



Apostle Rita Joyce Johnson

FEB 22, 1942 - FEB 18, 2018



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P hase One – Origins

Rita Joyce Johnson was born on February 22, 1942 in Birmingham, Alabama to Lillie Thelma Williams. She was the oldest of six siblings. The year after Rita was born her family moved to Detroit, Michigan where she was raised by her grandparents Ernest and Cecelia Perry affectionately called Poppa and Dear. Rita always had a love for the Lord and accepted Him as her personal Savior at the tender age of 9. At age 16, under the leadership of the late Rev. Dr. Raymond S. Jackson, she was called to the ministry after an extended time of fasting and prayer. It was at the age of 25 that she publicly acknowledged her calling under the leadership of the late Bishop Benjamin F. Reid.

Phase Two – Education

Rita attended Duffield Elementary School, Miller Junior High School and Eastern High School where she first demonstrated the ability to lead. Rita was very outspoken and while at Eastern she exhibited leadership skills by organizing the very first prayer cell where students would meet in the halls between classes for a word of daily prayer. She played an iatrical role in organizing Monday night youth prayer meetings with as many as 80 teenagers in attendance learning about Christ as they met from home to home. She was always ahead of her time and thought “out of the box.” As a teen, Rita was often called into her Pastor’s office (jokingly called “Heartbreak Hotel”) to explain her actions. Peers often teased Rita by calling her “Sweetheart” (a nickname from the Pastor) attempting to accuse her of doing or saying something wrong but Rita’s mind was always one step ahead. She truly always had a plan.



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In high school Rita carried a 4.0 grade point average, was Senior Class President, Captain of the swim team and class Valedictorian. Rita was subsequently awarded a full academic scholarship to Wayne State University. She ultimately graduated from William Tyndale College with a degree in Religious Studies and from Spring Arbor College with a degree in Human Resources. She was honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from the Southern California School of Ministry.

Phase Three – Building a Family

Rita married Richard (Rick) Johnson, Jr., the love of her life, on December 22, 1962 at Joseph Campau Avenue Church of God in Detroit, Michigan. In January 1963 Rick was deployed to Frankfurt, Germany. This meant that the newlyweds were separated for one year at the beginning of their marriage. During that year Rita wrote Rick a daily letter. The soldiers in his platoon could not wait for mail call because they knew Rick would get a letter every time. On one occasion she even wrote him a 100 page letter.

After Rick returned to the states the newlyweds made their home in Detroit, Michigan. On November 8, 1967, Rita and Rick were blessed with a beautiful baby daughter, Ricoya Teraye, whom Rita and Rick cherished, adored and spoiled tremendously. Rita and Rick desired a great life for their family. They made plans to give opportunities to their daughter that they did not experience as children. Providing Ricoya with a strong work ethic was at the top of their list. Together, Rick and Rita strived for the very best.

Phase Four – Entrepreneurship

During high school, Rita began working at the Davis-Grant Insurance Agency. She was later employed at Whatley Insurance Agency and H.L. Isaac & Associates. In time, Mr. Homer L. Isaac decided that he wanted to sell the agency and Rita stepped in to buy it from him. She renamed the company Metro Insurance Underwriters. Rita was now an entrepreneur. As a successful business owner, Rita employed many family members and friends. She kept the insurance



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agency and did the work of the Lord until the end of 1990's. She was clear that ministry was both her calling and passion and she trusted and believed that God would make a way for her to do ministry full time. When the Lord answered Rita's prayer, she sold the agency to Mr. Willard McRae of Allstate Insurance.

Phase Five – Pastoral Ministry

In 1980, Rev. John Weston, Sr. and the late Rev. Evelyn Ruth "Aunt Sis" Simpson approached Rita while she was directing the youth choir at Southwestern Church of God presenting her with an offer to become the Interim Pastor of Sumpter Community Church of God in Belleville, Michigan. Rita considered the offer thoroughly. After fasting and praying, Rita spoke with her pastor, the late Rev. Dr. Lawrence P. Wyatt who gave his blessing as did Rick. She also had a heart-to-heart conversation with First Lady Artelia Wyatt and then decided to take the position of Interim Pastor of Sumpter Community Church of God. Rita informed Bro. Weston and Aunt Sis that she wanted a male Assistant Pastor and asked Pastor Wade P. Hooks to serve in that capacity. He accepted the offer.

In 1983, Pastor Rita made the transition from interim to the permanent role becoming Sumpter's Senior Pastor. The congregation continued to grow and in 1988 Pastor Rita cast the vision that would result in the purchase of 19.7 acres of land. In October 1995, the Sumpter Church family walked 4.5 miles from the original building (with police escorts) to their new edifice.

Phase Six – Church Growth and Apostolic Ministry

While the members of the congregation were excited to make such a move, they quickly outgrew the newly built church home. The sanctuary was designed to accommodate 425 people, and the average Sunday morning attendance was 550. The parking lot was overpopulated weekly. Pastor Rita informed the congregation that God had filled their cups to overflowing and that the church needed to expand to accommodate His abundant blessings. She indicated that God had given her



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a vision to do something different in Belleville and the surrounding communities. She shared that God had shown her a Family Life Center that would be the first of its kind in the area. The center would provide expansion for His kingdom.

