before you left, and it was always, with a smile! To my fam, rest easy because he left a legacy to be remembered and a light that shines bright. Lifting you all in prayer.... My Sis , Tanya, and to my family, I love yall, and you have my deepest condolences - The Osabuhiens (Diane & So So)

Diane - September 12, 2025 at 10:42 PM

OD

“ *My Deepest Sympathy and Condolences to the Davis and Knott Family on the passing of Thornton Davis Sr.*

Our family will not be the same without Uncle Thornton. I know we'll find comfort in each other, and we will get through this together. I am always reminded that we are never prepared for death, no matter how long, quick or short the journey, but we grieve with our hope in the Lord. I know that wonderful memories of Uncle Thornton will bring smiles and even laughter as we never forget God is able and will never forsake us.

What an amazing person and what a remarkable life. He made a difference in so many lives.

"In Sympathy and Love"

Oscar B. and Gwendolyn Knott Dailey

Oscar B. and Gwendolyn Knott Dailey - September 12, 2025 at 05:23 PM

GS

“ *Gladys, Willie, and family. Condolences to you at this time. May God give you comfort and peace knowing that your Dad has received his reward! You're in our prayers. Love you dearly. From the Sanders family, Beaufort, SC*



Gena Sanders - September 12, 2025 at 04:26 PM

NK

“ Your father was a phenomenal man and my uncle. What good memories you must have. Lean on them to remind you of the joy he brought into your life. I will miss his call on my birthday (9/13) just to sing happy birthday. His voice will forever ring in my mind. When there are some weak moments and they will come, Look to the Hills from which cometh your help (Psalm121:1). Nelson and Beverly Knott.

Nelson Knott - September 12, 2025 at 02:09 PM

LC

“ Love, Zario & Christina purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..



Love, Zario & Christina - September 11, 2025 at 08:09 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..

September 10, 2025 at 10:24 AM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..



September 10, 2025 at 10:24 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..

September 09, 2025 at 01:24 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..



September 09, 2025 at 01:24 PM



“ Darlene Warren purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..



Darlene Warren - September 06, 2025 at 12:32 PM



“ Darlene Warren planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..

Darlene Warren - September 06, 2025 at 12:32 PM

WM

“ W. Esther McAlpine, MD

3 days ago

A Loving and Heartfelt Tribute to Our Daddy, Rev. Thornton Davis, Sr.

Daddy was different, special, and unique in a thousand ways. He was kind, giving, and loving, and we will miss him dearly.

His legacy was always God first, then friendship. He understood that true friendship is a priceless gift—one that cannot be bought or sold, and whose value is beyond measure.

Daddy was a proud veteran, and his testimony to God's goodness was unwavering. This was beautifully expressed in a video with Tanya, posted on Facebook on September 1, 2025. In May of 2022, Tanya was encouraged to place him in hospice care, as he was not expected to walk or make significant improvements. But Daddy prevailed—he defied expectations, was able to drive again, continued singing, and celebrated life with his family and the male chorus. His resilience and faith inspired everyone around him. He knew sorrow in great measure and faced illness with courage, but neither could subdue his spirit. He was determined to endure, always showing strength and faith. Above all, he knew when it was time to rest. At the age of 97, Daddy told us he was ready to transition to his heavenly home.

As we remember him now, we choose not only to mourn, but to celebrate his life. We honor this man of integrity, faith, and courage—a devoted family man who loved and cherished his church and community.

Lord, forgive us for our sorrow and for wishing he was still here with us. It is so hard to let go of someone we have loved so deeply.

With all our love,

Your children

W. Esther McAlpine, MD - September 05, 2025 at 10:20 PM

VR

“ *Rev. Thornton Davis, Daddy #2, will truly be missed. I am picturing him and my Daddy, Elder Lovell Knott, putting on the greatest gospel concert ever in heaven. I love both their voices! Tanya, I am praying for strength for you and the family to get through this difficult time. I also pray that you feel supported and remember to lean on family when you need us. Love you! Vanessa Knott Rivers*



Vanessa Rivers - September 05, 2025 at 08:46 AM

JK

“ *Janet Knott purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..*



Janet Knott - September 04, 2025 at 09:09 PM

TS

“ *The Children of Odelia Davis Stringer purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..*



The Children of Odelia Davis Stringer - September 04, 2025 at 07:19 PM

MP

“ *Mr & Mrs Derrick Purcell purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..*



Mr & Mrs Derrick Purcell - September 04, 2025 at 09:44 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..

