



Mother Zelma Yvonne Rucker

September 6, 1938 - January 30, 2026

Our story begins on September 6, 1938, in Magnolia, Mississippi. On this day, Otis Ginn and Lithia Ross Ginn welcomed the eighth of ten children born to their union. They named her Zelma Yvonne. She spent her early childhood in Mississippi. The family later relocated to Bakersfield, California, where she graduated from Bakersfield High School.

Yvonne, as she was affectionately known, accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior early in life. She worshipped at St. Paul Church of God in Christ under the leadership of Elder Cornelius N. Rucker, where she served faithfully in the ministry. She was known for her commitment to God, her gentle spirit, and her anointed singing.

Yvonne's faith, service to God, and the church, caught the attention of Elder Cornelius N. Rucker. Their relationship grew through shared values, ministry, and purpose. In September 1958, they were joined in holy matrimony. In September 1959, Elder Rucker left Bakersfield en route to Brooklyn, NY to conduct a revival. God directed him to stop in Kansas City, MO. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he established a church at the corner of 10th and Park Avenue. This marked the founding of Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, with Sis.

Yvonne Rucker serving as the Founding First Lady. She stood as a true

partner in the ministry, actively serving in multiple auxiliaries: teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir and serving as president, acting as the informal transportation ministry, and cooking for the masses.

Elder and Sis. Rucker never planned to become hoteliers, but it came with the territory. Their home was always open to others, and Mother Rucker continued this tradition until recent years. They welcomed everyone from family members to visiting elders and pastors, and even entire families relocating to Kansas City.

As Elder Rucker traveled and evangelized, Sis. Rucker often accompanied him. Her anointed and skillful singing blessed revival attendees and congregations alike. She became widely known for songs such as "I'm One of Them Today," "Nobody Like the Lord," "Rise Up and Walk," "I'll Say Yes," and many others.

In June 1973, Elder Rucker was elevated to the office of Bishop in the Church of God in Christ, and Sister Rucker continued her unwavering support, serving as First Lady of the Central Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Missouri. She and Bishop Cornelius N. Rucker remained inseparable until the Lord called him home in 1987. After his passing,

Mother Rucker continued her dedicated service to the Lord as an active member of Greater Holy Temple. As the founding First Lady, she played a vital role in preserving the history and legacy of the church. She was an anointed teacher who shared her wisdom and experiences with all, especially young women and fellow first ladies near and far. She was a trusted advisor and mentor to many, and her insights made her a sought-after speaker in her own right.

Mother Rucker was a true woman of God, full of grace and dignity. Yet her playful sense of humor helped to lighten the mood and bring laughter to all of those blessed to be in her presence. She was well known for her elegant and classic style. Her fashion sense embodied a clear understanding of current trends. She could make just about any hat look spectacular and she seemed to believe that stockings were an absolute essential daily wardrobe requirement.

Her love for music was equally refined. She embraced contemporary gospel artists and their work, keeping her talents and tastes current. As Chrystal gained prominence, she often traveled with her—familiar territory, as she had long been accustomed to ministerial travel while accompanying her husband.

Mother Rucker's greatest joy was being with family, especially her grandchildren. She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. On Friday, January 30, 2026 the Lord dispatched a celestial nightingale that sang a sweet lullaby, and Mother Zelma Yvonne Rucker peacefully entered into her eternal rest. She was reunited across the Jordan with her parents, Otis and Lithia Ginn; her husband, Bishop C. N. Rucker; three sisters, Pearlene Richards, Geraldine McCaleb, and Lillie Mae Dickerson; four brothers, Otto Ginn, Arthur Ginn, Roosevelt Ginn, and Ray Charles Ginn, two children, Linda Howard and Yvette Rucker; and her granddaughter Ciara Rucker-Nero.

To her union three children were born, and together they lovingly raised six children, left to cherish her memory are: Chrystal Rucker, Mia Wise and husband Fred, and Marie Rucker; son, Cornelius Rucker and wife Karen; two sisters, Mary Alice Lane and Onita Carter, both of Bakersfield, CA; her grandchildren, Michael, Carlos, Chontae, Chanel, Constance, Stacy, Cortez, Cortinos, and her special heartbeats, Quincy, Camille, Kyla, Jadon, Gia,

Andre, Trena and Trevon; special nieces, Sherrita, LaTonya and husband Brian, Andrea and husband Steve, Cydney Harris, Patricia Murphy, and a special nephew, Johnny Carter; her best friend for over 60 years, Mother Ernestine Byrd; her bonus children, Andrea Murphy, Harrison Murphy, Chuck Byrd, Cleo Byrd, Kevin Byrd, Kendra Byrd-Edwin, Kelley Byrd-Sodeinde, Michael Miller, Maurice and Pam Wallace, Jamar Franklin, Carla and Winston Williams, II, Carmen Simmons, Candice Franklin, Charles "Rusty" Clifton, Chris Allen, Tiaunna Jackson, and a host of great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and her loving church family, Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

Funeral Services will be held on Saturday, February 14, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Trinity Temple COGIC . Interment: Forest Hill Cemetery. Visitation: Friday, February 13, 2026, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Tribute Service at 7:00 p.m. at Greater Holy Temple COGIC. Visitation: Saturday, February 14, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. at Trinity Temple. Arrangements entrusted to Lawrence A. Jones & Sons. Condolences May be shared on our website.

Cemetery Details

Forest Hill Cemetery

6901 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64131

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 13. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Greater Holy Temple COGIC
2310 East 10th Street
Kansas City, MO 64127

Celebration of Life

FEB 13. 7:00 PM (CT)

Greater Holy Temple COGIC
2310 East 10th Street
Kansas City, MO 64127

Visitation

FEB 14. 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Trinity Temple COGIC
11922 Food Lane
Grandview, MO 64030

Funeral Service

FEB **14**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Trinity Temple COGIC
11922 Food Lane
Grandview, MO 64030

Tribute Wall

GB

“ *To Mia and family I send prayers for this celebration of your mom's life and legacy. Be at peace and joy at her remembrance in the days and years yet to come.* ”

Gwen Brazil - February 14 at 11:20 PM

GB

“ *Gwen Brazil lit a candle in memory of Mother Zelma Yvonne Rucker* ”



Gwen Brazil - February 14 at 11:14 PM

JJ

“ *God receive your daughter and bring comfort to her family.* ”

Jennifer Jiles - February 14 at 04:53 PM

AL

“ *My condolences and prayers to the family.* ”



A. Jeffrey LaValley - February 13 at 06:36 PM

ED

“ *EMC Bond Department purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Mother Zelma Yvonne Rucker.*



EMC Bond Department - February 09 at 06:55 PM

BB

“ *Praying for the Family!*

May God Bless and Keep You!!!

Brenda Bass - February 05 at 05:37 PM

MR

“ *To the Family of the Beloved Mother Zelma Rucker: I was one of many who was blessed to hear of Mother Rucker through Chrystal's posts on social media. The stories of her antics brought a smile to my heart and laughter to many days. She exemplified the sweet mothers in Zion who prayed for us and modeled for us what living a Godly life looks like. She will be missed. My prayers and sincere condolences to her family.*

Mama Sue Roseberry - February 05 at 04:48 PM