In February 2003, Pastor Rita was ordained as an Apostle by Bishop Corletta J. Vaughn. In her own words, Apostle Rita stated, “I am indeed humbled and honored that God in His sovereign wisdom has counted me worthy to walk in the Office of Apostle. As I reflect, I am keenly aware that He has been preparing me all of my life for such a time as this. Every experience, good and bad, has been a learning experience and an opportunity to teach others by both precept and example.”

Phase Seven – POWER Centre Church International and the Life EmPOWERment Centre

In late November, 2004 Sumpter Community Church of God broke ground on the Family Life Center. The building was completed and dedicated the week of April 29 – May 7, 2007. The building included a gymnasium complete with basketball courts, locker rooms, indoor track and fitness center. The goal was to help promote the physical well-being of the people of God and the community. The center included administrative offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, computer lab and a nursery area. The size of the sanctuary was increased to 750 seats. The goal was to make a dynamic impact in the lives of the members and the community, as well as to extend the apostolic vision that God had given Apostle Rita, and to provide for an opportunity for the fivefold ministry to grow. Also during this time The Lord impressed upon Apostle’s heart to change the name of the church. It was re-named POWER (Prayer, Outreach, Worship, Education and Restoration) Centre Church International. The Family Life Center was renamed the Life EmPOWERment Centre.

Phase Eight – The Apostleship



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By definition an Apostle is one who is sent out with authority and wisdom to establish churches locally and internationally on a solid foundation of God's Word. To this end, Apostles:

“Strengthen, assume and exercise general leadership over existing churches in the foundation of the Word of God; establish people in kingdom truth and order; cast vision, minister from a deep personal relationship with God and have a “parenting” relationship with those to whom they minister; Demonstrate God’s anointing through signs, wonders and healing miracles; function in all of the ministry gifts and operate in all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; Govern and bring necessary discipline, accountability, stability and protection from deception into the lives of believers, ministries and churches; Function closely with ministry of the prophet in appointing and ordaining elders confirming God’s call on certain believer’s lives and establishing them into functioning in the ministry gifting into which God has called them; Imparting and releasing believers into operating in the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.” (Source unknown)

Phase Nine – To Whom Much is Given

Apostle Rita had a passion for the development of people and leaders. Thus, she took on the assignment to start Rita J. Johnson Ministries, The ARMI (Antioch Restoration Ministries International) Network, SWIM (Strengthening Women in the Marketplace) and The Dr. Rita J. Johnson Christian Private Elementary School in Namibia, Africa. Apostle Rita was a covering to many churches in Australia, Bermuda and the Bahamas as well as throughout the United States. Under her pastorate several ministers were mentored and sent to pastor other churches. In addition, Apostle Rita served on numerous local, state and national boards. She served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Church of God in Michigan and the Board of Trustees of Anderson University. She was determined to travel around the world, crossing denominational and racial lines to declare the message of unity, fellowship and reconciliation that God had entrusted to her. In 2009 Apostle Rita accomplished one of her lifetime goals by writing and releasing a book entitled *No More Whining: A Blueprint for Attitude Metamorphosis* with a foreword by the late Dr. Myles Munroe.



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On Sunday, May 6, 2012, Apostle Rita celebrated 30 years of pastoral leadership and retired to Orlando, Florida with her husband and family. Apostle Rita & Brother Rick made New Beginnings Church, Orlando, Florida their new church home under the leadership of Pastor Howard Harrison. Pastor Howard accepted her role as an Apostle and allowed her to walk in her gifting. She was the overseer of the ministers, communion and the New Beginnings prayer call that continues to take place every Wednesday at 7:00 AM (EST).

Phase Ten – An Abundant Life

In addition to being a trailblazer in ministry and a brilliant orator, Apostle Rita was passionate about reading. She loved books, cooking Gumbo and 7 layer salad, riding motorcycles, and playing Phase 10 which was her favorite game. She was a classy lady with an eye for detail. She had a great sense of humor. She loved to laugh and to make those around her laugh. She loved for people to be comfortable and she made everyone feel like they were the most important person in the world to her. She simply had a genuine love for people -- especially youth. While Apostle Rita was pastoring, the Lord told her to welcome the ones that nobody wanted and he would send her the ones that everybody wanted. She did just that. Her presence and wisdom were captivating. Her personality was magnetic.

Transition

On Sunday, February 18, 2018 at Florida Hospital East she heard her named called and she answered and was ushered into the presence of the Lord. "Welcome home Apostle Rita Joyce Johnson! Well done, thy good and faithful servant."

Apostle Rita was preceded in death by her sister; Cecelia Ann and brother; Tyrone Truss. She leaves to cherish her memory her devoted husband of 55 years, Richard Johnson, Jr ; one daughter, Ricoya Johnson-Cowper (Thomas); one bonus son (Rodney Johnson); four grandchildren; Chadni Cowper, Chaston Cowper, Marquita Johnson and Ryan Johnson; one



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sister, Laconnie Horne; two brothers Thomas Williams (Emma) and Keith Williams Flowers; One sister-in-law; Jeanette Johnson, one brother-in-law; Melvin Johnson (Calan); A special Best Friend for Forever; Brenda Palmore; a host of nieces, nephews, goddaughters and godsons and a special congregation in time; the members of Sumpter Community Church of God and POWER Centre Church International - her beloved!



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Apostle by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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