

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026 - 11:00 AM

ZION BAPTIST CHURCH  
933 EAST 24TH AVENUE, DENVER, COLORADO 80205  
PASTOR FRANK M. DAVIS, PASTOR / OFFICIANT

THE CELEBRATION

Prelude.....The Five Points Ambassadors

PROCESSIONAL

Invocation.....Pastor Frank M. Davis

Scripture Reading.....Reverend Barbara Berry-Bailey  
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8  
John 14: 1-11

Tribute.....Vohn Regensberger

Selection.....Twilight World - Marion McPartland, Composer  
Recording/Performance By Purnell Steen

Tribute.....Tony Green

Selection.....Come Sunday - Composer Duke Ellington  
Soloist - Myhra Warren

Tribute.....Andrew Hudson

SILENT READING OF THE OBITUARY

VIDEO TRIBUTE  
Featuring Purnell LeVant Steen

Tribute.....The Honorable Wilma Webb

Selection.....On a Clear Day - Composer Burton Lane  
Soloist - Lee Morris

BENEDICTION

Eulogy.....Pastor Frank M. Davis

RECESSIONAL  
This Little Light of Mine

MEMBERS OF THE FIVE POINTS AMBASSADORS

Derek Banach  
Ron Bland  
Mike Fitzmaurice  
Bill Larsen  
Lee Morris  
Vohn Regensberger  
Doug Roche  
Ed Stephen  
Max Wagner  
Myra Warren

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Videography by Donnie Betts, Vohn Regensberger, and  
Tad Michael Wheeler

Memorial celebration arranged by friends of Purnell Steen

RECEPTION

Pipkin Braswell Reception Center  
6601 E. Colfax Ave.  
Denver, CO 80220

PIPKIN BRASWELL FUNERALS AND CREMATION SERVICE

6601 E. Colfax Ave  
Denver, CO 80220  
Office Phone: 303-996-0869  
Direct Phone: 303-577-6006

“When Someone You Love Becomes A Memory; The Memory Becomes A Treasure.”

ONE OF A KIND



*Purnell*  
LEVANT  
**STEEN**

APRIL 15, 1941 - NOVEMBER 18, 2025

# Purnell LeVant Steen

On April 15, 1941, Porter and Laverne Steen welcomed into their lives a son, Purnell LeVant. Little did they know he would grow up to be a gregarious, brilliant scholar and, above all, a child prodigy in music. Over his lifetime he would embrace and share his talents with people in Denver and beyond.

Prior to starting first grade, Purnell's parents supported their gifted child with piano and violin lessons. Purnell's first piano recital occurred during his pre-school years. Growing up in a loving, but disciplined home, he was exposed to his parents' values of hard work and the Christian Faith. Zion Baptist Church was his religious home throughout his life. He furnished musical ministries at a variety of metro Denver churches and accommodated more requests for music at funeral services than one can count. He considered doing this his privilege and responsibility.

Purnell was educated through Denver Public Schools and graduated from East High School in 1959. Following high school he was offered entry into the prestigious Juilliard School of Music. On finding out that he was black, however, Juilliard rescinded the offer. He subsequently matriculated to the University of Colorado in Boulder, where he wanted to declare a major in classical music. The school did not allow him to do this. He embraced the education available to him and continued to develop his musical skills. The late bassist Charles Burrell, a cousin, was Purnell's mentor and inspiration throughout his life.

Frustration and indignation from blatant discrimination, as well as the social conditions of the early 1960's, propelled him to confront injustice and awaken others to the unfulfilled promises of American citizenship.

Purnell's contribution to the Civil Rights Movement began in 1961, when he joined other young activists, known as The Freedom Riders, in traveling via interstate buses throughout the South, where racism was most oppressive.

The commitment and passion Purnell and his colleagues had for equality ultimately took him to Washington, D.C., where he had a brief meeting and conversation with then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, serving under his brother, President John F. Kennedy, at the time. At an Easter Sunday service on March 29, 1964, Purnell met Pastor Billy Graham and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. King introduced the song, "This Little Light of Mine" at that service. Purnell performed it, and it became his signature song.

Later, Purnell served in the Army during the Vietnam War. Initially stationed in Southeast Asia, he was inducted into the 7th Army Soldier's Choir and transferred to Germany, where he became fluent in German. He often told the story of a cold Christmas Eve when his choir stood on one side of the Berlin Wall singing "Silent Night" and the soldiers of the Russian Army—on the other side of the wall—joined them in song. That experience deeply affected Purnell and he carried forth the "light" in him that had begun to shine despite whatever circumstances he faced.

With that "light", Purnell never became bitter. People who knew him often remarked that he "never met a stranger". He made friendships with all kinds of people and used the language of music to enhance his communication with an incredibly large and diverse cadre of friends.

Purnell worked in Denver at Amoco and later in the Denver County Court System. As music was his vocation, however, it was always part of his life. He was knowledgeable about multiple musical genres and their history. Purnell was a very lyrical piano player who loved melodies. He fully engaged audiences with his historical vignettes. His riveting performances used the full range of the piano, displaying his mastery of the instrument. His most recent group, "Purnell Steen and the Five Points Ambassadors" was dedicated to the preservation of Jazz Music in a Five Points style. He delighted in encouraging young musicians to pursue their dreams.

Twice in recent years, Purnell and his Ambassadors had the distinct honor of performing with the Colorado Symphony, where they were well received. In 2022, they had the pleasure of participating in a reciprocal performance program with musicians in Brest, France. This international experience was a highlight of Purnell's career.

Recognition came from many sources, such as the Juanita Grey Community Service Award, the East High School Hall of Fame and the Humanitarian Award conferred by the Colorado Martin Luther King Commission. A Doctorate Degree in Public Service was conferred on him by the Institute of Urban Studies and Adult College in 2025. Posthumously, the Hiawatha Davis Seniors Group recognized him with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

We shall miss Purnell's light, but are grateful he shared it with us. Rest in Peace, Purnell.



Precious Memories