



## *My Hope*

*My hope is that my children will remember that their Mama tried. Even when I was tired. Even when I was stressed. Even when I was scared and had no clue what to do. I had every intention of being the "BEST" mother I could be, and I hope they know I did my best because I "DEARLY" love them with all my heart.*

*Love, Mama*

*Written by Annie to her children on  
February 6, 2025*

## *Acknowledgments*

We, the family of Annie Ruth Gray, wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for your acts of kindness, love and support during this, our challenging time of bereavement. Your prayers and compassion are deeply appreciated. May God bless and keep each of you, is our prayer.

## *Pallbearers*

Christopher Carter | Dante Gray  
Kevin Gray Jr. | Clarence Gray  
Daylin Gray | Thomas Gray  
DeJuan Lewis | Demarco Lewis  
Broderick Tillman

 **SERENITY**  
FUNERAL HOME

1101E. Bannister Rd. | KCMO 641131 | 816-599-2939

In Loving Memory

Of

*Annie*  
**RUTH GRAY**

JUNE 13, 1937 | APRIL 19, 2026

**Friday, May 1, 2026**

Visitation: 10:00 A.M. | Service: 11:00 A.M.

**Memorial Church International**  
11424 Hickman Mills Dr. | Kansas City, Missouri 64134

**Officiant: Rev. Curford E. Dixon Sr.**

# Life Reflections

**Annie Ruth Gray, 88**, was born on June 13, 1937, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi to Tommy Townes Sr. and Eddie Mae Reed-Townes. She received her initial education in Hattiesburg public schools and graduated from Royal Street High School in 1956. She lived in several places until she eventually settled in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1960, with her then husband, James E. Gray Sr. She remained a resident of Kansas City until her death. She was a member of Trinity Missionary Baptist Church for more than 50 years. She had a deep, abiding faith in God, and this legacy was passed on to her family.

Annie was industrious and had an entrepreneurial spirit. Soon after separating from her husband, she started a day care in her home providing safe before and after school care for many. She also had some children in her care all day. This is how she supported her family for several years, along with part-time work.

She was a “community mom”. Many of her children’s friends called her “Mama Gray” and her home was often a neighborhood hangout. She served as a Den Mother for the Cub Scouts and kept several of her sons active in the Boy Scouts for years. She often used scarce household resources to make sure they could participate in many Boy Scout activities, including trips to camp. She supported all her children’s extracurricular activities to the extent possible.

Annie emphasized the importance of education and modeled this for her family. She returned to school to earn a business certificate. She learned shorthand, basic accounting principles and could operate a 10-key adding machine with speed and accuracy. She was also a typing whiz accurately typing 65 words per minute. These skills lead her to being hired for a secretarial position with Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) at Pitcher Elementary School.

She eventually became an education paraprofessional working at several schools including Volker Elementary School and Weeks School. She was an active member of the Kansas City Federation of Teachers (KCFT) while employed by KCPS, serving as a union steward. She continued to pursue opportunities for education by attending union training conferences all over the country to enhance her skills. She was so trusted by the principals for whom she worked that she was often used as a substitute teacher. She retired from KCPS in 2002 at the age of 65 and had maintained her membership in KCFT as a retiree.

Annie worked two jobs for many years to support her family. In addition to her work with KCPS, she worked as a concession stand cashier, bartender, and stand manager for more than thirty years. She worked at venues such as the Starlight Theatre, Municipal Auditorium, Kemper Arena, and KC Convention Center. She also worked at the Sports Complex, at both Arrowhead and Royals stadiums. She enjoyed the cultural events that her work afforded her the opportunity to attend. She often made sure that her children and grandchildren attended as well.





Annie was known for her sense of fashion. She was always beautifully dressed and went the extra mile for special occasions. She was occasionally an in-store model for Lane Bryant when it sold high-end clothes for big and tall women. She could keep what she modeled. She loved fancy hats, high-quality handbags, and accessories. She had a cap to match every casual outfit. Friends often turned to her to borrow a dress or outfit for events such as weddings, and she gave away beautiful clothes that she no longer wore.

Annie had many hobbies and interests, including cooking. She enjoyed word search puzzles, especially ones that were biblically based. Annie loved to travel, and she visited 21 states and the District of Columbia. She loved arts and crafts and liked to draw. She was an avid Kansas City Chiefs fan and always dressed up for game days. She was also a Dallas Cowboys fan because her youngest brother, Willie Townes, began his pro football career with that team. She also enjoyed basketball, which she played for two years in high school. Her favorite basketball player was Steph Curry from the Golden State Warriors.

Annie outlived all her siblings but stayed connected to her nieces, nephews, and cousins all over the country. She was known as "Aunt Bae Bae" to many of them. They treasured her as the last link to their parents. Annie also had a wide circle of friends from many phases of her life. She remained in contact with her high school classmates and former coworkers.

Annie's greatest treasures were her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She enjoyed being around them and collecting hugs and kisses. She was known for "going in the back room" to find gifts. One grandchild said that if Grandma went to the back room, something good would come out. Annie gave thoughtful gifts to many, not out of an abundance, but out of love.

Annie Ruth Gray departed this life on April 19, 2026, surrounded by loved ones. She was preceded in death by her parents Eddie Mae Reed-Townes and Tommy Andrew Townes. Her siblings Willie Jean Townes Evans, Betty Jean Townes Gaddis, Pearlean Townes Burns, Edna E. Townes, Shirley Townes McGhee, Sandra Townes Holloway, Tommy Townes Jr., and Willie Townes. Her cherished son, Donald Charles Gray, and granddaughters Cassandra E. Jones and Danielle J. Gray also departed this life before her.

Left to cherish Annie's legacy of love, her children James E. Gray II, Lisa A. Gray, Esq., Kevin B. Gray Sr. (Christia), and Tommy E. Gray. She will also be lovingly remembered by her grandchildren Shaneka Fikes-Carter (Christopher), Demarco Lewis Sr. (Tenisha), DeJuan Lewis, Tiara Gray, Thomas Gray, Erica Gray, Preshus Ellen Gray, Talisa Gray Jackson, Clarence Gray, Tashe Gray, Tangela Gray, Daylin Gray, Kevin Gray Jr. (Samantha), and Dante Gray.

Annie's legacy also includes her great grandchildren Dakota Gray, Paris Johnson, Siwel Lewis, De'Xior Davis, Honesty Lewis, Joyous Lewis, Dayonna Lewis, Demarco Lewis Jr., Amear Watson, Calia Jackson, Cylan Jackson, Danielle Foster, Whitley Fikes, Journey Gray, Eddie Stewart Jr., Jamier Shelby, and Victoria Gray.

Annie will also be missed by her sister-in-law, Eva "Kandi" Townes, daughter-in-law, Lori Downing and a host of nieces and nephews, cousins, and close friends.

# Celebration Of Life

## Processional

### Greetings

Reverend Curford E. Dixon Sr.  
Trinity Missionary Baptist Church

### Congregational Hymn

“I’ll Fly Away”

### Prayer

### Scripture Reading

Old Testament | “Lamentations 3:22-26 and 31-33” | Kevin Gray Jr.  
New Testament | “1 Corinthians 15: 50-57” | Ellen Gray

### Musical Selection

### Poem

“For Grandma Annie” | Shaneka Fikes-Carter

### Acknowledgments and Condolences

### Video Tribute

### Remarks and Tributes

Two Minutes Please | Family & Friends

### Musical Selection

### Words of Comfort

Rev. Curford E. Dixon Sr.

### Benediction

### Recessional

“Let The Church Say Amen”

