



Clara Manns Bates

February 18, 1943 - April 28, 2026

Mrs. Clara Bates departed this life Tuesday, April 28, 2026. Celebration of Life Services will be held Thursday, May 7, 2026 11:00am at Columbia Drive United Methodist Church 2067 Columbia Dr, Decatur, GA 30032. Visitation will be held Wednesday, May 6, 2026 4pm-8pm at our South Dekalb Location. 4347 Flat Shoals Pkwy Decatur, GA 30034. Please express your love and condolences here on our website.

With profound love and tenderness, we (the family) share the passing of Clara Manns Bates born February 18, 1943. She was preceded in death by her beloved

parents, Isaac Manns and Bernice Fikes Manns and her brother, Isaac Manns, Jr. of

Birmingham, Alabama. Clara was embraced by the Lord's peacefully loving arms

on April 28, 2026, at the age of 83. Her beautiful spirit ascended to heaven while

surrounded by her family.

Mrs. Bates professed Christ at an early age and joined First Baptist Church East

Thomas in Birmingham Alabama. She has always loved the church and its ministries. As a teenager in church, she was a Sunday School teacher and participated in many programs and play productions.

She married Jerome Bates, Sr. in 1964, and they shared 62 years together. In 1966

they welcomed their first son Jerome Bates Jr., and in 1969 they welcomed their

second son Delton Bates.

Mrs. Bates spent most of her formative years in Birmingham, Alabama where she

completed her public-school education. Following her graduation from A. H. Parker High School, she pursued higher education at Spelman College in Atlanta,

Georgia earning a BA degree in Psychology with a minor in Elementary Education.

After graduation from Spelman, she was employed by DeKalb County School System as a teacher in 1965 and went on to earn specialist status in reading and

elementary mathematics. In 1978, she was promoted to assistant principal at Peachcrest Elementary School where she provided instructions for teachers on how

to help children at a predominantly white school with approximately 900 students.

Her primary responsibilities were Curriculum Development and Discipline. In 1980 she was then selected by the Board of Education to be one of two first black

female principals in the DeKalb County Schools history and the first black female

principal at Leslie J. Steele Elementary School. She left Leslie J. Steele as principal to serve at Toney Elementary School from 1985-1988. She was asked to

return to Leslie J. Steele at parents' request in 1988. This was the first time in DeKalb County history a principal was returned to a school. She remained there

until her retirement in 2000. Mrs. Bates was named Area III Principal of the Year

for the 1998-1999 school term.

Mrs. Bates educational background consists of a BA in Education from Spelman

College 1960-1965; MA in Mathematics Education from Atlanta University (now

Clark Atlanta University) 1970-1972; Earned certification in Administration and Supervision from Georgia State University 1973-1975; and studied Christian Education at Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia 1995-1999.

Upon retiring from education, she served as Director of Operation at Cascade United Methodist Church (2000-2006) and later as assistant to the pastor at Columbia Drive United Methodist Church (2012-2015).

She not only served in administration at churches, but she was a diligent and enthusiastic ministry leader in Children Ministry and Christian education at Ben

Hill United Methodist, Cascade United Methodist and Village of Hope Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Her love for church ministry prompted her to attend

the International Theological Seminary.

As a church member, in addition to ministry activities, she held the following positions: chairperson of Christian Education, chairperson of Children's Ministry,

member of the Finance Committee, Communication Committee, Administrative

Board, Nominations and Personnel Committee and the Staff, Parish, Relations Committee.

Mrs. Bates leaves a loving legacy upon the lives of those she touched. Among those who will cherish her memory are her loving husband Jerome Bates Sr.,

her

two sons Jerome Bates (Schyuler) and Delton Bates (Sandra), sisters Alice Moore

and Nancy Edmonds, brother Charlie Manns, grandchildren, Delton Bates Jr. (Amber), Kendall Bates, Jarret Bates, Jordan Bates, Jaylen Bates, Kennedy Streeter

and Sheridan Bates, great grandchildren Ryleigh Bates and Dakari Bates and a host

of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends

Cemetery Details

Westview Cemetery

1680 Westview Dr SW
Atlanta, GA 30310

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 6. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

South DeKalb Chapel
4347 Flat Shoals Pkwy.
Decatur, GA 30034
(404) 241-5656
info@levettfuneralhome.com

Celebration of Life

MAY 7. 11:00 AM (ET)

Columbia Drive United Methodist Church
2067 Columbia Dr,
Decatur, GA 30032

Tribute Wall



“ Auntie Clara you will truly be missed. I will definitely miss your calls and check ins with me. Thank you for always being a supporter of me. You were always one phone call away. Thank you for all the gifts for Kenzo birthday parties and thank you for the support and motivation when I was in school. My favorite memory was when we went to Calloway Gardens for Christmas and even though it was cold and rainy we had a blast looking at those Christmas lights and shopping around in the store. We had the whole family there and you were so happy. It's nothing like family having a great time. I love you auntie.

Anna Ledford - May 08 at 05:11 AM



“ Mrs. Bates was the first principal I had at Leslie J. Steele Elementary School. She was not only a great leader, but also a strong Black woman leading a school and setting an amazing example for so many students.