September 03, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..*



September 03, 2025 at 11:26 AM

KA

“ *Thank you Rev. Thornton Davis for allowing me to be a part of your care; for sharing your beautiful family; for sharing your beautiful voice and showing grace throughout your journey. It is an honor and a privilege to have been a small part of your journey and to have witnessed your beautiful smile.
May you fly high with the Angels.
Kelly Anderson*

Kelly Anderson - September 03, 2025 at 10:23 AM

WM

“ *A Loving and Heartfelt Tribute to Our Daddy, Rev. Thornton David, Sr.*

Daddy was different, special, and unique in a thousand ways. He was kind, giving, and loving, and we will miss him dearly.

His legacy was always God first, then friendship. He understood that true friendship is a priceless gift—one that cannot be bought or sold, and whose value is beyond measure.

Daddy was a proud veteran, and his testimony to God’s goodness was unwavering. This was beautifully expressed in a video with Tanya, posted on Facebook on September 1, 2025. In May of 2022, Tanya was encouraged to place him in hospice care, as he was not expected to walk or make significant improvements. But Daddy prevailed—he defied expectations, was able to drive again, continued singing, and celebrated life with his family and the male chorus. His resilience and faith inspired everyone around him.

He knew sorrow in great measure and faced illness with courage, but neither could subdue his spirit. He was determined to endure, always showing strength and faith. Above all, he knew when it was time to rest. At the age of 97, Daddy told us he was ready to transition to his heavenly home.

As we remember him now, we choose not only to mourn, but to celebrate his life. We honor this man of integrity, faith, and courage—a devoted family man who loved and cherished his church and community.

Lord, forgive us for our sorrow and for wishing he was still here with us. It is so hard to let go of someone we have loved so deeply.

With all our love,

Your children

W. Esther McAlpine, MD - September 02, 2025 at 12:33 PM

BD

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Brenda Dunlap - August 30, 2025 at 01:20 PM

BD

Cousin Brenda Dunlap & husband ❤️🙏❤️

Brenda Dunlap - August 30, 2025 at 01:36 PM

BD

“ Cousin Thorton ❤️ it was such a pleasure talking with you each time we spoke over the phone. You provided me with so much family history, that I will always cherish! You explained how the two of us were related. My Mom's father, and your father were brothers... Your personality along with your sense of humor was BEAUTIFUL.

Hearing your voice sing many gossip songs, really touched my heart ❤️ and soul. You had an outstanding voice out of this WORLD!!! Although we never got a chance to meet one another in person, talking with you countless times over the telephone, gave the two of us pure LOVE ❤️ for one another! I can say you did see a picture of my husband, and myself. You voiced how you kept it on top of your mantle looking at it all the time 🙏!

Cousin Thornton, now that our heavenly father has called you home, REST IN PARADISE, for you have very well earned your wings ☐! Tonya and other family members you each have my very deepest condolences 🙏... We will keep each of you in prayer 🙏! Blessings 🙏 and Love, your cousin Brenda Dunlap ❤️

Brenda Dunlap - August 30, 2025 at 01:02 PM

BD

“ *Brenda Dunlap lit a candle in memory of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr.*



Brenda Dunlap - August 30, 2025 at 12:33 PM

SC

“ *2 files added to the tribute wall*



Sharon Clay - August 30, 2025 at 09:15 AM

SW

“ *I'm so saddened to hear about the passing of your father. Please accept my deepest condolences. My prayers are with you and your family during this difficult time. May you and the family sense God's love, presence and peace during this difficult season. Sincerely, Stephanie AnnMassé Williams*

Stephanie AnnMassé Williams - August 30, 2025 at 08:23 AM

LJ

“ *Sending my condolences to the entire DAVIS family*

Lois Johnson - August 29, 2025 at 09:36 PM



“ *My Condolences and prayers to you and your family*

Ezekiel Pittman - August 29, 2025 at 08:40 PM

VP

“ My thoughts are with you and the family at this time and always. Praying for comfort and peace throughout. Get your rest cousin Thornton. With love. Valerie Knott-Peebles and family.

