



Ms. Esther Mae Payton

May 7, 1931 - May 3, 2026

Esther Mae Payton, peacefully departed this life on May 3, 2026, surrounded by loving family members. She was born on May 7, 1931, in Simpson, NC, to the late Lossie Little.

Due to the untimely passing of her mother when she was young, Esther Mae was raised by her grandfather, John Bryant Parker “Papa,” grandmother, Elizabeth Parker, and her devoted aunts, Cora and Cassie. She was raised alongside Mary Harris and Shirley Clemons, who were her first cousins but grew to be more like sisters and shared a lifelong bond. Esther Mae was also very close to her aunts Ida, Gladys, Reather, and Jeannette, as well as her uncle, John Henry “Buddy” Parker. She attended school in Simpson, NC, where she spent her early childhood years surrounded by family, faith, and community.

Esther Mae was no stranger to hard work. Alongside her husband Zeno “Dean” Payton, she helped farm and provide for her family with strength and determination. Later in life, she found employment with Procter & Gamble, where she continued to demonstrate the same dedication, resilience, and work ethic that defined her throughout her life.

Esther Mae loved attending church and especially looked forward to Sundays at Hayes Chapel Missionary Baptist Church where she faithfully served as one of the Mothers of the Church. On Saturdays, you could hear the excitement in her voice as she prepared for worship the next day. Her faith, joy, and devotion were evident to all who knew her.

Esther Mae also enjoyed cooking, doing puzzles, and watching her favorite television shows. No matter how many times she watched them, she reacted as though it was her first time seeing them — right up until she started telling everyone what was about to happen next.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Dean; her daughters, Diane Payton-Stokes (Eddie Mac) of West Haven, CT and Delores Payton of Ayden, NC; her three brothers, Oscar Lee Whitfield of Rocky Mount, NC; Willie “Rabbit” Parker and Earl Parker, both of Simpson, NC; and two beloved grandchildren, Chasity Labrell Payton and Shelton Johnson.

She leaves to cherish her precious memory her loving children, Annie Pearl Dudley (William “Bro”) of Greenville, NC; Carolyn Gilliam (John Moore) of Greenville, NC; Mary Wilkes (Johnnie “Willie C”) of Greenville, NC; Brenda Daniels (Rodrick) of Greenville, NC; Vickie Pitts-Lawrence (Joseph) of Greenville, NC; Veronica “Renee” Payton-Snider (William “Bill”) of Chesapeake, VA; and Stephanie Payton-Rigsby (Olayta) of Owings Mills, MD; also holding a special place in her heart was her granddaughter, Nicole Parker of Greenville, NC, whom Esther Mae and Zeno “Dean” Payton helped raise as one of their own from a young age. She also leaves to cherish her precious memory nineteen surviving grandchildren, a host of great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, extended family members, and dear friends whom she loved deeply.

Esther Mae was a devoted mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, and friend whose kindness, wisdom, strength, and unconditional love touched everyone who knew her. She was intelligent, funny, witty, loving, and giving — truly one of a kind. She possessed remarkable strength, unwavering tenacity, and a resilience that inspired everyone around her. She often said, “I’m a little piece of leather, but well put together!” And tough she was. Those words became a reflection of the strength, dignity, and perseverance that carried her throughout her life.

One of the many cherished memories shared by her daughters was during fair

season. They would come home from school to discover that their mother had bought them brand-new outfits to wear to the fair. To many, it may have seemed unusual to buy children new clothes only to wear out and get dirty, but that was the kind of loving and devoted mother Esther Mae was. There was nothing too trivial to go to her about. She always had a listening ear, often saying, "My children can always come to me with anything." She found joy in making her children feel special, loved, and cared for, and those memories became treasures that her family will forever hold close to their hearts. We thank God for the beautiful life and lasting legacy of our mom. Her strength, wisdom, faith, laughter, and unconditional love will forever remain woven into the tapestry of the hearts and lives of all who knew and loved her. Until we meet again, our sweet Butterfly.

Cemetery Details

Homestead Memorial Gardens

4251 E. 10th Street
Greenville, NC 27858

Previous Events

Viewing/Visitation

MAY 23. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Hayes Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
541 Cherry St
Greenville, NC 27834

Celebration of Life Service

MAY 23. 1:00 PM (ET)

Hayes Chapel Missionary Baptist Church
541 Cherry St
Greenville, NC 27834

Tribute Wall



“ *View and Download the Funeral Program*

Congleton Memorial Mortuary - May 23 at 11:15 AM

BS

“ *Rest in the Lord's arms, Ma. Thank you for the gift of your love. We love you more than words could ever describe and we will carry you with us always. Renee & Bill.*



Bill & Veronica Snider - May 24 at 12:50 PM



“ *Rest easy Aunt Esther Mae* ❤️❤️❤️

Gregory Whitfield - May 23 at 02:14 AM

AR

“ *Lord, my heart is broken. This was my last aunt. I extend my heartfelt condolences to all her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Lord please give all the bereaved peace and comfort during this difficult time. Aunt Esther was a good mother, grandmother, and aunt. She's truly going to be missed. May she RIHP!* 🙏❤️



Ann & Eugene Reed - May 21 at 11:04 PM

CS

“ To the family of Aunt Esther Mae, please accept my condolences on the loss of your mother. It's always tough dealing with the loss of a parent. Not a day will go by where you will not think of them or love them. She will forever be in your hearts. She will now be resting in peace with her beloved husband until you all meet again.



