

Order of Service

Musical Prelude

Overture: A Partial History of Black Music Mervyn Warren
Right On Be Free The Voices of East Harlem
The Lord is My Shepherd Cissy Houston
Joy and Pain Maze featuring Frankie Beverly
Peace Be Still James Cleveland and The Angelic Choir
A Charge to Keep I Have Rev. Timothy Fleming Sr.
Angels Richard Smallwood
I'm Building Me a Home Morehouse College Glee Club

Centering Prayer of Comfort

Pastor Kelley

Song

Be Grateful Jerome Allen featuring Kim Burrell

Sacred Readings

The Prophet, On Death
The Bhagavad Gita, 2: 18-20
The Holy Bible, Old Testament, Psalm 23
The Holy Bible, New Testament, 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Song

Jerusalem Rev. James Cleveland

Obituary

Dreams of Home Ziggy Marley & The Melody Makers

Song

Evergreen Yebba

StoryWeaving

Featured StoryWeavers including Journey DeShazor-Burks

Song

Family Song (Reprise) Kindred The Family Soul

Lyrical Acknowledgments

Thank You BeBe Winans

Song

Tony Burks Bryce The Third

Eulogy

Rev. Dr. Tony Lamair Burks II

Song

Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus Chuck Brown

Committal

Pastor Kelley

Musical Postlude

Music Unwrapped featuring Jeff Bradshaw

Appreciation

We are grateful to God for blessing us to have family and friends who are giving us loving support, fervent prayers, and encouraging words. We are thankful for the flowers, cards, calls, text messages, social media posts, food, and love you continue to send our way during this season.



Interment: Private Burial of Cremains.

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, please consider a donation to the "Little Miss Journey Fund" in support of Opa Tony's granddaughter's education including summer camps and drumming classes and/or VOCAL, the victims rights organization he co-founded with Miriam Shehane and 8 others.

Little Miss Journey Fund: Donate online using Zelle (336-558-7808). You can also mail a check payable to "Tony Burks and Thomas DeShazor" in care of LEADright, 50 Sunset Avenue NW #92383, Atlanta, Georgia 30314. Please write "Little Miss Journey" on the memo line.

Victims of Crime and Leniency (VOCAL): Donate online at www.vocalonline.org/donate/ Please check "In memory of" and enter "cofounder Tony Burks" in the dedication box. You can also mail a check payable to VOCAL at P.O. Box 4449, Montgomery, Alabama 36103. Please write "cofounder Tony Burks" on the memo line. VOCAL is a non-profit and all donations are tax deductible (Tax ID # 63-0845784).

Obituary written by Rev. Dr. Tony Lamair Burks II
Member, The Society of Professional Obituary Writers



Videos and Photos: www.leadrighttoday.com/tonyburks

Homegoing Celebration TONY LAMAIR BURKS

October 26, 1952 — August 3, 2024

Saturday, September 21, 2024

two post meridiem

Greater Deliverance Outreach Ministries
1000 Montana Street
Dothan, Alabama 36303

Dowling Jerome Kelley, Pastor

MSGT. TONY LAMAIR BURKS

*Accomplished Drummer and Bandleader + Decorated Veteran
Undercover Investigator + Victim's Rights Advocate
Mentor and Instructor + Wellness Enthusiast and Entrepreneur
Grill Master + Beloved Opa, Father, and Friend*

***In the beginning was the beat / And the beat
is the rhythm of God / And the rhythm of God
Is the heartbeat of humanity*** — Sounds of Blackness

Legend has it that during those early months in his mother's womb, Tony Lamair Burks was already listening intently to the steady beat of her heart—a sound like a drum calling him forth into the world. From his first breath in Dothan, Alabama, he was in tune with the rhythm of life. Music became his first language. Inquisitive from an early age, he observed the sights and sounds of America's South. He attended the segregated public schools of Alabama, and what he did not learn there, he learned at home from his family. His mother—well known for cooking and baking—taught him the basics of cooking and sparked a lifelong interest in the culinary arts. His completion of a week-long Quick Service Culinary Skills Course in 2011 at *The Culinary Institute of America*, in many ways, honored his mother's legacy.

A prodigy on the drums, his first set consisted of his mother's pots and pans. He played his “drums” in the kitchen until Miss Lillie eventually drove him outside. There, he transformed a propane tank into a percussive instrument! By the age of 14, as a freshman, he was already leading his high school's drum line. Mr. Walter L. Parker Jr., the band director, was keenly aware of his student's skills and snuck him into the balcony of Dothan's *Capri Club* to observe and learn from bands performing each week. His musicianship grew under this tutelage.

