



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND CITY COUNCIL HONOR REVEREND DOCTOR CLAY EVANS**

CHICAGO—Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and members of the City Council today introduced a resolution honoring Reverend Doctor Clay Evans, a Baptist pastor, gospel singer, and civil rights leader who founded Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago. Evans passed away on November 27, 2019, at age 94, and will be remembered as a husband, father, renowned faith leader, civil rights pioneer, and gospel legend.

“Chicago is stronger because Reverend Doctor Clay Evans dedicated his life’s work to making this city better for everyone who calls it home,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “It is with utmost respect that we honor his life, legacy and contributions to our great city.”

Clay Evans was born on June 23, 1925, in Brownsville, Tennessee, to Henry Clay and Estanauly Evans. After moving to Chicago in 1945, Reverend Evans attended seminary school at the Chicago Baptist Institute. He later attended the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago Divinity School and was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1950. He founded Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in September of 1950 with five other members.

During his dedicated service as a minister, Reverend Evans founded the Broadcast Ministers Alliance of Chicago and the African American Religious Connection, and he helped to develop and lead Concerned Clergy for a Better Chicago and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. He is also responsible for launching the ministerial careers of over ninety people, including the Reverend Mother Consuella York, the first woman to be ordained in the Baptist denomination of Chicago.

After fifty years of dedicated service, Reverend Evans retired as pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in 2000. Following his retirement, he continued to hold an active schedule of ministry and participated in community events and civil rights engagements.



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Reverend Evans joined Reverend Jesse Jackson Sr. in promoting the civil rights movement in Chicago, and helped to found Operation PUSH, an organization dedicated to improving the economic conditions of black communities across the United States. He served as the founding National Board Chairman of Operation PUSH from 1971 to 1976, later becoming Chairman Emeritus and serving on its board of directors until his passing.

In addition to his career as a minister and civil rights activist, Reverend Evans was a successful gospel artist, having recorded over thirty musical projects, often working in collaboration with the choir of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church.

Reverend Evans entrusted his archive to the Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington Library Center so that all Chicagoans can appreciate his rich legacy of pastoral leadership at Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, his engagement with the civil rights movement, and his television, radio, and musical work.

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