

In Loving Memory of *Rev. FranCione, Ph.D*

CELEBRATING A WONDERFUL LIFE



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Sunrise: July 9, 1937
Sunset: July 28, 2025



Saturday, the 4th of October 2025 | 11:00 AM | Oakland Center for Spiritual Living

Celebrating the Life Of Rev. FranCione, Ph.D

Oakland Center for Spiritual Living
Saturday, October 4, 2025, 11:00 a.m.

We gather together on this day, united in memory and love, to honor the life of one
who has touched and shaped us in ways both profound and gentle.
Together, we journey through grief, cherish hope, and celebrate a legacy that lives on . . .

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcoming Music – Kev Choice

Processional – Family, Ministers and Practitioners

Welcome & Evocation – Rev. Dr. Sunshine Michelle Coleman

Libation – Carol Johnson-Williams, RScP Emerita

Opening Music – Kev Choice and Rev. Queen Michelle Jordan

Silent Reading of Celebrating the Life of Rev. FranCione, Ph.D

**Rev. Dr. Soni Cantrell-Smith, Spiritual Leader
Centers for Spiritual Living (video)**

Musical Tribute– Kev Choice

Family Tributes

Katherine Russell-Brown, Niece
Special Family Sharing

Proclamations

Oakland Mayor Barbara Lee,
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.

Tributes – East Bay Church of Religious Science

Rev. Dr. Elouise Oliver, Minister Emerita
Elder Harriet Tubman Wright, MA, MS
Rev. Arleen King, EBCRS Practitioner Core

Musical Inspiration – Kev Choice and Queen Michelle Jordan – “My Help”

Eulogy – Rev. Dr. Michael Bernard Beckwith

Musical Inspiration – Kev Choice

Tributes and Open Mic Sharing

Dr. Sandra Smith, RScP, Tracy Brown, RScP,
Rev. Geri Carder

Musical Inspiration – Kev Choice and Rev. Queen Michelle Jordan

Closing – Rev. D. Jacquelyn Edwards

Recessional



Celebrating the Life of Rev. Francione , Ph.D

Sunrise: July 9, 1937 — Berkeley, California

Sunset: July 28, 2025 — Elk Grove, California

A Life Rooted in Spirit, Love, and Truth

Today we celebrate the LIFE of Francione — at times known as Fran, Newellene (Newie or Noodles, Hey Sis, Mom, and “Gra’Ma Sit Dwn” by her family and grandbabies), called Dr. Lewis by students, and Rev. Fran by her congregants. She loved to tell the story of how, when she “lifted the C in the middle of her name, the C-I-ONE declared her nature & the TRUTH — Christ and I are One”. This realization guided her path: a life devoted to Spirit, learning, teaching, and love.

Francione was born in Berkeley, California, the first of two daughters of Alfred Newell and Paulene Johnson. She grew up on King Street, just a few houses down from Alcatraz Avenue, with her beloved sister Tanya, Grandma Fannie Speese, Aunt Lois, and Uncle Simon. Childhood with Tanya was filled with imagination — once digging a “tunnel to China” — and with mischief, like the night stepfather Adam “Hacky” Jones marched them home from an after-hours party, his belt snapping the sidewalk in rhythm. Even then, Francione carried within her an artist’s eye and a contemplative spirit, finding joy in painting, dance, and quiet observation.

Scholar and Educator

She attended Berkeley public schools and graduated from Berkeley High School in 1955, later earning her Bachelor’s degree in Home Economics from San Francisco State University in 1959. That same year, alongside Tanya, she was initiated into the Rho Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporate. Teaching at McClymonds High School (“Mack”) in Oakland became her first professional calling, where students fondly remembered her warmth and care. In 1961, she married Ahlerman Van Lewis, whom she had met at Slim Jenkins nightclub during a Ray Charles concert. Their union brought forth two sons: Ahlerman “Ahlee” Van Lewis II (1966) and Frederic Paul “Fred” Lewis (1969).

