



## Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson

January 9, 1956 - October 14, 2022

Jeannette Myrna Shafer Brownson, (Nettie, Mom, Jenny, JSB, Sweetie, Grandma J) died peacefully in her home on Friday, October 14, 2022, from cancer of the pancreas, Jeannette's "undesirable companion (Audre Lorde)" of the last three and a half years. She was 66 years old.

To watch the memorial service on Facebook - Click here: <http://Facebook.com/BLVDchurch>

Born in 1956 in Beverly, Massachusetts, Jeannette was the daughter of Myrna Quant Shafer and Rev. Roger Shafer and the middle child of three. She spoke fondly of how each year, she piled into the backseat of the family car with her two sisters, Nina and Linda, and the family took a road trip together. Her mother saved up vacation days from her job as an executive secretary and her father used the little money he earned as a minister to make sure they saw the country together.

One part of the country they frequented each summer was Camp Peniel in Lake Luzerne, New York. It was at Camp Peniel that as teenagers, Jeannette and Jonathan Brownson first met. After growing up as a pastor's daughter, Jeannette swore she would never become a pastor's wife. She learned to never say never when her summer friendship with Jonathan turned into a long-distance romance after she graduated from Covenant College with a

degree in Business in 1978. Before she knew it, she was moving to Holland, Michigan (for the first, but not last time) to work while Jonathan went to seminary. And two years later, she found herself married to a soon to be minister of the Reformed Church of America.

While she was always supportive of Jonathan's professional calling, Jeannette also prided herself in not being a "typical" pastor's wife. Her directness, honesty, and colorful sense of humor had a way of cutting through the pretense and seriousness of church life. Jeannette lived a faith that was dynamic and alive and unbounded by the four walls of a church. She worshiped a god who was amused by her occasional cussing and whose vision of justice and beloved community shaped her daily actions. Jeannette was not afraid to expand her Christian faith as her relationships and understanding of the world expanded. In doing so, she used her faith as an inclusive instrument rather than a weapon and it was her faith that provided meaning and strength in some of her most difficult moments.

After 20 years of being a full-time parent, early educator of her three children and steadfast partner to Jonathan in his ministry, Jeannette had a professional renaissance. Beginning in 2001, she went to work in a real estate office as an administrative assistant. Within 6 years, she earned her real estate license and started selling houses for a large brokerage firm. But Jeannette dreamed of creating connection and community directly through finding people homes and doing it her own way. Plus, as she told it, "I knew I could do it just as well, if not better, than all the men I was working for!" With this vision as her guide, she went on to earn her brokerage license to enable her to work for herself. In 2007, she gave birth to Brownson Properties, a brokerage and property management company that supports first time and historically discriminated against home buyers and renters find homes in and around downtown Holland, where Jeannette lived and worshiped. Brownson Properties was founded on one of the first real estate redistribution models in Holland,

donating 10% of all of Jeannette's commissions to local nonprofits of her clients choosing.

It was one of Jeannette's rituals to read the obituaries every day. When asked why, she would reply "I want to know their stories". Jeannette always wanted to know your story. And as her daily ritual attests, she would get it out of you one way or another. Often that meant asking a question others may consider inappropriate or impolite. After all, being perceived as inappropriate or impolite usually mattered very little to Jeannette. What did matter to her was learning your story and making you laugh. Jeannette had a deep attunement to the things that create and grow connective tissue between us - to laughter, to giving and receiving care, to storytelling, to the belief in the unseen forces around us, to allocating resources to where they are most needed, and to remembering names, faces and personal details with bizarre accuracy. She was a vibrant and generous spirit whose courage in the face of incredibly scary sh\*\* (she would want us to say that) continues to inspire those she leaves behind.

In what would turn out to be the last years of her life, we witnessed Jeannette intentionally tend to her inner life and to talents and depth that she was often not given credit for by the world. She took a writing class that honored the sharp and beautiful writer she was and gave her space to explore memory and art in a new way. You may be one of the lucky families that received a very soft baby blanket crocheted by Jeannette upon the arrival of your little one. To better communicate with her Spanish speaking friends and neighbors, Jeannette was committed to her Duolingo streaks; barely missing a daily lesson. And ten years ago, she started therapy for the first time in her life to courageously face her wounds with compassion and love. Her dedication to her own mental and spiritual growth and healing bore fruit in so many ways; not least of which in her relationships with her children. This effort was a gift

for which they will always be grateful.

