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# Rev. Clarence Norman Sr., an influential Brooklyn pastor and local leader, dead at age 85

By ERIN DURKIN  
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Rev. Clarence Norman Sr. founded the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights. He was a religious and political fixture in central Brooklyn. He died on July 8 at age 85. (Adams IV, James Monroe (Freelanc/Freelance, NYDN)

The Rev. Clarence Norman Sr., the pastor of First Baptist Church of Crown Heights for the last 62 years and a longtime local leader, died last week.

Norman, a religious and political fixture in central Brooklyn, was 85. He died July 8, said First Baptist's assistant pastor, the Rev. Daryl Bloodsaw.

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"He was a great man," Bloodsaw said.

"Pastor Norman served Brooklyn well for decades and has left an indelible mark upon the religious, political, and real estate landscapes," he said. "The way he wanted to be remembered is as a father, and a man who was full of the Holy Spirit, who many people came to Christ through."

Norman was a father of five, including former Assemblyman and Brooklyn Democratic boss Clarence Norman Jr. He is also survived by his wife Ellen.

Norman founded the church as First Baptist Church of Williamsburg in 1953.

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Over the years, he built the church from a 20-member mission to a congregation of more than 2,000 people that became a must-stop for politicians including Hillary Clinton, Mayor de Blasio and Gov. Cuomo, and where several local pols were members.

"Rev. Norman's passing has left an ache that will reverberate through Crown Heights, and all of New York City," said Public Advocate Letitia

James, one of a number of officials to mourn his death. "He helped us all to be more kind, more loving, and more holy. I feel extremely fortunate to have known Rev. Norman well, and know that his legacy will stay with me and all whom he touched in his lifetime."

Norman also taught social studies at two Brooklyn middle schools and founded a local development corporation that built housing for low-income and homeless residents.

"He built the church into a haven where you got the Gospel, but you also got what the Gospel is steeped in, and that's nothing more than making sure that people have what they need in order to survive," Bloodsaw said.

His wake will be at the Eastern Parkway church Friday from 6 to 8 p.m. The funeral will be Saturday at 10 a.m.

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