

Pallbearers

Rodney Harris
Jerome Philips
Warren Weems

Franklin Bond
James Sanford, Sr.
Nathaniel Sanford

Honorary Pallbearers

Gary Christie
Derek Hamilton
Phillip Fant
Avery Johnson
George Moore, Jr.
William Sanford, Jr.

William Bond
Charles Fant
Kim Hamilton
Ben Moore
Vincent Sanford

Alfred Fant
June L. Hamilton
Rodney Gorley
Robert W. Sanford
Roderick Moore
Steven Slaughter

Flower Bearers

Nieces, Family Members, and Friends

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to Dr. Scott Kotzin, Amberly Primary Care, and staff for their professional service and to Tammy Buttlerwerth, Home Health Aide, for the care and comfort she provided Wilbur. The family would like to thank each one for the cards and flowers sent during our time of bereavement. The telephone calls and visits made to comfort us during this time were sincerely appreciated. Your many acts of kindness will never be forgotten.



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Celebrating the Life and Spirit of



Wilbur Lee Sanford

August 2, 1935 - April 15, 2025

Saturday, May 3, 2025

Visitation: 10:00 am - Funeral Service: 12:00 pm

New Mission Missionary Baptist Church

4809 Ravenna Street - Cincinnati, Ohio 45227

Pastor Tracy E. Ventus - Officiating

Obituary

Wilbur Lee Sanford was born on August 2, 1935, in Lexington, Kentucky, the fourth child to bless the union of Lloyd and Catherine Sanford. He departed this life at the age of 89 on Tuesday, April 15, 2025.

The Sanford family attended the Wesley United Methodist Church, where Wilbur accepted Christ and was baptized at an early age, which was the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith and service.

On February 28, 1965, Wilbur married the love of his life, Dorothy Moore Sanford. Their marriage was a shining example of commitment, love, and partnership, lasting sixty beautiful years. They had two children, James Alvin Sanford and Vanessa Ann Walker, both preceded him in death.

A LIFELONG LEARNER AND EDUCATOR

Wilbur was a proud product of the Lexington Public School System and a graduate of Dunbar High School's college preparatory program. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Government (History) from Kentucky State University, where he also became a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Beta Mu Chapter.

His passion for education continued at the University of Kentucky, where he earned a degree in Elementary Education and later a Master of Arts with a minor in Counseling and Guidance. Wilbur also pursued post-graduate Montessori studies at Xavier University and the University of Cincinnati. He received a Master's Degree in Administration from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. His dedication to academic excellence was recognized with an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Cambridge University, London, England.

A CAREER DEDICATED TO UPLIFTING YOUTH

Wilbur began his teaching career in the North College Hill School System from 1960 to 1965, where he also served as President of the Teachers' Association and led a successful constitutional revision as Chair of the Legislative Committee.

In 1965, he joined the Cincinnati Public School System, dedicating ten years as a passionate classroom teacher at several elementary schools, including Quebec Heights, Douglas, and Cummins. From 1966 to 1968, he also taught at the Cincinnati Bible Evening College.

In 1975, Wilbur transitioned into administration, beginning as an administrative intern at Heberle Elementary and becoming Assistant Principal the following year. He then served as Assistant Principal at Clifton Elementary and later as Principal at Hoffman Elementary. In 1980, he became Principal of Windsor Elementary, where he served for a decade. He concluded his career at South Avondale Elementary, retiring in 1992.

Even after retirement, Wilbur's passion for teaching never waned. In 1993, he returned to education, teaching summer school and Saturday Enrichment Programs. He worked as a tutorial supervisor and returned to the classroom as a 6th-grade teacher at St. Joseph Catholic School. He also taught at NIA University, G.C.C.A., and Nu Bethe School in Dayton, Ohio.

Inspired by Uncle Will

He inspired me to always keep learning. He made sure I had plenty of Books to read whenever I stayed with him. We shared many laughs about the silliest things. He was an intelligent, kind, and humorous role model.