Her career expanded into educational research and leadership. She served as a research associate for Project Follow Through and was appointed Program Director of the Responsive Education Program at the Far West Laboratory, consulting nationally on early childhood curriculum. She earned her M.A. in Education at SFSU in 1978 and her Ph.D. in Education from the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities in 1983.

Her son Fred captured her essence in a card that she kept by her bedside: “Just Because... You have loved and supported me in times when I probably did not deserve it! You have taught me through actions as well as word what unconditional love is all about...The woman on the card is an African Queen... that is what you are to me and have been since my first breath. Thank You!”

A Calling to Ministry

In 1986, Francione was diagnosed with breast cancer. After a double mastectomy and treatment, she was declared cancer-free. A holistic physician encouraged her to embrace a less stressful path. She listened — to Spirit, to her dreams, to her heart — and transitioned into ministry.

Her mother once told her, “*I may not always remember to say how proud I am of you...But more important than your successes, I am proud of the goodness and generosity which are such a wonderful part of the joys you bring to others. I am proud to be your mother.*” Those words affirmed the truth Francione was already living.

Ministerial and Academic Leadership

Her spiritual leadership was broad and deep:

- Minister & Youth/Family Minister, First Church of Religious Science (1989–1991)
- Northern California Dean, Ernest Holmes College (1991–1992)
- Senior Minister, San Francisco Church of Religious Science (1992–1995)
- Director of Youth & Family Ministry, East Bay CORS (1995–1998)
- Regional Dean, Holmes Institute & Assistant Minister, Pacific CORS, San Diego (1997–1999)
- Director of Education, United Church of Religious Science, Los Angeles (1999–2004)
- Minister of Prayer Chaplains, Christ Unity Church, Sacramento (2005–2008)
- Minister, Church of Religious Science, Davis, CA (2010)
- Staff Minister, Oakland Center for Spiritual Living, CA (2016–2019)
- Interim Minister, East Bay Church of Religious Science, Oakland (2020–2022)

She co-designed Holmes Institute's Psychology 606: Diversity & The Ministry, now a required course, and served on the Centers for Spiritual Living Curriculum Design Team.

In 2012 she founded the Sacred Arts and Living Center (SALC), a CSL Teaching Chapter, and later led diversity trainings that helped heal racial divides.

Her ministry was inspired by her spiritual mentors — Dr. Howard Thurman's vision of the Beloved Inclusive Community, Harriet Tubman's courage, and the prophetic wisdom of her ancestral and cultural guides. She often declared: "Let me tell you what I KNOW TO BE TRUE."

Dreams, Art, and Daily Mysticism

Francione's deepest communion with God often came through her dreams, which she painted to anchor their spiritual messages. Transformative, creative expression was always an integral part of her ministry. One dream she titled "I Can Manage This": she stepped from a tiny, confining room into the wide open street, arms outstretched before a massive building, proclaiming, "I CAN MANAGE THIS!" From that vision, she learned to transform fear into faith, trepidation into confidence. These revelations guided her ministry, her stewardship, and her daily walk.

Legacy of Family and Joy

Retirement for FranCione meant more time with her grandchildren — Jehlani, Jalen, Ahjani and Jasmin — while continuing to teach occasional classes. She delighted in painting, tending to dreams, and watching Grey's Anatomy, Bridgerton, Law & Order, and CSI. Her family, friends, students, sorors, and congregants all knew her as one who infused humor, generosity, and equity into every circle she entered.

She is survived by her sons Ahlee and Fred; daughter-in-law Sonja; grandchildren Jehlani Paulette Lewis, Jalen Rashad Lewis, and Ahjani Frederic Lewis; bonus granddaughter Jasmin Ford; sisters Natasha Wild and Leah Wise; nieces Katheryn Russell-Brown, Donna Ayo, Samirra Wise, Mariana Jones, Maya Jones, and Monay Jones; nephews Babu Wild and Avram Wild; and cousins Ricardo Russelle, Andrea Russelle, grandnephew, Louis Brown, and grandniece, Sasha Brown. She was preceded in transition by her parents Paulene and Newell, stepfather Adam "Hacky" Jones Jr., sister Tanya, brother Adam Jones III, foster sister Shaminade Ayo, aunt Cleodele Russelle, and daughter-in-law Tiffany Massimino.