With determination and humor, Jeannette thwarted cancer's timeline to welcome her first grandchild, share food and wine with friends, continue to find homes for community members, celebrate weddings, holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries that doctors didn't believe she would live to see, travel, and spend time at home with family, and take daily walks with her beloved person, Jonathan. Though her time was cut unjustly short, she spent it well.

Jeannette is survived by her husband, Jonathan Brownson, their three children; Benjamin, Joanna, and Samuel, their partners; grandchild, Kieran; two sisters, three brothers-in-law, a sister-in-law, and fifteen nieces and nephews. She is also survived by a deep and wide community of friends and chosen family.

The family wants to thank all the people who have stayed connected and showed up for Jeannette and the family during the darkest and brightest times of the past three and a half years, and who we know will continue to do so in the time ahead. You make up a vast web of "invisible threads" near and far that we believe Jeannette will continue to gently tug on from the beyond. We know that the loss of Jeannette is a shared grief amongst many that will reverberate throughout the community she nurtured and who nurtured her.

Visitation with the family is 4:00-7:00 pm on Monday, October 17, 2022, at Langeland Sterenberg Funeral Home, 315 E. 16th St. Holland, MI 49423.

Memorial Services are at 11:00 am on Tuesday, October 18, 2022, at BLVD Church, 238 W. 15th St. Holland, MI 49423.

Burial to take place in Pilgrim Home Cemetery.

Memorial contributions in Jeannette's honor may be given to "Making Room at the Table" Campaign of BLVD Church, 238 W. 15th St. Holland, MI 49423.

[www.langelandsterenberg.com](http://www.langelandsterenberg.com)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 17. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home  
315 E 16th St  
Holland, MI 49423  
(616) 392-2306  
info@langelandsterenberg.com  
<http://langelandsterenberg.com/>

## Live Streaming of Service

OCT 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

BLVD Church  
238 W. 15th St.  
Holland, MI 49423

<http://Facebook.com/BLVDchurch>

## Memorial Service

OCT 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

BLVD Church  
238 W. 15th St.  
Holland, MI 49423

# Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson*



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**Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes** - October 17, 2022 at 12:37 PM



“ *With tears I have just read through these memories. I share not a memory, but some information about Jeannette's newly formed memorial fund at [jbbbc.com](http://jbbbc.com)*

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**Jonathan Brownson** - May 20, 2023 at 09:11 PM

JR

“ Jonathan and family -- My heart breaks to know that Jeannette is no longer with us here on this earth. She has been such a gift to me in so many ways. In these more recent years it was a joy to get to know her and see her vision for beloved community here in Holland. She helped us sell two of our homes in town and was such a godsend when she was willing to buy our first home after tenants absolutely trashed the place. She didn't even let us clear the place out but bought it as is trash heap and all (it took an unbelievable number of dumpsters to get to the blank slate she needed to turn it back into a beautiful home in the neighborhood once again). She was passionate about making homes beautiful yet affordable. And the impact she has made will be a lasting legacy. But I want to name something from much earlier in our lives. We didn't know each other well when you were pastoring my home church. I had moved on to college and then seminary while you were there. But Jeannette did something for me that I will also treasure. She befriended and mentored my beloved sister at a very tender and vulnerable time in her growing up years. She was just the right person at just the right moment in Jen's life and I will forever be grateful since I was so far from home. The love the two of you shared was such a gift to those of us who know you and precisely because your love was so deep -- I know your grief must be so large. Know that I am holding you all in the light --- may you find peace! peace, Jill Russell

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**Jill Russell** - October 26, 2022 at 10:05 AM



*I just noticed this Jill...thank you so much for sharing*

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**Jonathan Brownson** - November 01, 2022 at 07:27 PM

SH

“ So thankful for all the ways Jeannette served her community. We live down the road and I will miss her joyous energy as she would walk by our house. She would always say, "Hi Joanna!" to my oldest daughter because because of her daughter with the same name. Thank-you for your efforts to try to find us our next house!