~Tanganikia Bond



My Favorite Dr. Uncle Wee

~ Glenda Trumbo

Hello Favorite Niece

~ Catherine Bond

One of a Kind Man

14 Karat

"Ginuwine"

~ William Bond

LEXINGTON, KY

To the Moon and Back

August 2nd, 1935 - a child of God, a son, a future teacher, a future leader, a father, a brother, an uncle, a friend, a grandfather, a great-grandfather, a husband - entered the world. And though these are my words, I know everyone here would agree: Dr. Wilbur Lee Sanford was the kindest soul I have ever known, and ever will know. A pillar of wisdom, of fairness, of getting it done - or not doing it at all. I dream in color - loud, vivid, unstoppable color. For a long time, I thought it meant my mind was lost, too chaotic, too wild. But one day, when I was no more than thirteen, my grandfather told me: "Any gift the Lord gives you is never to be wasted, because the Lord doesn't waste His time." I didn't know it then. But I know it now: His true gift was impact. He spoke life into you on your darkest day shifted your thinking, inspired you to reach higher to be better, to believe. The mountains he climbed, the storms he weathered - proof enough to me that God is real. April 15th, 2025 - we lost him. Sadness filled me, until my grandmother's voice lifted my heart to gratitude. You see - My brother JB, the rock in my life, is shaped in Grandpa's reflection. My sisters and I watched our papa love our beautiful, brilliant, bold, and brave grandmother, Dorothy Mary Sanford - out loud, every day, for over six decades. For three little girls growing up, that love meant everything. He was light. He was strength. He was the greatest gift we were ever given. And he will never leave us. Dear Grandpa, if you can hear me - we will love you forever, as you would say: "To the moon and back, and more than that."

Goodbye, Paw Paw. Goodbye for now.

SaunaJ



COMMUNITY AND FAITH LEADERSHIP

Wilbur was deeply involved in community organizations. He was a youth advisor for the 4-H Club, Boy Scouts of America, Avondale Community Council, and Youth Crime Intervention Programs. He was a member of the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators and a strong advocate for educational equity and community engagement.

As a long-time member of Gaines United Methodist Church, he served as Director of Education, sang in the choir, and was an active member of the Usher Board. On March 30, 2003, Wilbur and Dorothy moved their membership to New Mission Missionary Baptist Church, where Wilbur participated in the Senior Usher Board and the Reach and Teach Ministry until his health began to decline.

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Wilbur's contributions were recognized with numerous awards and honors, including the Exemplary Service Award in 1987. He was listed in Who's Who in America (24 edition) and Who's Who in the Midwest (1994-1995). He also received the Community Service Award and the Youth Crime Intervention Recognition Award. He was also nominated for the Distinguished Principal Award and Educator of the Year. In addition, he was a proud member of St. John Lodge #3 and Sinai Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio.

CHERISHED MEMORIES

Wilbur was preceded in death by his parents, Lloyd and Catherine; his siblings, Dora M. Sanford, Lloyd Sanford, Jr., Nathaniel Sanford, Sr., Ellen Bond, and William Sanford, Sr.; his beloved children, James Alvin Sanford and Vanessa Walker.

He is survived by his devoted wife of sixty years, Dorothy Moore Sanford. He is lovingly remembered by his grandson, James Benjamin Sanford, and his granddaughters, Stephanie Johnson, Sauna Johnson, and Dorothy Halton, along with her husband, Terrell. Wilbur also leaves behind three great-grandchildren: Ava Sanford, Xayvion Sanford, and Mikaela Malcom.

He will be fondly missed by his devoted sisters-in-law, Pastoria Weems and Melda (Alfred) Fant. Wilbur will also be deeply missed by special nieces Catherine Bond, Glenda Trumbo, and Wilma Sanford Williams, as well as a host of other nieces, nephews, extended family members, former students, and friends whose lives he touched with his kindness, warmth, and generosity.

Wilbur Lee Sanford lived a life of faith, integrity, and service. His enduring commitment to family, education, and community has left an indelible mark, and his legacy will continue to inspire for generations to come.

