



## Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr

July 17, 1947 - February 3, 2024

Frank Hartfield Catchings, Jr. was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on July 17th, 1947, to Frank Hartfield Catchings, Sr., and Jeannetta Lyles. He was the younger brother of Milton McGee, whom he lovingly referred to as "bubby." Shortly after Frank was born, his parents moved to Chicago, Illinois. Frank Sr. and Jeanetta (Jean) raised Frank Jr. (Frankie) on the south side of Chicago. Frank attended Brownell Elementary and later Parker High School. During his early schooling, his mother insisted he learn the piano. No matter the circumstances, Frank had to practice his music every day. His mother once knocked on the hotel door of boxer Joe Louis to ask if her son could practice on the only grand piano in the hotel. Music was a part of Frank's life well before he had any say. Later, the Catchings family joined St. Luke Baptist Church under the pastorship of Rev. S.A. Greyson. This is where Frank Jr. really developed his own personal relationship with God and true love of music. The whole family sang in the choirs, and Frank played the piano or organ. He met the likes of music legends: Thomas A. Dorsey, who wrote the hymn "Precious Lord," musician Doris Akers, who wrote "Lead Me, Guide Me," gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, and singer Dinah Washington. He even met and was brought on stage by singer/dancer Josephine Baker. Frank was always surrounded by music. He continued to serve fervently in the church, wearing many hats. Members often joked that Frank did everything but deliver the sermon.

Frank graduated from Parker High School with honors at age 16. He

immediately enrolled in classes at Chicago State University, where he learned very quickly that he was not quite ready for college and did not enroll for a second semester. The Vietnam War started, and since Frank was not in school, he was drafted on Halloween Day, October 31, 1964, at the age of 17. Through the grace of God, instead of being sent to the front line, he was sent to Germany and assigned as a chaplain's assistant because he could read and play music. Frank worked under Chaplain LeRoy Ness. Frank played for every mass or service on base regardless of their denomination. He also developed a close friendship with Chaplain Ness and his family that continued until Chaplain Ness' passing two years ago. When Frank returned home, he began serving at Progressive Community Church under the pastorship of William H. Knighten. Frank became the Minister of Music and directed multiple choirs. Frank also continued his education and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education from Chicago State University. In 1973, Frank became an educator, starting as a music teacher. He worked with the Archdiocese of Chicago and taught at multiple schools. The highlight of his career in Chicago was serving at the parishes of Holy Name of Mary and St. Catherine of Genoa. He had many stories from his time there and formed lifelong friendships.

In April of 1974, Frank was introduced to Toquilla Ann Mitchell by his adopted sister Lucy Barber Adams. Frank and Toquilla spoke on the phone from 11 p.m. until 6 a.m. on Holy Thursday, and Frank proposed sight unseen. Their first date was on Good Friday, and they married on August 17th, 1974. From this union were born Allena Jeanette and Dionna Elizabeth. Frank and Toquilla worked together, providing a home for their immediate family and, from time to time, other family or friends who needed a place to stay until they were able to journey on. In 1990, the family moved to Minnesota, where Frank was hired by Greyhound as a driver. Frank worked at Greyhound for two years. He loved driving but did not like being away from home. God led Frank and Toquilla to an opportunity to work together as foster parents for the

Menninger Youth Program. This program provided safe housing for at-risk youth until they could return home. One of the children in the home was a promising young boy, Jackson Munroe. Frank and Toquilla developed a bond with Jackson and when they left the program, they adopted him. Jackson Munroe became Jackson Hartfield Catchings. After leaving the Youth Program in 1993, Frank returned to education and began working with Minneapolis Public Schools. Frank knew he wanted to serve in a higher capacity and was encouraged to advance his education. Frank received a Master of Arts degree at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, and an Educational Administration license from St. Mary's University, Winona, MN.