"What man meant for evil, God meant for good." — Genesis

This was Francione's witness and her legacy: that each day offers us the opportunity to step into truth, wholeness, love, and joy. And so it is.

Rev. Dr. FranCione "Newie" Johnson (Lewis) (1937–2025) was a beloved educator, minister, and artist whose life revealed the truth she so often declared: "Christ and I are One." A graduate of Berkeley High (1955) and San Francisco State (B.A. '59, M.A. '78), she earned her Ph.D. in Education in 1983. She began her career teaching at McClymonds High before directing the Responsive Education Program at the Far West Laboratory. Following recovery from breast cancer, she answered her call to ministry, serving as minister, dean, and director across Religious Science and Unity communities. She co-designed Holmes Institute's Diversity & The Ministry course and founded the Sacred Arts and Living Center in 2012. Her dreams, art, and teachings inspired countless students to embrace Spirit and truth. She is survived by her sons, grandchildren, and extended family, who carry forward her legacy of wisdom, humor, equity, and grace.

Definition of Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect.


It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.

It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

*There is only one Life,
that Life is the Life of God,
that Life is Perfect,
that Life is My Life now!*

Ernest Holmes said “Recognizing unity is not uniformity nor conformity.” Come discover how to “honor your own unique ethnic cultural backgrounds and to respect and embrace the cultural background experiences of others in your community.”

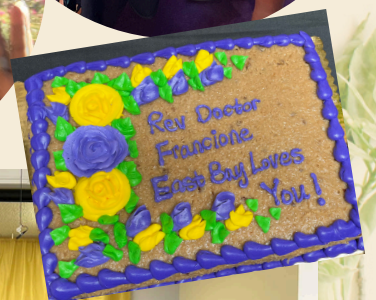
*MAJESTIC CALM
The Inner Mind is still.
The Soul reflects the Most High.
The Spirit of man is God.
In the great calm of the All Good,
I rest in peace and security.
My life is now reflecting the Perfect Whole.
I am Peace; I am Calm
(323.3 SOM Textbook)*













A FaceBook Tribute to Rev. Dr. FranCione



Gerri Carder

July 31 · 🌐

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It is with a heavy heart that I share with you the passing of our beloved Rev. [FranCione](#). As many may know, she was an iconic figure in our CSL philosophy. She was a master teacher, wonderful mentor, amazing friend, a great artist and someone I call "family". My human heart is heavy, but spiritually I know that she orchestrated her shift from this world to the next with grace and did it her way! Love you Rev. Fran and know that your journey has been an incredible one as you move into your next "greatest yet to be". Godspeed ❤️

erraro

so very sorry to learn of her passing. A beautiful light bearer on this earth please keep her beautiful Soul.

Sam Ladion

Sending Love and Light to Rev Francione's family and friends...

Janet Copeland



Bonnie Allen

Blessings to all who new and treasured her

Vicki Durst

Thank you for letting us know Rev Geri. She will be missed. Peace to All, Light to All, Love to All. ❤️

Carol Manson

I will love her forever 💜💜

Melissa Phillippe

Not sure whether to cry or celebrate...I loved her!!! I guess both are in order. Fly fly fly beautiful being.

Deborah Blank

So sorry to hear this sad news. She was and still is lovely.



Pamela Morgan

Rev FranCione Francione 🌸💜

Robert Leeds

Francine was a force to be reckoned with. I feel blessed to have known her. Sending love and peace to all who knew her.

Cindy Hegger

On to your greatest yet to be

Rev Lani Howard

Godspeed Rev Francione. What a gift you were to our movement. I taught her Bible class and people loved it. I also painted my one and only oil painting in a workshop at Asilomar that turned out to foreshadow my being pastor in Grass Valley

Sage Ardas

love this pic. heart strings and hugs. 🙏🙏🙏

Beth van Arkel

She was a wise one & will be missed - blessed be & I was looking forward to seeing her again at our 80th celebration

Gregory Toole

Blessings on this beautiful soul. There was a time when our paths were tracking closely and it was great to be in her presence.