Valerie Peebles - August 29, 2025 at 08:26 PM

FH

“ From James and Shona Harding purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..



From James and Shona Harding - August 29, 2025 at 07:50 PM

FH

“ From James and Shona Harding planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rev. Thornton Davis Sr..

From James and Shona Harding - August 29, 2025 at 07:50 PM



“ Words cannot express the lost of this beloved man of God. I will miss those hugs. When someone has been a part of your life for over 55 years. The memories of his singing, There's a Brighter Day Ahead, and oh who can forget, Go Preach My Gospel, The album that we recorded live. I will miss you. ❤️🙏❤️🙏

Lou Jordan Waters - August 29, 2025 at 07:45 PM

SC

“ Words cannot adequately express my heartfelt sympathy. Rev. Thornton Davis, Sr. was a devoted member of our church and a beloved friend to our family. His extraordinary stories and joyful laughter "let go of my hand" will be profoundly missed and forever cherished in our hearts. We offer our prayers that you may find some comfort during this painful time. If there is anything I can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact me. And that is not merely a platitude. With love, Auntie Sharon ❤️

Sharon Clay - August 29, 2025 at 07:03 PM

CD

“ Welp Gdaddy... Visiting U

U let me know I was ur fav granddaughter 🙏🙏🙏 & U said "I want U2 knw I love you so much" I'm glad I was able to keep reminding U that I loved you just as much. My heart is heavy!!!!

I will truly miss his beautiful singing voice that could lift any room, the way his words and spirit always lifted everyone around him thank you 4 the love, the laughs, & the encouragement U poured into all of us. Your voice, your joy, and your faith will echo in my life 4eva!🙏🙏🙏

It's the way the SUN BRIGHTLY shines that COMFORTS in its TRUTH that Heaven has GAINED another GENUINE, GOD FEARING, ANOINTING SANGING, ALL LOVING, MAN OF GOD, MAN OF HONOR, MAN OF FAMILY, DIVINITY CHOSEN HEART & SOUL 🙏🙏 Couldn't NOBODY do it like ya!!!!

May your Wings Extend Long & Wide...I can only imagine the way you walked to grab ahold of the Master's Hand & the Song you Sanged to Receive your Gift...

For we know a Good Foot Stomping Time is gonna be held up above~so Don't be Surprised when you hear the Rolling Thunder...Ha 🙏

To you all He was Rev Thornton Davis.. but that was my Granddaddy 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏 Rest well, I LOVE YOU



Candy Davis - August 29, 2025 at 06:28 PM



“ *Sincere Condolences to Tonya and the entire Davis family! Became neighbors and friends with all the family back in the 50's and remained so until the LORD called him home! He will be missed!* ”

Loretta Harrison - August 29, 2025 at 06:01 PM

AB

“ *Tanya Davis-Johnson, and the entire family,*

Rev. Thornton Davis, was/is The man with the golden voice. He'll forever be alive in our hearts. Many times before he'd sing, he'd say, "Pray for me, my sinuses are bothering me." Then, he would lean back and sing with all of your might.

I thank God for the opportunity to visit Rev. along with several members of Lelands Mother's Board, and the Male Chorus. He sang along with his fellow chorus members. We prayed for him, and he actually recognized some of our voices. That memory is forever stamped on our hearts.

Thank you for lifting my spirit in song when my parents passed. "There's a Brighter Day Ahead" has helped me to press forward through the difficult times. I've internalized the words and understand what they truly mean.

*Rev., God has answered your request,
"Give me two wings, to veil my face,
Two wings to veil my feet,
Two wings to fly away to Glory,
And the world can't do me do harm."*

Tanya, We're lifting your entire family in prayer. We mourn with you, and we share soooooo many precious memories. We love you.

Deacon York and Mother Andrea Banks

ANDREA BANKS - August 29, 2025 at 05:59 PM