FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
GENERAL NEWS

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MOURN THE PASSING OF DR. ANNE RUTH WELLS
Local pastor’s wife, educator and community leader will be sorely missed

With deep regret, the Rev. Dr. W. O. Wells, Sr., pastor of Greater St. Paul Baptist Church, in Cocoa, announces the death of his beloved wife of 53 years, Dr. Anne Ruth Wells, of Cocoa. She was 77.

Dr. Anne Ruth Wells, a retired educator, died Oct. 3, at Wuesthoff Hospital, in Rockledge, following a brief illness.

She retired, in 1998, as Brevard Community College’s Associate Vice President for Library Services--in which she was the college administrator overseeing four community college campus libraries, in Brevard County. However, she will best be remembered for her lifelong, faithful Christian service, and for the outstanding leadership and service she provided as the ‘First Lady’ of Greater St. Paul Baptist Church.

For 53 years, Anne Ruth Wells was married to one of the state’s most prominent African-American pastors--a civic leader. Together, they had worked as a team in the ministry, at Greater St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, since May 17, 1959, when her husband began pastoring that church.

Dr. Anne Wells was a teacher, church administrator, musician, scholar, community leader, and the mother of four children: the Rev. Willie Oliver Wells, Jr., Pastor Oliver Warren Wells, Mrs. Annette Olivetta Wells White, all of Cocoa, and Mrs. Dee Dee Wells Lassiter, of Tampa. She also was a founding member of Metropolitan Baptist Church, in Cocoa.

Anne’s major priority was to build the Kingdom of God. She went to great lengths to render service to others--including driving and providing transportation for college students who needed a ride to church. She regularly visited her family and church members, to make sure they were doing well. She never was known to speak or act unkind to anyone, to complain, or misbehave. She enjoyed helping and serving others, and was upbeat, happy and passionate about life.

As church members learned of her death, they were deeply saddened. They had lost a “good person.”

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Dr. Anne Ruth Wells

Anne Wells, was a Spelman College graduate, who later earned a doctorate degree. She was prim and proper, and a sophisticated member of the Links, Inc., a well-known social and community service organization. She also was highly competent, organized, clean, neat and efficient. She was among the community’s best-dressed women, pretty by every standard, and equally as virtuous and God-fearing.

When friends gathered for her 75th birthday party, everyone present was asked if they had ever heard a profane or unkind remark from Anne. Although many attended, including friends she had known all of her life, no one present could say that they had ever heard anything negative or unkind coming from Anne. She was always upbeat, an excellent teacher and listener, who was often soft-spoken, yet dynamic.

For the past 49 years, Anne Wells was the epitome of a pastor’s wife, and rendered faithful, loyal service to her family, church and community. She ensured the success of her husband, who previously served for a decade as moderator of 135 churches in the State Convention, as a past vice president of the State NAACP, and a past president of the local NAACP. She stood behind him, as he stood forefront in the fight against racism and discrimination in the 1960’s.

Anne Wells greatly assisted all of his efforts; she was a capable leader and organizer in her own right.

At Greater St. Paul Baptist Church, Anne Wells has been: a Sunday School teacher, director of daily Vacation Bible School, organist and director for the church’s choirs, president of the Missionary Society, treasurer of the church’s community development corporation, Visions Plus, chairperson of the church’s New Membership Committee, teacher, scholar, and instructor for minister’s wives at district, state and national church conventions. She headed numerous committees at the district and state associations--and accomplished nearly all of this while maintaining a professional career, dozens of relationships, affiliations and memberships, and raising her children.

In 1984, she earned a doctorate degree in Education and Administration, from Nova University. Her doctoral thesis on the practical uses and feasibility of electronic/computer technology in transforming the information systems of the library, provided the impetus and blueprint for the building of a new, ultra-modern college learning resource center (library) at Brevard Community College.

Dr. Wells has been listed numerous times in “Who’s Who in Florida Education,” and was selected as one of the Outstanding Educators of America.

In Brevard County, Dr. Anne Wells was known for her grace, poise, compassion and virtue. She carefully balanced her demanding profession, and the needs of her husband and church family, and superbly filled the roles of daughter, sister, mother, aunt, grandmother, and community matriarch.

Dr. Anne Ruth Wells was born Annie Ruth Collins, in Fitzgerald, Georgia on August 26, 1931, to the late James E. and Beulah Stubbs Collins. She was reared in Baltimore, and in Cocoa.

At a very early age, she was converted and accepted Jesus as her personal Savior, and under the pastorate of the late Dr. H. D. Parker, she joined the St. Paul Baptist Church. As a young Christian, she was active

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in the Sunday School and Baptist Training Union (formerly the B.Y.P.U.). During these early years, she was guided in her spiritual growth by the late Mrs. A. O. Parker, also a minister’s wife. Mrs. Parker served as a mentor and would often have the young Anne to accompany her to the district, state, and national conventions. It was at these conventions and under Mrs. Parker’s supervision, that the young Anne Collins met her future husband.

After graduating from Cocoa High School, Anne embarked on her pursuit of higher education. She earned her Bachelor’s Degree in English and Education, at Spelman College, in Atlanta, GA, and then surpassed that accomplishment, by earning her Master’s Degree in Library Science, from Atlanta University.

By the time she began work on her graduate studies, she was approached by a young man she had known during her days of attending the Florida district and state congresses. His name was Willie Oliver Wells, and at that time, he had completed two years at Bethune Cookman College; a tenure of service in the Army (stationed in Germany); and having been called to preach, returned to the United States with the goal of attaining a Bachelor’s degree from the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. One other thing he desired was to marry Annie Ruth Collins.

He knew that she would be a loving and devoted wife, a good and caring mother, and most of all, she was the other half — the balance — he needed to reach his lofty dreams in the honor of God, and for his church and community. Thus, in 1955, Anne Collins was joined in matrimony to the Rev. Willie Oliver Wells, Sr.

Dr. Anne Ruth Wells possessed and shared a wealth of knowledge, experience, wisdom, and good old-fashioned common sense. In the midst of her many accomplishments, she was happiest being known as a born again Christian and committed servant of God. She served best in one of the most demanding professions for any Christian woman — that of being a minister’s wife.

Dr. Anne Ruth Wells was deeply loved, and will be sorely missed by everyone who knew her.

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