

Javonda Jane Harner Barnes
“Ghee Ghee”
October 3, 1957 - November 19, 2023

Loved ones from around the globe were devastated by the sudden passing of Javonda Jane (Harner) Barnes of rural Brownstown, IL. This Proverbs 31 woman had a pulmonary embolism on Sunday morning November 19, 2023 at SBL Fayette County Hospital in Vandalia, IL. The EMTs, nurses, and doctors could not stop her from going to her heavenly home. Her last words were “Jesus, take me home!” Javonda was born October 3, 1957 to Joseph Pershing Harner and Jennie Alice (Logue) Harner in Vandalia, IL. Her first love was with Jesus Christ; she spent her life dedicated to the service of Jesus’ Church worldwide. Her love for Christ was followed by her love for her husband, Gary Allen Barnes (married May 31, 1976). Javonda deeply loved their three children, three grandchildren, her parents, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, and great-great nephew.

Javonda was most proud of being a mom and a grandma. Her children fondly remember the dedicated years she spent raising them. Her grandchildren affectionately knew her as “Ghee Ghee.” Javonda had an incredibly strong work ethic, which she developed from her parents who raised her on the family farm in Brownstown. She was an avid learner and enjoyed: reading, her bicycle, the Harner farm, the ocean, words of comfort, helping others, teaching, hymns, piano playing, singing, and whistling. She grew up playing the piano for Fairview Methodist Church. Javonda had the most beautiful spirit and mind--full of infectious happiness and laughter. She did cartwheels into her 60s--a testament to her joyous spirit. She was a natural wordsmith making her a gifted writer and occasional preacher. Upon her passing, an old friend said, “I always hated to pray after Javonda. Her prayers were pure poetry.” For a season of life, she spoke at women’s retreats. Dabbling in ghostwriting and submitting a literary piece for print did not surprise those who knew Javonda. Her children remember her giving the most beautiful eulogy for her mother.

Javonda’s family was extremely proud of her studies and accolades. Javonda received the following degrees with honors from the University of Missouri, St. Louis: Master of Education, Secondary Education; Bachelor of Science, Education, Secondary Education with Honors: *summa cum laude*; Bachelor of Arts, English. She earned both TESOL and ABE certificates. She was a Missouri Option Educator who was awarded the Mehlville School District’s 2014-2015 Teacher of the Year at her school, SCOPE. Teacher of the Year was a first for SCOPE, the district’s alternative high school. In addition to teaching at SCOPE during the day, she taught TESOL and adult GED classes at Meramec Community College at night.

Javonda and her husband, Gary, met at Liberty Christian Church. Together they have served as missionaries with World Changers International (Loveyourneighbor360.org) since 1988. World Changers International (WCI) took Javonda and Gary all over the world. They worked in Eastern and Western Europe when the Berlin Wall came down (daughter, Bethany, was born in Vienna). This assignment included assisting Operation Mobilization with the Love Europe Conference. This conference trained and deployed more than 7,000 summer workers throughout the Eastern Block and Western Europe. While living in Vienna, they also served as interim pastors at Grace Church of Vienna.

In Nepal, they led short-term missions trips and partnered in training leaders with the Evangelical Fellowship of Nepal and pioneer leaders, Sundar and Sareeta Thapa. During this strategic partnership much was accomplished: Nepal Bible College was born; hundreds of orphanages, children’s homes, and churches were planted; the first home for the elderly was created; small business loans were given to help

struggling pastors start farms and small businesses; and more than 600 graduates were sent out from Nepal Bible College.

Throughout their work with WCI, they served at churches in Illinois, England, Scotland, Austria, Arizona, California, Missouri, and Bangkok. A couple favorite ministries for Javonda was when she and Gary were campus pastors at Eastern Illinois University (Christian Campus House) and when Javonda was the interim Children's Ministry Director at Central Christian Church in Mesa, AZ.

