

**A Celebration of Life
In Loving Memory
of
Reverend Nathaniel Dixon Jr.**

**Sunrise
March 19, 1950**

**Sunset
May 5, 2022**



**Friday, May 13, 2022
11:00 a.m.**

**Nelson Funeral Home Chapel
1021 East Washington Street
Rockingham, North Carolina 28379**

Order of Service

The Prelude

Video Tribute: Part I

The ProcessionalClergy and Family

Selection *Love is the More Excellent Way* Babbie Mason

The Scriptures

The Old Testament..... Psalm 121

New Testament..... John 14: 1-4

Prayer of Comfort..... Rev. Vernard Leak, Presiding Elder

Musical Selection*Blessed Assurance*.....Wintley Phipps

AcknowledgementsMrs. Debra Douglas

Obituary(*Read quietly during musical interlude*)

My Lord My God by Rev. Nat Dixon

SoloLaToya Diggs

Reflections(*Please limit to three minutes*)

Selection.....*The Lord's Prayer*..... Wintley Phipps

EulogyThe Rev. Dr. Janice Ingram

Video Tribute: Part II

Musical Selection *It is Well*.....Wintley Phipps

Parting View

Recessional.....*Goin' Up Yonder*Tramaine Hawkins

INTERMENT

Richmond County Memorial Park Cemetery
1717 East Broad Ave. (Highway 74)
Rockingham, NC 28379

REPAST

The Ballroom
3 W Hamlet Ave.
Hamlet, NC 28345

Obituary

Nathaniel Dixon Jr., lovingly known by his family as “the silver fox,” was born to Nathaniel Dixon Sr. and Naomi Dixon (née Ragland) on March 19, 1950 in his mother’s hometown of Richmond, Virginia. Nathaniel professed his faith in Jesus Christ at the age of 12 and was baptized at Thessalonia Baptist Church in the Bronx (NYC). He grew up in the Pelham Parkway Houses, with his parents and his sister, Cynthia Smith (née Dixon). As a youth, he enjoyed competing in sports and discovered a deep passion and aptitude for music. He began playing the clarinet in the 4th grade and eventually developed a love for playing the saxophone that would last a lifetime. He also auditioned and was selected for the Borough Wide Band—with one of his very first concerts taking place at the renowned Carnegie Hall in Manhattan.

Nathaniel attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan (now known as LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts; the 1980 film “Fame” was based on student life there). At the urging of his mother—and in the tradition of her family, who are graduates of historically Black colleges—Nathaniel applied to and was accepted to Winston Salem State University (WSSU) in North Carolina. In college, he was a member of the marching band and the WSSU band. He also became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, Delta Chi chapter.

WSSU is also where, as a freshman, he met the love of his life, Norma Jean Leak, who would become his best friend and confidant of 54 years and wife of 48 years. The two wed on July 6, 1974. Norma Jean lovingly jokes that he asked her to move with him to NYC promising to move back with her to her hometown after two years ... but that never happened. The young couple lived in Tracey Towers in the Bronx across the street from a park because, “the park had a lot of tall beautiful trees so Norma would feel at home there,” according to him. Later, they would move to another building in Manhattan across the street from a park with a lot of beautiful trees. To their union was born a daughter and a son, Ayana Dixon and Nathaniel Dixon, III.

After graduating from WSSU with a Bachelor of Science in Music Education in May of 1972, Nathaniel went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in Music Education from Columbia University in 1977. He would spend the early years of his career working as a music teacher for the NYC Board of Education by day and as a jazz band leader and saxophonist at night—playing in music venues all over Harlem. He’d spend summers teaching summer school and touring the U.S., Europe, the Caribbean, Canada, and Japan playing with the likes of guitarist George Benson, saxophonist Sam Rivers, pianist Kenny Kirkland, and drummer Chico Hamilton.

In the 1980s he founded an independent record label, Saxrack Records, LLC, with a catalogue of seven self-produced studio recordings (albums and CDs) including: *Rose Colored* (1983); *Upfront* (1984); *Contours* (1987); *Back Street Blues* (1990); *Harlem Allstar* (1994); *Made in New York City* (2016); *Harmonic Soul* (2017). He is a longtime member of BMI, a musical composer, arranger, and jazz saxophonist. His recordings feature legendary musicians like organist Brother Jack McDuff, bassist Andy McCloud, and many other greats. Formal education was central to Nathaniel’s philosophy about life and service. In 1991, toward the end of his career in education, he earned a second master’s degree in Educational Administration at the Bank Street College of Education in Manhattan. He then worked as an Assistant Principal at a high school in Yonkers, NY, for several years, while continuing his musical pursuits, before retiring from education in 2005 with more than 30 years of service.