Now, as an educator myself, I find myself looking for leaders just like her. Her impact, leadership, and legacy will never be forgotten.

Rest in peace, knowing that you truly made a difference and left a lasting legacy. DeVona Terrell

DeVona Terrell - May 07 at 10:55 AM

RI

“ I met Mother Bates through my dear friend and fraternity brother, Jerome. A kind and gentle spirit that always had a kind word and a smile every time I saw her. May her life ever be a joyous reflection and her memory be a blessing. I'm a better person for her touching my life.

Roy Byrd, III & Family

Roy Byrd III - May 06 at 02:31 PM

GB

“ Clara & I met in the halls of Morehouse South dormitory @ Spelman College. Her roommate was Barbara Warren. Clara was a fun person to be around and always had something funny to say. I was glad to see her at our 60th class reunion in 2024 since I had not seen her in a month of Sundays.

Gloria Knowles Bell

Gloria Knowles Bell - May 06 at 01:13 AM

MF

“ Mrs.Hendra Meadows & Family purchased the Floor Plant for Sympathy for the family of Clara Manns Bates.



Mrs.Hendra Meadows & Family - May 05 at 10:17 PM

MF

“ Mrs.Hendra Meadows & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Clara Manns Bates.

Mrs.Hendra Meadows & Family - May 05 at 10:17 PM



“ *Lavender & White Standing Spray was purchased for the family of Clara Manns Bates.*



May 05 at 04:03 PM

AT

“*My heart is heavy and deeply grieved at the passing of my dear friend, Clara Bates. Yet even in this sorrow, I am comforted knowing that God, in His infinite wisdom and love, has called one of His faithful servants home.*

I first came to know Clara through years of working together, but what I truly encountered was a woman whose life was anchored in purpose and guided by faith. Her passion for education was not confined to a building—it was a ministry. She poured into others selflessly, touching lives far and wide with wisdom, compassion, and grace.

Clara carried herself with a quiet strength and divine elegance. She led not only with professionalism but with a Christ-like spirit that uplifted every teacher, every student, and every life she encountered. Her love for people was a reflection of God’s love—unwavering, inclusive, and genuine.

Her work in Christian education was a calling she embraced wholeheartedly. She helped plant seeds of faith, nurtured spiritual growth, and guided many along their journey with Christ. Through her service, she strengthened the church and inspired the congregation to walk boldly in worship and truth.

*Today, we do not say goodbye—we say “well done.” For Heaven has gained a faithful servant. I can only imagine Clara hearing the words, **“Well done, thy good and faithful servant.”** She now rests in the presence of the Lord, where there is no pain, only eternal peace and joy.*

Though our hearts mourn, we stand on the promise of God’s Word:

***“For by His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also.”** — I Corinthians 6:14*

Clara’s life was a testimony of faith, love, and service. Her legacy

will continue to shine in the lives she touched, the seeds she planted, and the souls she helped guide toward Christ.

Ann Thomas

Ann Thomas - May 04 at 07:48 PM

ST

“*Profound sadness fills my heart, yet I find comfort in God’s promise. Mrs. Bates meant more to me than words could ever capture. She was my first example of a successful and powerful Black woman in leadership—at work, at home, and in the church—strong, graceful, and deeply inspiring. She walked in faith, led with wisdom, and loved with a Christ-like spirit that touched everyone she encountered.*

Beyond her accomplishments, she possessed a heart larger than life, one that uplifted, encouraged, and reflected God’s love in all she did. She welcomed me into her life, and I am forever grateful that she was part of so many milestones in mine.

Though my heart grieves, I rejoice in knowing that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. I loved her dearly, and her legacy of faith, strength, and love will continue to live on in my life and in the lives of so many she blessed.

Stephanie A. Thomas

Stephanie Thomas - May 03 at 04:31 PM

RW

“Mrs. Bates, I am going to truly miss you. There’s not a single memory of my childhood education that does not include you. Thank you for seeing what I couldn’t. Your style of running Leslie J. Steele was unique and as the leader your academic vision has led to many successful students. Mrs. Bates was fearless and had a fast sprint and could redirect disruption to academic compliance with the her favorite rectangular paddle (this was the late 80s). She understood us and loved all of us even when it was difficult. At times we did not deserve presence we could still approach her and she never turned us away.

Before you retired years ago I’m happy that I had the opportunity to come back and speak with you and allow you to see the improvements. What I can say is thank you! I was a hard student to manage but you never put me in the system but created a system to help me succeed. I was a student no one believed in and today in my 40s I’m a great chef and have graduated with high honors from CUNY School of Professional Studies with my Bachelors and I have a Masters Degree from Stony Brook University.

To the Bates Family,

I extend my condolences. Mrs. Clara M. Bates was an iconic leader in the DeKalb Education System and her memory will be cherished.

I live in New York not but I will reach out to members of DeKalb County Government to inquire about the process of renaming Second Avenue to Clara M. Bates Avenue.

Ralph Willis

Ralph Willis - May 01 at 03:24 AM