



Odestia Lewis

August 10, 1940 - October 24, 2025

"Love You More"

Odestia (Gardner) Lewis was born in Ethelsville, Alabama. According to her grandmother, her birth date was August 3, 1941. She always celebrated her birthday on August 3, even though many records list it as August 10, 1940. Like many others who grew up in the rural South, her official records were often inaccurate because recordkeeping for Black families was not a priority at the time.

Odestia was the eldest daughter of the late Leroy Gardner and Eva Mae Wells-Gardner. Her family worked in agriculture, and she actively participated in the daily chores on the farm—milking cows, planting, feeding animals, cooking, cleaning, and picking cotton. Despite her many responsibilities, she attended school, worked outside the home, and graduated from Hopewell High School in Pickens County. Odestia professed her love for Christ at an early age and was a member of Providence Missionary Baptist Church.

Odestia was intelligent, beautiful, and hardworking. Her assiduous drive was evident to all who knew her. When her Aunt Christine called for help with her young family, Odestia moved to Akron, Ohio, to assist. She lived with her aunt and uncle until their sons grew older. Rather than returning to Alabama, she reached out to her Uncle Alfred in Toledo, Ohio, who welcomed her into his home.

It was in Toledo—the “Glass City”—that Odestia met her future husband, Wilbur Lewis, through her cousin Mack. Mack warned Wilbur that his cousin was a good woman and not to play with her mind, body, or emotions. The young couple attempted to marry several times but were initially denied because her age could not be verified through court records. They persevered and were finally married on December 7, 1961. Their union was blessed with five children, twelve grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Lewis was a devoted and loving mother who always made sure her children knew she loved them more. Her “more love” was apparent to everyone. She was deeply involved in her children’s education, extracurricular activities, and home life, and she filled their home with delicious meals and warmth. In addition to caring for her family, she also worked

outside the home in the manufacturing industry. She was employed by Goodyear Corporation and later by General Motors Powertrain Division, where she retired in 2006 to enjoy more time with her family.

Odestia's fun-loving spirit drew people to her. She cherished the friendships she developed over the years through her neighborhood, workplace, and church. In the 1970s, she became a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church, where she served faithfully in many leadership roles, including the Usher Board Ministry, Deaconess Ministry, Women's Ministry, and Culinary Ministry. Her love for cooking was well known and shared with family and friends alike.

Odestia Lewis was preceded in death by her husband, Wilbur Lewis, Sr.; her parents, Leroy, and Eva Mae (Wells) Gardner; her sister, Ora Pearl Guyton; her brothers, Howard Grove, Willie Joe, Billy Ed, and Leon Gardner; and her grandsons, Robert, and Deonte' Lewis. Her legacy will forever be cherished by her loved ones.

She leaves to carry on her traditions: her children, Joyce (Jan) Lewis-Johnston, Gloria, Robert (Sylvia), Wilbur Jr. (Ingrid), and Jennifer Lewis; her grandchildren, DeLorean, Christopher (Summer), Jovon (Tara), Jake, Danielle, John, Amri, Elia, Joshua, and Destia; and her great-grandchildren,

Ramiah, D'Lorien, Lo'Elle, Aubrielle, Terrell, Josiah, Amohn, Grant, Rowan, Ka'lelle, and Elle.

She is also survived by her brothers, Willie Roy (Lynn), Tommy Lee (Morris), and Arthur

Gardner; her sister-in-law, Betty Gardner; brother-in-law, Richard Macer; beloved godchildren,

Mac Mitchell and Patricia Murphy; and a host of nephews, nieces, cousins, an aunt, and dear

friends—all of whom she loved, more.

Cemetery Details

Historic Woodlawn Cemetery

1502 West Central Avenue
Toledo, OH 43606

Previous Events

Wake Service

NOV 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethlehem Baptist Church
1430 West Bancroft Street
Toledo, OH 43606

Funeral Service

NOV 7. 11:00 AM (ET)

Bethlehem Baptist Church
1430 West Bancroft Street
Toledo, OH 43606

Tribute Wall



“ We are thinking and praying for the entire Lewis family at this time. Jennifer, sending you so much tender care my sister. You are so very much loved.
~ Gigi Gilliard and Family (Bx, New York)

Gigi Gilliard - November 06, 2025 at 02:17 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Odestia Lewis.



November 03, 2025 at 06:48 PM



“ Barry & Gladys Jackson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odestia Lewis.

Barry & Gladys Jackson - November 03, 2025 at 06:48 PM



“ May your heart find comfort knowing that your love one is at home with the Lord
Love Gwendolyn E. March Jones & Family



Gwendolyn E. March Jones - November 01, 2025 at 01:16 PM

NC

I was saddened to learn of Odestia's passing. I worked with her at GM for 20 years on the same job. What a beautiful soul. She talked about her family all the time and if I was lucky there were photos. I feel I know all of you personally. I remember, if someone in our department should lose a loved one. You can count Odestia to take up a collection for them.

Odestia, may you rest in peace

Nick Carr - November 23, 2025 at 05:30 PM