Stacy Hurd - October 25, 2022 at 08:55 AM



Yes

Jonathan Brownson - November 01, 2022 at 07:27 PM

GP

“ My family was blessed to meet Jeannette and Jonathan through their daughter, Jo. Jo and I worked together, and Jo's brilliance and integrity clearly were extensions of her parents. The times Jeannette and I were able to spend time together were intertwined with laughter and love. May she rest in power. - Greg, Gary, and Davonne.

Gregory Peters - October 24, 2022 at 01:18 PM



Thanks Greg!

Jonathan Brownson - November 01, 2022 at 07:28 PM

EQ

“ To Jonathan, the Brownsons and shafers,

*I am sorry to say I did not know Jeanette suffered from pancreatic cancer. I am altogether shaken by this news. Jeannette was just one month older than I was.*

*I will never forget her infectious smile, her bubbly personality and those dimples.!!*

*You have served her well highlighting all of these traits in her obituary.*

*Please know that I hold all of you in my thoughts and prayers.*

*Elizabeth Quincy*

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**Elizabeth Quincy** - October 23, 2022 at 09:50 AM

RK

“ *I thoroughly enjoyed knowing Jeannette. She took on the job of selling our house on 18th St. with expertise and pizzazz. When I was desperate to find housing for a friend, she pointed me in the right direction--sharing a house with one of Jeannette's homebuyers.*

*I thank God for her.*

*Robin Klay 616-212-0486*

*klay@hope.edu*

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**Robin Klay** - October 20, 2022 at 03:38 PM

KC

“ We met Jeannette and Jonathan when Ryan was interviewing for a job with the city of Holland and city residents were given the opportunity to ask questions of the candidates. Ask, she did! I believe her questions pertained to affordable housing issues. (No surprise, there!) And then, also no surprise, she became our realtor. I know (and she frequently reminded me!) that I took a very long time selecting what I thought was the perfect home for our situation. Perhaps I was selfishly and unconsciously stretching out the process to remain in contact with this warm and funny, tell-it-like-it-is woman. But no need, because by then we were friends with the Brownsons as a couple. Jeannette and I discovered we had much in common; born and married within a couple weeks of each other, one of three sisters, we each had three children, and we lost our parents in the same years.

We've been fortunate to have shared many meaningful times with J. and J. and their family. One of Jeannette's many superpowers was to make each of us feel we were special and important to her and I know we genuinely were. So many of us feel a great loss because she was such a true and generous friend. Even when she was going through all the cancer related side effects and wasn't feeling her best, she always asked about our family and activities with concern and interest. We were all so very lucky to have a friend like Jeannette and now, going forward, I will try to be a bit more like Jeannette, (WWJD? - What Would Jeannette Do?).

Much love and peace to Jonathan, Ben, Joanna, Sam and all who loved Jeannette.



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**Karen Peters Cotton** - October 19, 2022 at 04:21 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.*



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October 18, 2022 at 01:35 AM



“ *Jeannette helped our family move to Holland this year. She was one of many realtors recommended in relocation and we picked her with little knowledge or thought. In our first zoom call with her she said she had heard about our story for a few months and had been praying for us. We felt so seen and blessed. It has been a privilege to know her even just briefly. She introduced us to Holland and the values she invested in the neighborhood. Thank you. -Kendra & Mark Thomas*

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**Mark & Kendra Thomas** - October 17, 2022 at 09:16 PM



“ *So grateful to have been your friend. Remembering with love sitting on the deck celebrating our successful project with you*

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**Brenda & Jack VanderMeulen** - October 17, 2022 at 06:52 PM



“ *I'm so sorry to hear about the passing of Jeannette the world have lost a great person I hope she finds the garden of heaven as beautiful as I did  
God bless you all*

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**Tom jones** - October 17, 2022 at 06:13 PM

TL

“ *Transnation Title Agency - Lakeshore purchased the Joyful Memory for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.*



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**Transnation Title Agency - Lakeshore** - October 17, 2022 at 04:09 PM

NS

“ *Grace and Peace to you Jonathan and your extensive family. Jeannette was a gift to Holland and will be missed.*

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**nate schipper** - October 17, 2022 at 01:37 PM