***Seemed to me that drumming was the
best way to get close to God.*** — Lionel Hampton

As a Boy Scout and a PK (preacher's kid), he was deeply involved in church life. He lived under the ever-watchful eye of church members, who often saw him as an extension of his parents' ministry: his father, a Country Preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, who had a gift for leading circuits of smaller churches; and his mother, an unorthodox church First Lady, who embraced New Thought and saw God everywhere—even in her garden! There was a deep sense of responsibility; at times he struggled to find his place. People said he ran from the expectations that came with being a PK. They said he ran from “The Call.” In truth, his journey was one of navigating expectations while finding his unique voice through music. It wasn't until he reframed his love for drumming that he realized he had not been running away from God, but growing closer to God. Drumming became his ministry.

During his high school junior year, he began working at Southeast Alabama General Hospital (now Southeast Medical) in both the Pathology and Dietary Departments. The year 1970 was action-packed for him: he graduated from Essie R. Grimsley Colored High School/Ashford High School in May; he married Janice Potter in June; celebrated his 18th birthday in October; and welcomed his namesake son in December. He also participated in an on-the-job training program at Enterprise State Junior College in partnership with the hospital, aiming to improve his skills.

***A great drummer listens
as much as he plays.*** — Indian Proverb

A Freemason, Prince Hall Affiliated, he was initiated into Fairview Lodge #513 on January 28, 1971. Later that year, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and then enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He served as a Security Police Specialist in Thailand during the Vietnam War and was honorably discharged from the Air Force as a Sergeant in 1977. He joined the Air Force Reserve, serving as Superintendent of Administrative Services and Superintendent of Medical Readiness for the 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. His last deployment was in January 2005 during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm to Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Over six months, he and his team

evacuated over 6,000 injured troops from the war zone to Germany and then home to the United States. During his military career, he received several awards, including the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Air Force Reserve Meritorious Service Medal. He retired from the Air Force Reserve with the rank of Master Sergeant in August 2006, after 32 years of service.

An advocate for victims' rights, he served with the Montgomery Police Department as an officer before becoming an undercover Vice and Narcotics Investigator. On January 5, 1982, he survived being shot in the line of duty. Fueled by the slaying of his police partner, Mary Pearl McCord, he found his calling in advocating for victims of crime. He devoted the next season of his life to supporting others who had suffered tragedies and became the youngest of ten cofounders of *VOCAL* (Victims of Crime and Leniency). He graduated *cum laude* from Alabama State University in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in Psychology. He left the police force to work for the *Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission*, where he rose through the ranks from Temporary Clerical Aide to Crime Victims Specialist and from Acting Claims Division Head to Crime Victims Manager. He listened to the voices of the most vulnerable ensuring they received the justice they rightly deserved.

***Praise him with the timbrel and dance /
Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon
the high sounding cymbals.*** — Psalm 150 King James Version

Playing with *Little Lois and the Fabulous Capris* was among his first professional drumming experiences; they performed from their home base, *The Soul Makossa*, as well as at *The Capri Club* and the *Wiregrass Elks Lodge #810 & Temple #566*. They toured the chitlin' circuit and played at NCO Clubs, performing original music and covers of soul, funk, and R&B hits. His beats also reverberated throughout Europe and North Africa, including Germany, France, Switzerland, and the Canary Islands (Fuerteventura), captivating audiences at family events, festivals, clubs, and churches. A road-tested artist, he shared the stage with or opened for James Brown, Ike and Tina Turner, Millie Jackson, and many others. Over the years, he performed with other bands including Manuel Bastian & Friends, Smitty & Friends, Port of Call, Smitty & Groove Machine, Smitty & Blues +, MWB, Room 4 Two, Groove Signal, PC&J and Friends, Junior & The Blues Busters, The Chilly-Willy Nightlife Band, and Reset Band among many others. Performing with these bands transformed him into a sought-after musician, comfortable playing original tunes and any genre from reggae to rock, from ballads to blues, and from soul to pop.

As an accomplished drummer and bandleader, he connected with God through his drums. His faith wasn't just about sitting on the front pew in church on Sundays; it was about a deep, personal relationship with God that was not bound by the restrictions we often place on the Divine. His music brought people together, uplifted spirits, and spoke to the soul's yearning for connection. Like his beloved mother, he found God in the voices and smiles of family and friends. He saw the presence of God in everyone from his fellow soldiers to the people he met while living, traveling, and performing across the United States and Europe.

