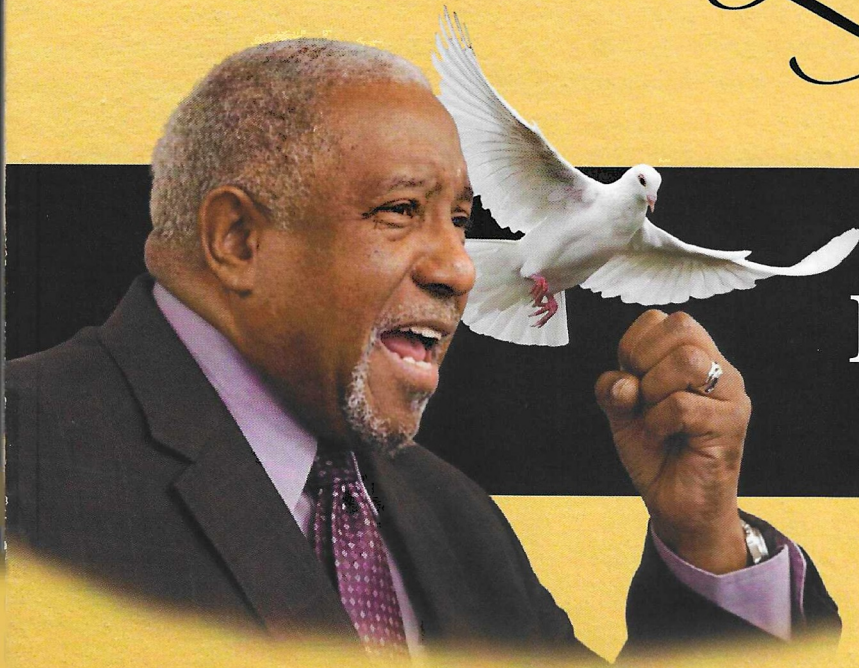


The Life and Legacy

*I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of
righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,
will award to me on that Day, and not only to me
but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8



REVEREND
DR. BERNARD
LAFAYETTE, JR.

REVEREND DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR., a loving father, husband, civil rights leader, minister, and lifelong teacher of nonviolence, was called home on March 5, 2026, at the age of 85.

Born on July 29, 1940, in Tampa, Florida, Bernard was the eldest of eight children of Deacon Bernard LaFayette Sr. and Willie Verdell Forrester LaFayette. Raised in Tampa's historic Ybor City during the era of Jim Crow segregation, he developed an early awareness of injustice that would shape the course of his life.

His grandmother, Rozelia Forrester, played a profound role in shaping his faith and calling. She often told him that he carried the "mark of a preacher" and should one day attend seminary. Bernard was present when New Hope Missionary Baptist Church was organized in his grandmother's living room in 1950, making him the youngest member of the church's founding group at the age of 10. The congregation nurtured the young boy's budding calling, even placing a small chair beside the pulpit so he could observe and learn from the preacher. Years later, he would fulfill the vision his grandmother saw in him when he became an ordained Baptist minister in 1969.

Bernard was proud to say that he began working at the age of 7. He delivered newspapers and coffee before school, earning the nickname "Mr. Coffee" as he carried coffee to market vendors early each morning. As a teenager he worked at Blue Ribbon Supermarket in Tampa, learning every aspect of the grocery business—from the butcher shop to produce stands to cashiering. Even as a young boy he showed generosity and compassion, often giving his coffee tips to classmates who did not have lunch money and sharing fruit from the family's yard with neighbors and friends.