**Marie Barfield Harris** was born September 23, 1927 in Madison, Florida to parents James and Audrey Barfield. She had six brothers and sisters. As a child, Marie developed a thirst for knowledge and education, though she was able to attend school only through the 8th grade. Her father believed that girls should only attend school through the 8th grade, rather than pursue higher educations. She loved and respected her father, but knew she wanted more.

Marie was married in 1949 to Clifford Martin. They had three children: Clarence, Joyce, and Kenneth. She relocated from Tampa, Florida to Detroit, Michigan and then, later she moved to Mt. Clemens, Michigan. She worked at Martha T. Berry hospital as a as a laundry worker. As a young mother, she was active in the community and church. She was a Sunday School teacher. She participated in the Gospel Chorus, Senior Usher Board, and was a Cub Scout Leader for her son’s troop. In addition to working and raising her children, Marie enjoyed cooking, reading, and sewing. Many can attest to Marie’s culinary skills. Her soul food staples included collard greens, cornbread, smothered pork chops, and fried corn. No meal was ever complete without a slice of her highly acclaimed pound cake or sweet potato pie. As a talented seamstress, she made alterations and clothing of all types; from prom dresses and bridal gowns to handkerchiefs for Pastors to throw from the pulpit and for women to cover their legs on Sundays.

Marie married her second husband, Thurston Harris on January 5, 1966. She and he moved to St. Petersburg, Florida where she worked in the pediatric ICU as a unit secretary at All Children’s Hospital. Her work there further demonstrated her love for children. Marie enjoyed traveling, and God blessed her to visit places she had only imagined. Among them were Hawaii, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. After living in Florida for many years, Marie and Thurston returned to Mt. Clemens in 1982 to be closer to family. Family remained at the core of what she valued most in life.

Upon returning to Michigan, Marie had an even greater influence on her family. An avid reader, she always stressed to her children and grandchildren the importance of education. Though she attained a GED as an adult, she was never satisfied with having minimal education. Thus, she returned to school registering in an adult education program. For her, the words, “I can’t” were never a consideration. In 1991 at the age of 63, Marie graduated with her high school diploma. She then enrolled in Macomb Community College and completed courses towards an Associate’s degree. Professors and students alike marveled at her high energy and tenacity to complete her goals. She was an inspiration for many.

Through the years, Marie continued her involvement in church ministries and community service. She volunteered as an election official for political elections. She volunteered with the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen. She was a member of the Red Hat Women’s organization. She was a member of the Council on Aging. She volunteered as a Greeter at the Macomb County Jail. She participated in the Foster Grandparent Program to support holding and feeding high-risk children in the hospital’s nursery and pediatrics units. She was a member of the Senior Choir and Missionary Board. She was also appointed Pulpit Committee Chairperson for the election of Pastor at Greater Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church. One of her most beloved roles was President of the GMS Mother’s Board. She felt it the highest privilege to be a role model to young women in that capacity.

Marie will be remembered most for her love for cooking, nurturing of children, compassion towards others, and her generous heart. She had a passion for mentoring and teaching young women how to cook, sew, and to cope with life’s challenges. When she asked the question, “How are you?” she really meant it! If you were good, she was good too. If you were not so great, she knew it, and always had an encouraging word to build you up, such as, “When you have your hand in the lion’s mouth, pat his head until you can get it out.” She had a way with words and a vocabulary all her own. Her unique expressions and colorful descriptions will never be forgotten. Even with declining health and the inability to articulate her thoughts, her body language and gestures spoke volumes.

Marie, Mama, Grandma, Grandma-Marie, Aunt Marie, Mother Harris departed on the “glory train” bound for heaven on Friday, June 15, 2018 at 11:05 am. Her parents, all six siblings, and her late husband, Thurston Harris preceded her in death. She leaves to celebrate her life, legacy, and loving spirit her three children: Clarence Martin, Joyce Stramler, and Kenneth Martin; her five grandchildren: Kimerie Guy, Adrienne (Stacey) Guy, Ericka Guy, Astin Martin, and Arielle Martin; her three great-grandchildren: Ryan Guy, Marissa Guy, and Mehki Martin; her one Great-Great grandson, Elijah Guy, and many other close family and friends.