

Flower Bearers

Family and Friends

Casket Bearers

Family and Friends



"I love you, and there's nothing you can do about it." - Chris

Acknowledgment

We are truly grateful for the countless acts of kindness and sympathy shown to us during the passing of our beloved brother, uncle, cousin and friend.

It is because of your thoughtfulness and

God's unwavering love that we are strengthened.

*A special thank you is extended to: Wake Forest University, Office of the Chaplain,
Saints Home United Methodist Church, Christian Disciples,
Twin City Choristers, Clarkwise, Sweet Potatoes Restaurant
and Keith Byrd and Robert "Baabe" Irving, III
Clark S. Brown and Sons Funeral Home*

The Family of Byron Christopher "Chris" Murrell



727 North Patterson Avenue
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27101
Telephone 336.722-8117 Fax 336.722-8120
www.clarksbrownandsons.com

*A Triumphant Celebration of Life for
Mr. Byron Christopher Murrell*



*"But O for the touch of a vanished hand, And the sound of a voice that is still!"
-Alfred Lord Tennyson*

*Saturday, July 1, 2017
Eleven O'clock in the Morning*

*Wait Chapel, Wake Forest University
1834 Wake Forest Road
Winston-Salem, North Carolina*

Reverend Dale Sneed, Officiating/Eulogist

THE MELODIC NOTES OF BYRON CHRISTOPHER MURRELL -VOICE OF CHOICE-

*“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self- control.”
Galatians 5:22*

It was Tuesday, December 18, 1956, and a winter wonderland in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The spirit of Christmas majestically appeared throughout the town. The parents, Frank William Murrell and Bernice Driver Murrell, received their gift of “TENDAness” from God with the birth of their son, Byron Christopher Murrell. The family affectionately called him “Chris” and began to experience God’s love through him.

Chris’ academic experience began at Saint Benedict the Moor School and he graduated from Bishop McGuiness High School in Winston-Salem. He later enrolled at Wake Forest University and began his studies in Theater Arts.

He was a faithful member of Saints Home United Methodist Church, where he found his passion for singing in the church choir, at the age of ten. Chris credited his mother, Bernice, with sparking what would become his all-consuming passion, spreading love through singing. His early years were shaped singing in church. He along with his cousins, Adrian and Darryl Swygert, formed the Christian Disciples. Intricate harmonies were performed when a new keyboardist, Robert “Baabe” Irving, joined the group. Baabe would later become the music director and pianist for Miles Davis.

Chris became a fixture in the music scene on the east coast. He sang at weddings, club dates and school jazz ensembles. He was hired to do a fall recital with the North Carolina School of the Arts Jazz Ensemble and Frank Foster, who was next in line to lead the Count Basie Orchestra, happened to be the guest conductor. Chris’ rendition of Strayhorn’s “*Lush Life*” that night was enough to convince Frank to hire “the kid with the silk chops,” once he became Basie’s leader. On September 10, 1991, Chris got the call and a week later with no audition or rehearsal; he walked on stage in Mount Pleasant, MI and sang “*Our Love is Here to Stay*” as his debut with the Count Basie Orchestra.

He began performing with all of the music icons that he grew up listening to, including but not limited to Ella Fitzgerald, Nancy Wilson, Frank Sinatra, Joe Williams, Tony Bennett and George Benson. And for nearly 16 years as vocalist, Chris literally covered the planet with the Basie Band. His first CD with CBO, “Live at Manchester Craftman’s Guild,” won the Grammy for Best Big Band Album of the year in 1997. His second Basie recording, “*Swing Shift*,” was nominated in 1999.

While touring 200 days a year, Chris still found time to release “Reprise,” his first album, and “Full Circle,” a collaboration with life-long friend and fellow traveler, Baabe Irving. Both offerings received international acclaim.

In 2004, Chris left the Basie Band and soon found himself in London’s West End headlining along with five other cast members at Theatre Royale in David King’s production of “I Can’t Stop Loving You, the music of Ray Charles.” This month long engagement received rave reviews and subsequently spawned a 3 year world tour. After traveling to India and Monte Carlo, he was chosen to direct as well as sing with Clarkwise’s “The Christ-mas Song” video.

Though he sang and traveled to very exotic places around the world, nothing brought Chris more joy than family and friends. He was honored to care for his mother and tend to the needs of his other elders. He would seek opportunities to share love, whether singing something TENDA or going to the grocery store for a sick neighbor. Chris personified kindness, goodness and gentleness. His presence beamed heart-warming rays of sunshine. We will remember his generous smile, off-stage comedy, two hour history lessons and midnight lyrics that would encourage you throughout the day. It is true, we will miss his love; but we are grateful to have experienced it! **“Love never fails ...”**

“Chris,” passed away unexpectedly at his home in Winston-Salem on Sunday, June 18, 2017. He was preceded in death by his parents, Frank William and Bernice Driver Murrell; sisters, Beverly Diane Murrell-Whitehead and Linda Witherspoon; and a nephew, Richard Payne.