The Dixon family had been faithful members of Salem United Methodist Church in Harlem for many years when around 1998, Nathaniel was called by God to the ministry. He first served as a Lay Speaker and then a Lay Leader, and he completed his third master’s degree in Divinity at Drew Theological Seminary in 2002. He began serving as a minister in the New York Annual Conference in 2002. He was appointed pastor of St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church in the Bronx in 2005 and ordained as a full Elder in the United Methodist

Church in June of 2008. As a pastor, he was dedicated to the spiritual growth and educational achievement of his parishioners and community; and he served as the Founder and Director of The Saturday Music Academy and Executive Director of the SAXRACK LEARNING CENTER, Inc., which taught language, media, and the arts to youth and seniors, from 2005 to 2016. In 2008 Rev. Dixon and a group of dedicated individuals began an ambitious fundraising campaign to restore the entire facade of the church, which culminated in a church restoration celebration service on October 24, 2010.

In 2011, no longer comfortable using the term jazz to describe his creative and spiritual maturation, Nathaniel coined and trademarked the term GOJA™ which he felt more fully described his appreciation of jazz and profound love of God. He recorded a live concert event entitled Three Nights of Riveting GOJA™ Music at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church under his Saxrack Publishing label.

Nathaniel retired from formal pastoral service at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church in June of 2017 with 12 years of service. He was recognized numerous times for his many accomplishments and contributions to the life and livelihood of Northern Manhattan by federal, state, and city elected officials.

Besides jazz music and ministry, everyone who knew him knew that Nat Dixon loved to eat. He loved dressing up and topping it off with a stylish hat (of which he had a large collection). He also enjoyed walking and being near the ocean; he loved watching movies (and sharing his critiques), he was an avid reader of Black history, and he always looked forward to the annual Dixon/Smith Family summer beach vacation as well as leading weekly Bible study at home with his family. He was very concerned about social issues and current events, so he regularly watched the nightly news—and he loved debating politics! Most of all he enjoyed being a husband and a father to his children, whom he affectionately called Yani and the Brown Bomber. Nathaniel was a great encourager and not a day went by without him teaching you several life lessons—whether you wanted him to or not. His favorite Bible verses, one of which his mother often encouraged him to live by and he passed on to his children, were: Galatians 6:9 which he paraphrased simply as “never be weary in well doing,” and 2 Timothy 1:7 “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Nathaniel Dixon, Jr. was a man of enormous faith, drive, and conviction. He was a fighter, a provider, and a fierce protector of his family. He loved people and God above all else. He was self-assured and confident yet never pretentious. He believed that there was honor in working hard and helping others, and though he had many achievements in life, he expressed that God and family were the most important and that all he did was to glorify the Lord and leave a positive legacy for his family and the generations that follow him.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister and leaves precious memories to be cherished by: his wife, Norma; his children, Ayana and Nathaniel III; a nephew, Rashad Smith (Sheena); five 1st cousins: Carl Alston, Alexander Waller, Kaaren Ragland Steele (John), Yvette Stackhouse (Bodiford Lee), and Delois Cue (Carter); five great nieces and nephews: Justin, Josiah, Isiah, Lael, and Naaria; one 1st cousin-in-law, Bernita Waller (widow of the late Rev. Alfred M. Waller, Jr.); and numerous other family members, friends, former students, parishioners, colleagues in music and ministry, and fans.

Rev. Dixon died peacefully with his wife and children right by his side. He lived each and every day to the fullest for his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and he continued to minister to people and play his saxophone for audiences until the end (as he always wanted to). He will be deeply missed and forever loved.

Acknowledgments



The family of Rev. Nathaniel Dixon, Jr. would like to take this time and opportunity to express our deep gratitude for joining with us in this celebration of life service; and for all of the kind expressions of love and sympathy shown to our family during this time of bereavement.

We would also like to thank Mr. Edmar Flores for surprising the family with two video tributes.

If you should desire to honor his memory after today, please consider making a donation *in memory of Rev. Nathaniel Dixon*, to [ElevateMeD](#) scholarships. [ElevateMeD](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to providing financial support and mentorship to medical students of African-American/Black, Latinx, and Native backgrounds; and/or to any one of his favorite charitable organizations including:

[Jazz Foundation of America](#)
[Food Bank For New York City](#)
[St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#)

Matthew 11:28-30
King James Version

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.



2 Corinthians 5:6-8
New King James Version

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8
New International Version

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Professional Services Entrusted To:
Nelson Funeral Service

W.H. "Chip" Knotts, Jr.
1021 East Washington Street
Rockingham, North Carolina 28379
(910) 895-2345
nelsonfuneralhome@yahoo.com