



Betty Thomas Graham

April 9, 1920 - July 29, 2019

Betty Thomas Graham, aged 99, passed away on July 29, 2019, at Westminster Oaks Retirement Community in Tallahassee, FL. She was the wife of Reverend Lee Graham, Jr. who preceded her in death.

Betty graduated from PK Younge School in Gainesville, FL, went on to Arlington Hall School in Fairfax, VA, and then graduated from Florida State College for Women in 1942. After graduation she worked in the state Capitol for Governor Spessard Holland.

When her husband-to-be Lee Graham returned from the World War II in 1945, they were married, and Betty began her life as the wife of an Episcopal minister.

Betty was known for her gentle spirit. She shared in her husband's ministry to congregations in Port St. Joe, FL; Birmingham, AL; Memphis, TN; and Tallahassee, FL.

Her husband was often in the limelight, but Betty had her own causes as well. While living in Birmingham she organized groups to travel to the state hospital for the mentally ill. She did this until 1964 when the Grahams moved to Tallahassee, FL to accept the call of St. John's Episcopal Church. After settling her family, she again took up the cause of the mentally ill and

arranged for the St. John's women to travel to Chattahoochee to visit the state mental hospital there.

Finally, at age 65 the Grahams retired from St. John's but took up a call for Pastoral Ministry at Calvary Church in Memphis, TN. There the needs of the mentally ill came to Betty's attention once again. Because the police in the city did not know how to work with the mentally ill, many were being shot during confrontations. When one man was killed by the police because he was cutting himself, Mrs. Graham and other women marched on the mayor's office and demanded change. Betty, working with the Alliance for the Mentally Ill volunteered to teach the police how to work with the mentally ill. The result of that work was the formation of the Crisis Intervention Team that became a model for police departments both nationally and internationally and is still in use today.

Betty Graham worked quietly behind the scenes, but she left her impact on many. Her top priorities were her husband and five children. In addition to working with the mentally ill, she was also on the leadership team for several years of Churchwomen United. This group was formed by church women during the turbulent years of integration. Both black and white women came together to pray and work for unity in the community.

Betty's parents, Dr. William Clark Thomas and Margaret Smith Thomas of Gainesville, FL, her brother, Dr. William C. Thomas Jr., her sister, Virginia Alison, and her husband Lee Graham, Jr. preceded her in death. She is survived by daughter, Marion of Fayetteville, NC; sons, Bill (Christine) of Bozeman, MT, Lee (Linda) of Atlanta, GA, Jim of Tallahassee, FL, and Robert (Jennifer) of Charlottesville, VA; and daughter-in-law, Bea Graham of Chattanooga, TN, She also leaves grandchildren Jessica Graham Scotchie (Jeff), Ellie Graham Davis (Adrian), Ryan Graham (Charlie), Gabrielle Graham

(Rich Cordero) and Cecelia Graham Varnum (Zakk) as well as 4 great grandchildren Claire and Will Scotchie and Graham and Madison Davis, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at St. John's Episcopal Church, Tallahassee, FL on Friday, August 16 at 3 PM. Burial will be on Saturday Aug 17 at Evergreen Cemetery in Gainesville, FL at 10 AM.

The Graham Family would like to thank all of those at Westminster Oaks Retirement Community who have cared for Lee and Betty during the last 14 years. Many of them were like family and loved them as we did.

To honor Betty, in lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to St. John's Episcopal Church, 211 N. Monroe Street, Tallahassee FL 32301 or NAMI – Memphis (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill), 5830 Mt. Moriah Road, Suite 6, Memphis TN 38115 or at nami-memphis.org.

Rocky Bevis of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) is assisting the Graham family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

AUG **16**. 3:00 PM (ET)

St. John's Episcopal Church
211 North Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Tribute Wall

MA

“ Marion purchased the Pink Tribute Spray for the family of Betty Thomas Graham.



Marion - August 13, 2019 at 10:35 AM

ED

“ Emily & Cal Edson, Matt, Kate, Wes & Jen Davis purchased the Rainbow Of Remembrance Spray for the family of Betty Thomas Graham.



Emily & Cal Edson, Matt, Kate, Wes & Jen Davis - August 13, 2019 at 12:12 AM