

GENTLE SUPPORT, STRONG RESOLVE - MOURNERS SAY GOOD-BYE, SEEK END TO KILLINGS

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The crowd rose to its feet, clapping to the church choir's upbeat hymn when William Parker Sr. walked into the sanctuary.

A group of about 1,000 mourners tried to support Parker emotionally as he approached the first coffin.

Inside was his son, William Parker Jr., 16. The senior Parker hugged and kissed his son, and then -- with the help of a woman holding him up -- proceeded to his 14-year-old daughter Wrandell's coffin. He kissed her, too, and moved a few steps to the right to the children's mother and his former wife, **Lisa Shelton**, 33, who was to be buried in a pink suit jacket.

Parker was halfway done when he started to collapse with grief. But he lifted himself up quickly to say good-bye to his youngest daughter, WaNee, 12, and **Shelton**'s last child, AuShanai Thompson, 9.

It took him 33 steps to walk past the five white coffins -- the girls' trimmed in pink and William Jr.'s in blue. William, Wrandell and WaNee were his only children.

The family was killed in their east-side home at 153 Minnesota last Thursday. **Shelton** was strangled. The children were beaten in the head with a pipe. Their funeral was Wednesday afternoon at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, also on the city's east side. The Swanson Funeral Home paid for the service in part, using public donations.

The service celebrated their lives and pleaded with mourners to do more to stop the surge of violence in the city. This year, 105 people have been killed in the city -- five of them children. A toddler was shot by her caretaker four days before **Shelton** and her children were killed.

"Somehow we must do more than gather and gather and gather and gather in these churches in this city," said the Rev. Edgar Vann of the Second Ebenezer Baptist Church, who officiated. "We must say to the forces of evil: 'You cannot have our children, our families, our community, or our city because they belong to God.' "

Wayne County prosecutors have charged **Shelton**'s boyfriend and AuShanai's father, Roger Thompson, 36, with five counts of first-degree murder in connection with the deaths.

Police said they believe **Shelton** and Thompson were arguing because **Shelton** bought computers to start a printing company -- in part, to publish some of her poetry. They said Thompson killed **Shelton** during that argument and then turned on the children.

Shelton 's 13-year-old sister also was home during the attack, but was spared. In an interview with the Free Press, she said she was partially disrobed and locked in a closet for 31 hours during the ordeal. She escaped to a neighbor's house when Thompson left to get money.

Police met the girl at the neighbor's house. They later arrested Thompson as he walked back toward the house.

Shelton 's family said Thompson had beaten her several times during their on-again, off-again relationship. But Thompson was never charged.

The church filled with music as mourners passed by the coffins. Sounds of grief lingered throughout the service.

At times, mourners stood up, clapped and sang with the choir. But William Parker Sr. was stoic in the front row, rarely raising his head. He only moved to help those who had collapsed in front of his children.

About 20 pastors from around the city attended the service. Sister Kim Chapman of Mt. Zion read letters from Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and the Wayne County Commission expressing regret about the family's death.

Carol Svatora, a teacher at Kosciusko Middle School where William Jr., Wrandell and WaNee attended, said she was proud to have an autographed copy of a book of poetry **Shelton** published. She also said her school has never experienced such grief.

"I am hoping that somewhere in this grief we can help move all of our students to a better place - of loving and caring for each other -- and all of us being part of stopping the violence," Svatora said.

The service also included some of **Shelton** 's poetry, including one she wrote about her love of her children. She described William as an artist and Wrandell as the comedian who "will make you laugh in a heartbeat."

In the poem, she called WaNee a singer, saying she would ask her daughter to sing when she felt down. And she called her youngest, AuShanai, an intelligent girl.

She wrote that her children are "my closest, dearest friends, who love me no matter what, my encouragement to win."

The family was buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Detroit.

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Caption: Photo J. KYLE KEENER/Detroit Free Press; Photo SUSAN TUSA/Detroit Free Press

Caskets bear the remains of **LisaShelton** and her children, Wrandell Parker, WaNee Parker, William Parker Jr. and AuShanai Thompson, at Wednesday's funeral at Mt. Zion Baptist Church on Detroit's east side. The five were killed at their home last Thursday. Roger Thompson, **Shelton** 's boyfriend, has been charged in the slayings.

An unidentified family member releases a white dove, one of five released after the service. The Rev. Edgar Vann of the Second Ebenezer Baptist Church called for an end to Detroit's recent spate of killings.

Detroiter Tonya Parker, 31, an aunt of three of five family members killed in last week's brutal attack, is comforted by Robert Beasley of Detroit on Wednesday at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Detroit.

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