We both served at the same high school, she as an educator, and I running a nonprofit project.

Hudson

so sorry to hear this. She spoke at my ordination and was an inspiring and wonderful person. She was loved. ❤️

Suzanne Baldwin

I was talking with Dorothy, about the time you posted this message, and she let me know the sad news. Rev FranCione was very special to me! I took SOM II with her back in 1986. When she was the senior minister at East Bay and then at the SFCSL, I provided music for her services regularly. Several years ago I took a DEI class she created and facilitated at OCSL, as well as a couple of weekend workshops she led. She had a unique blend of deep spirituality, great intellect and beautiful artistic expression. I was so hoping to be able to connect with her in person since she moved up to Elk Grove. May her family and all who loved her be comforted in knowing what a difference she made to the lives of so many. I remember one of her talks was titled "Oh, what a blessing!" It stuck with me through the years. And she surely has been a blessing! ❤️

Michael J Kearney

FanCione, what a beautiful soul! She was teaching the Foundations class as her Ministerial internship at Pacific Church of Religious Science, San Diego, when I first started taking classes. It was in her class that I first declared I wanted to be a minister. I had the privilege of working and supporting her in those early years. FranCione, may you be a blessing to all who have loved you as you continue on the journey of Life Eternal. 🙏🙏

Claudia Marie LaRoche

Very beautiful woman !! I took a class of hers many many years ago
Prayers lifted
Sending love and light

Badia Cooper

I spoke with her about a year ago. I was seeking her wisdom. On an experience I had. May her soul rest in love.

Annie Goglia

So sorry to hear this news. She was such a wise and beloved person. ❤️

C. Cheryl Archer

Such a beautiful soul who will be missed in this realm. Peace and blessings to her family and close friends. 🥹❤️

Dearest Geri,
My heart is with you in the passing of Rev. Dr. FranCione. She was such a radiant being, a true lighthouse for us all. Her wisdom and compassion touched countless lives, and her legacy will continue to inspire us. During this time of sorrow, please know that I'm holding you and your community in love and prayer. May the warmth of her spirit comfort you, and may you find peace in the cherished memories shared. With deepest sympathy, Rev. Siota Belle, Ph.D.



Sharon Dunn

WOW!!! We've witnessed a spiritual giant just get her wings. Was it sudden Geri Carder? Godspeed beloved [FranCione Francione](#) ❤️🙏

A Facebook Tribute to Rev. Dr. Francione

Helen Wyman

Oh so sorry to hear about the loss of Rev. Francione, she will be deeply missed 🙏🌸

Bonnie Sita

Many blessings to her, her family and her spiritual family.
I feel blessed to have known her

Diana L. Presley

Soarrrr Beautiful Sister!!! 🙏💛🌟💛🌟💛🌟

Martha McCabe

A giant among Religious Science Educators. A teacher of teachers and a very bright soul. She has left us a great legacy. And lots of curriculum!

Marcia Lynne MacLean
Much ❤️

Eleanor Vincent

Rev. Francione was a wise, grounded, loving teacher and mentor. Any conversation with her was enlightening. Her strength of character was an inspiration. She will be deeply missed. ❤️

Alexis Yancey

So grateful for her wisdom. Much love, light and peace. ❤️❤️❤️

Lorri Nicolini

I am sorry to hear of Rev. Francione's passing. She will be missed. That was a beautiful tribute to her.

Ed Tanzi

I'm so sad to hear the passing of Rev. Fran. She is a beautiful Light and soul and her presence so lifted the vibration of this universe. Wherever her next stop is, I know will be graced with her grace, wisdom and love.
🙏💛💛💛🙏

Maria L Antúnez Díaz

Rest in Power FUL Peace 🙏💜

Donna Maria White

I met Reverend Fran in 1970 when she was a Consultant for the Head Start Program.. She helped develop some of the curriculum for the program. I was pleased to see her when I joined OCSL in 1986. I want to say GOOD JOB and I know she is at peace.