Some of Javonda's many accomplishments included: playing piano "back in the day" as song evangelists with Gary at revivals; helping fund House of Grace HIV/AIDS Orphans Home in Thailand (Thailand's first HIV/AIDS orphanage) and Blessing House (a home for rescued trafficked girls in Nepal); supporting Gary in his roles as--director/missionary of WCI, coordinator/liaison of the Urbana InterVarsity Christian Fellowship student mission conference, and Associate Director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's Forum 2000-2004 in Pattaya, Thailand; and being instrumental in starting City on a Hill a mission to Nepali-Bhutanese and Burmese refugees in South City, St Louis.

Most recently, Javonda's role with WCI had been teaching students English in Thailand where she and Gary lived for 5 years until April 2023. For the last 8 months, she had been continuing personalized English lessons virtually with the same Thai students from Brownstown, Illinois. During this time, Javonda loved being near her big brother, Jvee, and living closer to her son, J.K. Javonda and Gary had planned to continue her teaching virtually from California sometime in 2024 to be near their grandchildren—perhaps spending a few months a year in Illinois, too. Javonda spent many years teaching from St. Louis to Bangkok and even California where she taught her grandchildren their homeschool curriculum during the pandemic of 2020. Her current roster included students from Canada, Thailand, and Australia.

Javonda was preceded in death by: parents--Joseph Pershing and Jennie Alice (Logue) Harner; siblings--Joseph Pershing Harner II and Jarielle Winkleman.

Javonda is survived by: husband--Gary; children--Rachel Faith Peddie (David) of Dana Point, CA, John Kaleb (J.K.) Barnes of St Louis, MO, and Bethany Hope JoAlice Barnes-Coloma (Josiah) of Claremont, CA; three grandchildren--Hudson Grace Peddie, Brewer John Peddie, and Holiday Jane Mercy Peddie; siblings--Jenetia Ruble (David) of White Cloud, MI, Jvee Harner (Theresa) of Effingham, IL, Jorita Cook (Gary) of Rockford, MI and JoAlice Dobbs (Steve) of Vian, OK; many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, and one great-great nephew; sister-in-law Idalee Content of Freemont, MI; brother-in-law Gary Winkleman of Springfield, IL; and many other loved ones.

"Javonda's Celebration of Life" can be viewed on Gary's Facebook page and also on YouTube. It was held over the weekend at Liberty Christian Church along with the visitation. Funeral arrangements were through Giesekeing Funeral Home (Brownstown). Pastor Clayton Richison presided. Anita Newlin brought her musical talents to the piano accompanied by the church band. Javonda's son-in-law spoke on behalf of the family, her grandson read scripture, and granddaughter did a cartwheel. Pastor Randy and Sarah Boltinghouse (Champaign, IL) shared remarkable testimony while Pastor Matt Herndon (St. Louis, MO) paid Javonda thoughtful tribute. Her oldest granddaughter sang "Goodness of God" by Cece Winans. Pastor Mark Slomka flew from San Diego, CA to give the sermon causing great tears and laughter. To the pastors' amusement, a common theme emerged--Javonda's love of gifting books. No one in the room was surprised as Javonda was notorious for this type of gift.

Javonda's graveside service was preformed by news anchor Tim Ezell (St. Louis, MO). The day concluded with a beautiful lunch given by members of Liberty Christian Church. Finally, loved ones in Bangkok, Thailand held their own meeting for those grieving called "Group Hug for Javonda." Those in Thailand were able to gather and view Javonda's service during their group hug thanks to family friend Hosanna Wong who recorded Javonda's Celebration of Life. Hundreds paid respect in person, and 24 hours post service, more than two thousand people had viewed the Facebook live recording. Most can't think of a person more deserving than Javonda to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Mark 14, "She did what she could do."

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to "Javonda's Legacy Project" at www.worldchangersintl.org, www.continuetogive.com/4910404, or to World Changers Intl., PO Box 23, Charleston, IL 61920.

Javonda was blessed.