ET

“ *Though I did not know Jeannette well, I was impressed with her lively spirit and kind heart. She helped all of my adult children with the sale of their houses within the past few years. She was wonderful for them. Peace, Elaine Tanis*

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**Elaine Tanis** - October 17, 2022 at 10:38 AM

HW

“ *What a privilege to know Jeannette. I'll miss her. Herb Weller*

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**Herb Weller** - October 17, 2022 at 10:36 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.*



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October 17, 2022 at 09:35 AM

MM

“ I met Jeannette 8 years ago while searching online for a home in downtown Holland. I bought the first house she showed me! We got to know a lot about each other through that sale. She came over with a present once the papers were signed and asked if I had a church in mind for worshipping? Then invited me to NC4th. The Sunday services there were like sharing a meal with family. Some of my dearest friendships grew out of that time! She had a way of connecting like minded people, I'm certain God will use that gift in the Heavenly realms! Marjorie Mayberry

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**Marjorie Mayberry** - October 17, 2022 at 07:44 AM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.



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October 16, 2022 at 07:03 PM

TB

“ From living across the street during Seminary days, to celebrating numerous New Years' Eves together in south Chicago, to many gatherings and meals across the miles, and only wonderful memories....we are carrying all of you in our aching hearts. Much love in Christ. Mary & Tom Bartha and family

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**Thomas and Mary Bartha** - October 16, 2022 at 05:56 PM

HB

“ Dear Jonathon - We learned of Jeannette's death through a friend and Karen & I were shocked and saddened. We were unaware of her previous health issues. We recalled previous times of being together, both the four of us and also our families. We always enjoyed Jeannette's authenticity and were blessed by your marriage with her. God's peace and hope in Christ be with you and your family. Love, Heino and Karen Blaauw

Heino Blaauw - October 16, 2022 at 04:07 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.



October 16, 2022 at 02:15 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.



October 16, 2022 at 02:12 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.



October 16, 2022 at 11:05 AM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.*



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October 16, 2022 at 10:50 AM



“ *This photo is a small portion of a dear group of friends who graduated from Hope in 2011 and were involved at 4th Reformed with Jonathon and Jeannette. To say that they welcomed and supported us wholeheartedly would be to state the bare minimum; our lives are not the same because of those four years and the ones that followed because we know and were loved by Jonathon and Jeannette in their ministry and life together. To Jonathon and the family: thank you for sharing your wife and mother with us (though certainly she left you no choice anyway ;).*



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**kelly cooper** - October 16, 2022 at 09:10 AM

KS

“*Jonathon and family. I remember so clearly meeting Jonathan when I bought a home in the neighborhood that you love and minister to in so many ways. We soon became friends and I loved the community I moved into you!!! That was 12 years ago. Jeanette helped me sell this home and to find another. Then helped me to sell again when the Lord said it was time to relocate again. She become a cherished friend in the process. I thank God for His mercies that gave her so much extra time to share in this life with you, your family and all she came into contact with. She was a special and remarkable woman. I admired her so much!!! Praying for comfort for all who loved her!!!*



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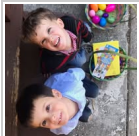
**Karen Seymour** - October 16, 2022 at 08:32 AM

SK

“*This post is beautiful and captures Jeannette’s personality perfectly. The fact that her family put so much time into writing the post shows how dearly she is loved. My husband and I also loved her candor that was doled out with humor and compassion. Her vibrant life continued even in sickness. She will be greatly missed. Sending love and hugs to the family.*

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**Shannon Kalmink** - October 16, 2022 at 08:31 AM



“*Mary Anna and I are stunned by Jeannette's passing. She was a kind, encouraging friend from college days forward, and we thank God for her fruitful life.*

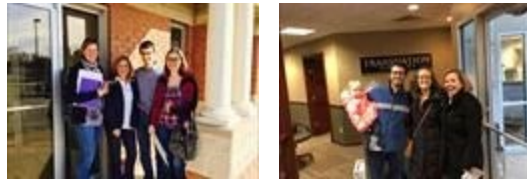
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**Andrew Belz** - October 16, 2022 at 06:25 AM