Ramona Mann

May Reverend Francione Rise in Peace! 🙏 Wow...Such Respect for her.

Karyl Huntley-Sadler

I am sorry to hear of dear Francione's passing. We worked together in the Marin Church in the mid- 1980s. She was the education director under Dr. Lloyd Tupper. Many blessings on her holy journey.

KSuzanne Massey

A great loss in this human physicality. Blessings to Rev. Francione as she flies high onto her next journey.....

Cynthia M Chang

Flying with the angels ..thank you 💜

Arthur Chang

Our beloved Francione's insistence that I joined Margaret Stort, herself and one other minister to speak on a panel at the Long Beach National Convention after the Rodney King event, brought me to national notice which helped established my ministerial career at Founder's. We are blessed by her amazing presence.

Teddi Rudler

Sending love ❤️ love is immortal life is eternal and death is only a horizon

Janine R James

Rev. Francione inspired me and so many people- a brilliant human , her life was amazing . Grateful to have known such an Incredible spirit 💜

Erin P. Gaffey

I hear her beautiful voice and her art of sharing Life.
Rest in Power Beautiful Francione

Freya Carol Hermanson

I loved Rev. Francione, and soo appreciated her! I am very grateful to her--so inspiring for me about being myself. She was our first practicum teacher, and I loved the art and other challenges she gave us.

Tynya Beverly

Rev. Francione, a minister, a teacher, a guide. It was an honor to have her as my ministerial teacher. She carved wisdom into my spirit, left footprints on my heart. Now she dances with the ancestors, wrapped in light. I will forever hear her whispering Truth.

Marcus Adeshima Penn

My heart is heavy, her presence was so transformative 🙏💛🙏

Maggie Wattle

Beloved friend Geri I too was one of those who stood in awe of such a wonderful grace-filled and wise GIANT! Francione leaves an indelible mark and legacy in our movement with such a clear voice and consciousness that resounds of the Truth in love , dignity, respect and equanimity. Raised and praised beloved one for a job well done!

Kathy Homara

I am deeply grateful to have known her as a mentor and light. Also, I am deeply sad she made her transition from our lives.

Geri, thank you for well said sharing. It hit every spot in my heart.

Sending love to all she has touched and loved. I know she lived and loved a full life. She was/is a true master, whom I loved from the first time I met her. Her wisdom and presence was grounding and inspiration through out my life. Some people directly talk to your soul. That was her.

Some people's presence is so pure, powerful and nonjudgmental that they change the world around them and transport life's with their peaceful presence. That was her.

Master Francione Francione thank you and bless you wherever your journey is taking you. 🙏💜💜💜💜💜

Thank you

Fred Lewis and Ahlee Lewis and Family thank all who participated in coordinating this beautiful Celebration of Life.

**To the Oakland Center for Spiritual Living,
Rev. Dr. Sunshine Michelle Coleman,
Rev. D. Jacquelyn Edwards, Rev. Geri Carder,
Elder Harriet Tubman Wright,
Carol Johnson-Williams RScP,
Dr. Sandra Smith RScP,
Jordon's Culinary Creations,
PM1 Printing and all the Volunteers!**





Life is eternal, and love
is immortal, and death is
only a horizon; and a
horizon is nothing save
the limit of our sight.

ROSSITER WORTHINGTON
RAYMOND





“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace.” Teach me how to order my days that with sure touch I may say the right word at the right time and in the right way—lest I betray the spirit of peace. Let me not be deceived by my own insecurity and weakness which would make me hurt another as I try desperately to help myself. Keep watch with me, O my Father, over the days of my life, that with abiding enthusiasm I may be in such possession of myself that each day I may offer to Thee the full, unhampered use of me in all my parts as “an instrument of Thy Peace.”

Amen.

Howard Thurman, “The Inward Journey”

Pg. 104