The family is eternally grateful to God for honoring them with the life of Byron Christopher Murrell. And the unspeakable joy that awaits him in heaven is the hope and promise of those who look forward to a reunion with him in eternity. Included in that number are his sisters, Barbara (Richard) Payne of Bay City, MI and Beulah Newby of Odenton, MD; his brother, Benjamin Murrell; brother-in-law, Lenzola (Beverly Ann) Whitehead, Jr. of Savannah, GA; nieces, Michele Payne, Kimberly (Benjamin) Wells, Amy (Wayne) Collier, Lisa Murrell, Kenyetta Driver, Patrice (Ronbardo) Whitehead-Gay and Monica Whitehead; cousins, Preston Drake, Wayne Drake, Bernard (Dale) Driver, Brenda Sullivan, Joseph Jordan, Jr, Ashley Williams, Synthia (Leroy) Scipio, Darryl Swygert and Adrian (Sharon) Swygert; a host of grandnieces, grandnephews, cousins and dear friends. “... *but the greatest of these is Love.*” **I Corinthians 13:13**

THE SINGERS

By: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*God sent his Singers upon earth
With songs of sadness and of mirth,
That they might touch the hearts of men,
And bring them back to heaven again.*

*The first, a youth, with soul of fire,
Held in his hand a golden lyre;
Through groves he wandered, and by streams,
Playing the music of our dreams.*

*The second, with a bearded face,
Stood singing in the market-place,
And stirred with accents deep and loud
The hearts of all the listening crowd.*

*A gray old man, the third and last,
Sang in cathedrals dim and vast,
While the majestic organ rolled
Contrition from its mouths of gold.*

*And those who heard the Singers three
Disputed which the best might be;
For still their music seemed to start
Discordant echoes in each heart,*

*But the great Master said, "I see
No best in kind, but in degree;
I gave a various gift to each,
To charm, to strengthen, and to teach.*

*"These are the three great chords of might,
And he whose ear is tuned aright
Will hear no discord in the three,
But the most perfect harmony."*





Byron Christopher Murrell “Chris”
December 18, 1956 — June 18, 2017

MY SONGBIRD HAS FLOWN
by: Dwina Murphy Gibb (excerpt)

*My songbird has flown and the world sighs.
The gentle mouthpiece of his immortal muse has gone
And no music can be heard that is sweeter
than the language of his love,*

And so no more, his voice now stilled but never gone.

My songbird has flown and my soul sighs - but he will never go away.

Musical Prelude
A musical compilation of songs by Chris Murrell and Friends

Order of Service

Processional	Clergy and Family
Greeting and Pastoral Prayer	Reverend Dale Sneed Pastor, Saints Home United Methodist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
Old Testament Reading: Psalm 23	Reverend Harrison Carlton Assistant Pastor, Marvin United Methodist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
Choral Selection	Saints Home United Methodist Church Choir <i>How Great Thou Art</i>
Personal Reflection	Adrian H. Swygert
Acknowledgments	Laverne Williford
Solo	Adrian H. Swygert <i>He Looked Beyond My Fault</i>
New Testament Reading: Romans 12:9-21 and Personal Reflection	Reverend Lynn Rhoades Co-founder and Executive Director of Authoring Action, Winston-Salem, NC
Musical Selection	Honorary Christian Disciples Tribute Group <i>Fill My Cup</i>
Personal Reflection	Robert “Baabe” Irving, III
Silent Reading of the obituary	<i>Misty</i> - Byrd, Franklin, Kendrick, Rahman

Family Tributes
Monica Whitehead, Joseph Jordan, Michele Payne, Gena Taylor and Lenzola Whitehead, Jr.

Musical Selection	Clarkwise <i>Is My Living in Vain</i>
Words of Comfort	Reverend Dale Sneed
Musical Selection	Irving, III, Franklin, Kendrick, Rahman <i>There Will Never Be Another You</i>
Benediction	Reverend Dale Sneed
Recessional	The Music of Chris Murrell and Friends

I'll Fly Away
THE INTERMENT
Evergreen Cemetery, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Reception
Please join the family for a Reception from 3 pm until 7 pm
SWEET POTATOES RESTAURANT
529 North Trade Street
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