Courtney Spruill - May 21 at 09:01 PM

MS

“ To my beloved family, please accept my condolences and my love for the loss of your mother. She the was last of her generation. She will truly be missed. She's now resting in peace in heaven with the rest of her loved ones. May God give you strength to continue. They say God makes no mistakes. I know you all loved her dearly, but God loved her more. RIP Esther, love your niece, Myrtle. 🙏



Myrtle Spruill - May 21 at 04:57 PM

BS

“ Betty Smith lit a candle in memory of Ms. Esther Mae Payton



Betty Smith - May 21 at 01:45 PM

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

To the family of Mother Esther Mae Parker-Payton

Whereas we have been called together on account of the passing of Ms. Esther Mae Payton, a beloved daughter, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, aunt, cousin, and friend to many; therefore, I'd like to say a word of comfort to the family.

I'd like to express my deepest sympathy to the family. Though no one can take away your sorrow, may the support and concern of others help you find the strength you need each day. Know that my continued prayers and love are with you. I encourage you to stand on God's promise that he will never leave you nor forsake you, for Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

Whereas, I will always profoundly treasure the cherished memories of Aunt Esther Mae, her contagious smile, her vibrant and feisty personality, and her remarkable, impeccable memory recall. She instilled in me a desire for gerontology, compassion, and patient care, for which I will always be grateful.

Let it be known that I know the deep loss and sorrow your family is experiencing. I want to share in your sorrow but recognize that the Lord has accepted into his presence a good and faithful servant. Therefore, I recommend to your family to look unto the hills from which cometh our help, also knowing to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!

*With Heartfelt Sympathy,
Reverend Marvion J. Wilcox (Lil Joe)*

Rev. Marvion J. Wilcox - May 19 at 02:37 AM

PF

“Psalm 116:15 “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

To the immediate family of Mrs. Esther Mae Parker-Payton,

Whereas we have been called together today on the account of the passing of Mrs. Esther Mae Parker-Payton, a beloved mom, grandmom, sister, aunt, and cousin.

Though no one can take away your sorrow, may the support and concern of others help you find the strength you need each day. Know that our continued prayers and love are with you. We encourage you to stand on God's promise that he will never leave you nor forsake you, for Earth hath no sorrow. that Heaven cannot heal. Family, please remember to cherish these beloved memories.

Be it resolved that we bow our heads in humble submission to the Heavenly Master's will; be it further resolved, let it be known that we know the deep loss and sorrow our family is experiencing. We want to share in your sorrow but recognize that the Lord has accepted into his presence a good and faithful servant.

Be it resolved, we extend to our family our tender sympathy in this sad hour. We recommend to our family to look unto the hills from which cometh our help. We want you to know that our continued prayers and love are with you. Be it further resolved that we will provide a copy of this resolution to the immediate family.

*Lovingly submitted by your family,
The Payton-Newton Family Reunion Planning Board*

Payton - Newton Family - May 19 at 02:32 AM

EH

“ With sincere sympathy to the family of Beloved Mother Esther Mae Payton. We light a candle to honor her memory. Alton, Ella, and Amber Harris



Ella Harris - May 18 at 09:01 PM

DM

“ My condolences and prayers to the Payton family. Hold to God's Unchanging Hand.

Dana L. Mason

Dana L Mason - May 17 at 11:27 AM

EL

“ God bless you cousins....



Ella Joyce/Thelma Louise - May 17 at 08:57 AM

SH

“ Mother was a jewel. I can still hear her kind words of encouragement . She loved to hear me play and her smile showed it. Rest well mother in God arms.

Sylvia Holmes - May 16 at 09:52 PM

HY

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you.
Herbert and Yvonne Moye*

Herbert and Yvonne - May 16 at 01:26 PM

TP

“ *I miss my Grandmother so so much 😞 Lord, at times I feel like like im dreaming. My 🦋 I love you Ma.*

Tamika Perkins - May 14 at 11:02 PM

CS

“ *Cecily Sene lit a candle in memory of Ms.
Esther Mae Payton*



Cecily Sene - May 12 at 06:49 AM

HF

“ *Reverend Billy C. Boyd and Hayes Chapel church family share in the loss of this beautiful gem. Sister Esther Payton was a faithful member of Hayes Chapel until her health would not allow her to attend. The Payton family is part of the great history here at Hayes Chapel and will always be remembered. May the family find comfort in days to come. She has fought a good fight and now taken her place of grace with our Heavenly Father. The church will be here for you always and thanks for sharing your loved one with us for so many wonderful years.*



Hayes Chapel Church Family - May 11 at 09:34 PM

B(

“ Family, I’m truly saddened for our loss! I’m so thankful I got to come visit Ma, and bring her some candy! She brought joy to my heart! Praying for strength and endurance for all my family! May God rest her soul 🥰🙏❤️❤️❤️❤️

Brenda Tyson (cousin) - May 11 at 03:39 PM

DF

“ My thoughts and prayers are with the Payton Family.



Deborah Fleming - May 08 at 05:03 PM

CS

“ Congleton Funeral Home and Staff wishes to express our sincere condolences on the passing of your love one. We light this candle in their memory.



Congleton Funeral Home and Staff - May 08 at 12:12 PM

PD

“ Peggy Daniels lit a candle in memory of Ms. Esther Mae Payton



Peggy Daniels - May 07 at 08:18 AM

MP

My condolences 🙏 to the last aunt of my husband. Such a sweet and kind person 💕💕

magalene Payton - May 22 at 10:35 AM

JD

“ *Jasper Dixon lit a candle in memory of Ms. Esther Mae Payton*



Jasper Dixon - May 05 at 08:43 AM

MB

Praying for the Family love Mary Ann and Donnie Brown ❤️❤️

Mary Brown - May 06 at 01:13 AM

ME

Praying 🙏 for the Payton family Mrs Esther ,will be truly miss Love Marion and Elmer Ellis.

Marion Ellis - May 08 at 06:58 PM

MP

My sincere condolences 🙏 for the Payton's family. She will be miss!!!!

magdeline payton - May 12 at 03:38 PM