Frank and his family found a church home at Zion Baptist Church under the pastorship of Curtis A. Herron. Frank and Toquilla served as ministers of music. Later, they served as the ministers of music at Macedonian Evangelical Missionary Baptist under the pastorship of Carl L. Darrisaw. Frank and Toquilla worked side by side in the church for 27 years until her passing in 2001. Frank continued serving and was a member and Minister of Music at New Covenant Missionary Baptist and New Beginnings Baptist Ministries under co-pastors Ian Bethel, Sr., and Jimmy Ashford. There, he was deemed "Elder" in the church. Frank served throughout Minneapolis, beginning with Benjamin Banneker as a teacher and intern assistant principal. Frank then served as an intern assistant principal at Ramsey IFAC (now Justice Page Middle School), assistant principal at Broadway Community School, assistant principal at West Central Academy, assistant principal at Lucy Laney Community School, and, finishing out his career as assistant principal at Burroughs Community School. Frank had a deep commitment to using relationships with parents and staff to pursue and nurture all opportunities available to students. He wanted all students to know that 'they are somebody.' Frank worked together with staff to provide an extended-day program that helped ELL students improve their reading and math abilities. He

also encouraged teachers to do home visits to introduce themselves to families. Together, they created some amazing relationships. Parent conferences increased by 50–70%, and behavioral problems decreased.

Frank established the “Eagle Award” for teachers and the “Caught in the Act” award system for students to regularly honor both teachers and students for their hard work. Frank was a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association (MESPA) and was voted Minnesota’s 2012 National Outstanding Assistant Principal. MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) presented the prestigious award in Seattle, WA. Frank’s favorite quote was by L. Frank Baum: ‘A heart is not measured by how much you love, but how much you are loved by others.’ All of Frank’s acts of service and the relationships formed over the years demonstrate not just how much he loved, but how much he was loved. Frank is preceded in death by his wife, Toquilla Ann Catchings, his parents, Frank Sr. and Jean Catchings, and his brother, Milton McGee. He is survived by children Allena Jeanette (Saidi), Dionna Elizabeth, Jackson Hartfield, granddaughters Meris Toquilla Ann, Marley Binti Saidi, nephew Milton McGee, Jr., niece Cindy McGee, and a host of family and friends. Matthew 25:23 (NIV): “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Frank Hartfield Catchings, Jr., you will be sorely missed, but now you are home and can rest. We love you, Poppy

If you’re unable to make the service in-person, please join us at 10:30am on 2/20 at: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81840853564?pwd=rKqm6ChYKTfW7Ka2vTq4uoKbPF4Adw.1>

Repast is immediately following the internment. Thank you!

Grand Stay Hotel – Wellington Room

7083 153rd St W. Apple Valley, MN 55124

# Cemetery Details

## Fort Snelling Cemetery

7601 34th Ave S  
Minneapolis, MN 55450

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB 20. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

New Beginnings Baptist Tabernacle  
4301 1st Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55409

## Funeral Service

FEB 20. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

New Beginnings Baptist Tabernacle  
4301 1st Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55409

# Tribute Wall

MF

“ *Michael Fink Austin Fink Kayla Fink purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr.*



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**Michael Fink Austin Fink Kayla Fink** - February 19, 2024 at 11:19 AM

FF

“ *Felisa Jones & Family purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr.*



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**Felisa Jones & Family** - February 18, 2024 at 01:50 PM

LM

“ *My uncle Frank always made himself available to talk about anything I needed to discuss whenever I called. He always shared words of wisdom, sound spiritual and educational advice for my daughter, his great great niece. He always displayed a warm and genuine concern and I never felt rushed to end the conversation. So many comical family stories He shared that always kept me intrigued. And of course, he NEVER let me forget making a swimming pool in his basement as a curious child each and every time we spoke!! He's one of the few family members that understood me clearly!! I'll miss you dearly Uncle Frank. Rest Well*

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**LISA MARIE** - February 14, 2024 at 04:15 PM

LQ

“ Lisa & Quinaiya purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr.



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**Lisa & Quinaiya** - February 14, 2024 at 03:57 PM

TA

“ Frank was a wonderful man. He was full of laughter and had such a big heart. I enjoyed talking to him so much. He will be missed.

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**Tammy** - February 12, 2024 at 08:23 PM

JM

“ Frankie was a gifted musician who shared his talents at family celebrations. He came Houston for our 35th and 50th anniversary. We were able to share stories about educational careers and those of the military. We will miss our times to just laugh together. His absence leaves the world missing a special unique light.

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**Jerry and Hortense Murphy** - February 09, 2024 at 11:38 AM

BF

“ Bridges, Brown, Green Family purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr.



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**Bridges, Brown, Green Family** - February 07, 2024 at 08:03 PM

BF

“ Bridges, Brown, Green Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Frank Hartfield Catchings Jr.

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**Bridges, Brown, Green Family** - February 07, 2024 at 08:03 PM