***Rhythm connects people with the resonance
of the universe. It's all about vibrations.*** — Mickey Heart

He admittedly wasn't a perfect man; he had tried his hand at marriage four times. When he asked his son if he should try it one more time, Lil' Tony quipped, “Marriage ain't your ministry, Dad!” Thankfully, the lyrics of one of his musical mentors, James Brown, encouraged him to press on: “If you don't get it the first time, back up and try it again!” It was his passion for music that ultimately brought his soulmate, Alexandra, into his life. In 2012, she attended a concert where he was playing. They would see each other from time to time after; she wasn't interested then; yet, he persisted. By 2014, his patience paid off, and they became a couple. He eventually asked her children for their mother's hand in marriage. They wedded in June 2020 and together built a life of love, laughter, and joy.

He made everyone feel like family, creating a circle of love stretching across continents—even to people he never met in person. His laughter, wisdom, and warmth were felt by those who knew him, and his ability to connect deeply with others was a testament to the vibrations of his spirit. He was known all around as a grill master. Ribs and chicken smothered in his signature barbecue sauce were classics of many family summer cookouts. Steaks, shrimp, kabobs—you name it, he could take anything, throw it on the grill, and make it taste like a slice of heaven. Whether performing with one of his bands, traveling across the globe, or cooking soul food in the kitchen at the Sembach Bowling Center or the Sembach Community Activity Center, you could count on him for his dynamic personality and positive outlook on life—even as he battled metastasized lung cancer for over a year.

***All that lives, lives forever. Only the shell passes away.
The spirit is without end... Eternal... Deathless...*** — Bhagavad Gita

Tony Lamair Burks is a cherished son, brother, cousin, uncle, father, Opa, and friend. On Saturday, August 3, 2024, he made his transition to be with the ancestors including his parents, Mrs. Lillie Burks and Rev. Timothy Burks; and his sisters, Gwendolyn Paul, Jacquelyn Erwin, and Carolyn Long.

When we think of him, let's remember the zeal with which he lived for 71 years. Think of him when you witness a drum solo at a live concert or hear someone say, “Yup, Yup” or “Scheisse!” Remember the passion with which he advocated for health and wellness as an entrepreneur (CBD, anyone?). Think of him when you eat *Popeyes Chicken* anywhere in the world (his favorite order was four spicy chicken wings—after all, chicken is chicken, but the wang is the thang!). Remember him when you lounge on a sandy beach or walk through a forest, soaking in God's handiwork. Let's remember how he created unforgettable moments with his drumsticks and captured them with his camera. When we think of him, let's remember his definition of “family.” For him, family was both by blood and by heart; it was about his multicultural tribe and its vibe. Let's remember him saying, “Sometimes you just need to stop and listen to the music.” Think of him when you celebrate Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Mobile (and he loved the one in Alabama the most; IYKYK!).

His memory will be cherished by his wife, Alexandra Burks. His legacy will be sustained by his son, Dr. Tony Lamair Burks II; son-in-law, Thandiwe DeShazor; and his granddaughter, Journey DeShazor-Burks. Others who count it a blessing to have known him are the mother of his son, Janice Potter Burks; his niece, nephews, their partners, and their children, Karen Patrick-Davis, Karl (Taneen) Patrick, Thomas (Debra) Durdin, Oscar Page III (who was like another son to him), Bryce Cobb III, Vashti Newton, Robin Grantham, Faith Durdin, Reagan Skye, Bryce Cobb IV, Ryin Cobb, and London Webb; his half-sister, Mattie Pearl Bray-Taylor; his cousins and their children, Dorothy D. Long, Felicia Rattray, Andre Parker, Xiomara Rogers, and Nicholas Shavers; his brother-in-law, David Long; his step-children and their partners, Benjamin Voltz and Sebastian Jäger, Alexander (Michelle) Herlan, Stefan Michalk, Sebastian Michalk and Vanessa Landmesser, Susann (Daniel) Michalk, Louisa (Jordan) Hardy, and KJ Michalk; his step-grandsons, Charles Hardy, Vincent Michalk, and Phillip Michalk; his godchildren; his extended circle of family and friends—including Sylvie Dauber, the late Deborah Faye Dixon Covington, Harold Smith, Antonio Fitzgerald Potter, Sr., Erika Davis, Karla Mays Marshall, Pastor Dowling Jerome Kelley, Pleshette Powell, Rachel Kelley, and Mary Johnson; members of his bands; fans of his drumming; alumni of Alabama State University; members of the Grimsley/Ashford High School Class of 1970; fellow service men and women with the 908th Security Police Squadron, the 35th Air Evacuation Squadron, the 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, and the 791st Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron Operation Iraqi Freedom; his colleagues at *VOCAL* and the *Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission*; members of the *National Organization for Victim Advocacy* and the *Alabama Professional Investigators' Association*; a host of Facebook friends; and members of the Anglin, Burks, Carter, Durdin, Eddings, Jones, Kelley, Page, Patrick, Potter, Smith, and Williams families.