MA

“ *What a beautifully written obituary and what a special wonderful woman. The world has lost such a bright light and our hearts are broken. We are forever grateful to Jeannette for helping us buy our first and second homes, and then connecting us to a realtor that helped us find our current home. She always felt like more than just our realtor from the very first time we met her - she just exuded warmth and love and care for us, and I know she was like that with everyone. So full of life and joy and so generous - we always were amazed when she would give away 10 percent of her commission check to a non-profit of our choosing, something we never heard of any other realtors doing. We are so glad to have known her and have had her in our lives. Love and prayers to all of Jeannette’s family and many friends and loved ones.*

*Love,  
Megan, Joe and Lucy*



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**Megan Arevalo** - October 16, 2022 at 04:57 AM

AA

“ *Ann Maria Anderson lit a candle in memory of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson*



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**Ann Maria Anderson** - October 15, 2022 at 11:10 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.*



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October 15, 2022 at 10:55 PM



“ *Dear All,*

*I will remember Jeannette as a kind, lovely and encouraging person. Someone who always looked for the positive in life. I met her through my sons Karson, Graeme and Walker playing baseball in Hamilton. She was also a person I knew who made a difference in people's lives in the ways she supported goodness. I know she will be so missed.*

*I pray for the Peace of Christ. I send my love to her whole family.*

*Kari Miller Fenwood*

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**Kari Miller** - October 15, 2022 at 03:03 PM



“ *I'm deeply saddened to hear of your loss. I was recently looking at some pictures that my late mother took that included your family from the time spent in South Holland. I'm thankful for that time and my prayers are with you. Russ DeYoung.*

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**Russell DeYoung** - October 15, 2022 at 02:28 PM

GD

“ Jeannette was the example of a Realtor who represented her clients and set an example for all of us through her support of non-profits.

*Blessings and prayers for Jonathon and family as you grieve and celebrate her life.*

*Graham Duryee*

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**Graham Duryee** - October 15, 2022 at 02:23 PM

BY

“ You and Ruth Bader Ginsberg were kicking pancreatic to the curb. Your 3 years of staying well with cancer encouraged so many. Every blessing to your family.

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**Barbara Yandell** - October 15, 2022 at 02:19 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jeannette M. Shafer Brownson.



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October 15, 2022 at 01:16 PM

TF

“ I was shocked to hear the news of Jeanette's passing. I was totally unaware of her illness. I have many happy memories of her when she sang in the choir at Christ Memorial. I believe this was even prior to your marriage. She was always fun and positive. I will remember her fondly. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

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**Thomas M Folkert** - October 15, 2022 at 10:41 AM

NB

“ You have my deepest sympathy in the loss of Jeanette. I only had brief encounters with her but was blessed when I did. I know she was well loved by all, especially her family. Although, I am unable to make either the visitation or service, my prayers are with you.  
Nancy Boote

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**Nancy Boote** - October 15, 2022 at 10:32 AM

AC

“ Heart....broken



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**Ann L Camp** - October 15, 2022 at 10:30 AM

PF

“ Jeannette,  
You are our sorella (sister).  
We have loved you from the moment we met you! Thank you for walking through the fires of grief & sorrow with our Family.  
You walk the talk of love, kindness, empathy and compassion. Our entire family holds you & your beautiful family in our hearts always!  
Until our glorious reunion~  
Your Famiglia Italiana  
The Fabiano Family  
Holland Peanut Store

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**Paula Fabiano** - October 15, 2022 at 08:18 AM

SV

*I'm so saddened by this news. I wanted more Jeannette time. Yet in the years I've known Jeannette I've always been nourished and uplifted by her spirit, her kindness and her loving irreverence. What an amazing woman she was. She filled so many empty spaces with her presence and optimism. I will miss her so much. Praying for comfort and healing for the family she adored.*

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**Sandra VandenBrink** - October 15, 2022 at 09:55 AM

RC

*Words cannot express our sense of loss. Jeannette spoke truth to all, yet often with a great sense of humor. She and her family epitomize the saying "Think globally and act locally." Generous in innovative ways -- incomparable to others in her field. Much love to all of the Brownson family.*

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**Ryan Cotton** - October 16, 2022 at 08:43 AM

DB

*...Well done... well done good and faithful servant!*

*Darryl Bartlett*

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**Darryl Bartlett** - October 17, 2022 at 08:27 AM