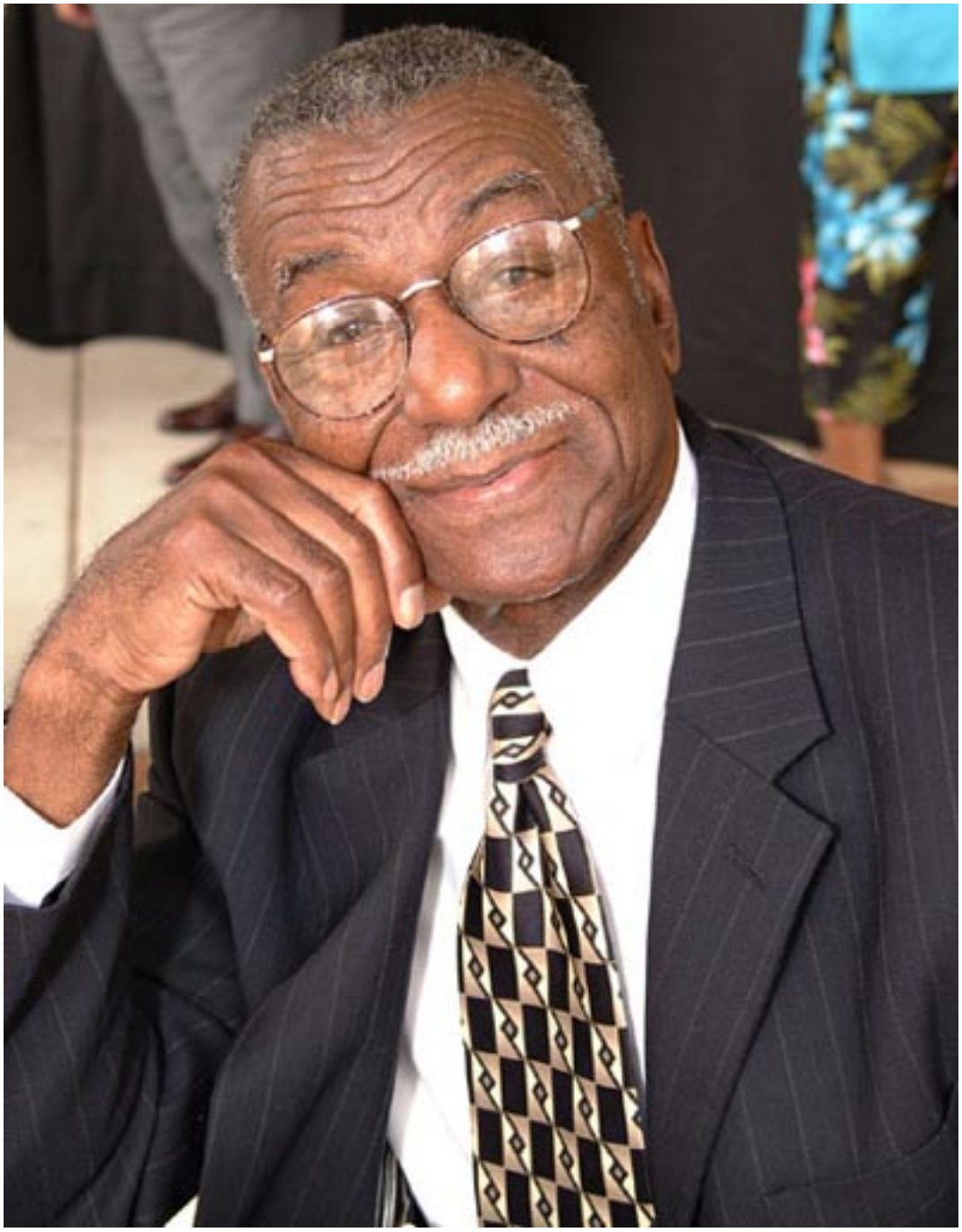

He was a voice for calm during the 1967 and 2001 racial unrest in Cincinnati. A street in Avondale bears his name.

The Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, a leader of the civil rights movement, passed away Wednesday

morning after a long illness. He was 89.

Princeton Baptist Medical Center spokeswoman Jennifer Dodd confirms he died at the Birmingham hospital Wednesday morning.

Shuttlesworth was born in Mount Meigs, AL in 1922, the son of a coal miner and a maid.

He was very active as a preacher of the gospel and civil rights in Birmingham during the 1950's, serving as pastor of Birmingham's Bethel Baptist Church.

He was beaten and arrested numerous times for his activism and was the target of several acts of violence, including the bombing of his house on Christmas Day in 1956.

"He suffered brutal beatings. His home was on several occasions bombed, his church bombed by the Ku Klux Klan. But Fred was relentless," said author L.D. Ervin.

Shuttlesworth formed the Alabama Christian Rights Movement and helped create the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, along with Martin Luther King Jr. and Ralph Abernathy. He was secretary of the SCLC for many years.

Shuttlesworth left Alabama in 1961 and moved to Cincinnati to become pastor of Revelation Baptist Church and, later, Greater Light Baptist Church, where he continued to work against racism.

He was a voice for calm during the 1967 and 2001 racial unrest in Cincinnati. A street in Avondale bears his name.

He frequently returned to Alabama to continue efforts to end racism. Shuttlesworth organized numerous lunch counter sit-ins and bus boycotts during the 1960's.

In 2000, Shuttlesworth was awarded the President's Citizens Medal by President Clinton.

He retired in 2006 after having a benign brain tumor removed. He suffered a stroke in 2007 and spent several days at University Hospital, returning to Birmingham after recovering.

In October 2008, the Birmingham Airport Authority changed the name of the Birmingham International Airport to Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.

"I have never sent people where I would not go. Reason I've suffered so much, is I've led the way," said Shuttlesworth during an interview with FOX19.

His widow, Mrs. Sephira Bailey Shuttleworth, expressed her appreciation and gratitude for the support and prayers that have poured in for Rev. Shuttlesworth and the family.

Rev. Shuttlesworth is also survived by four daughters: Patricia Massengill and Ruby (Harold) Bester of Cincinnati, OH; Carolyn Shuttlesworth of Rockville, MD and Maria Murdock of Birmingham, AL; a son, Fred Shuttlesworth, Jr. of Cincinnati, OH and a daughter-by-marriage, Audrey (Darnell) Wilson of Cincinnati, OH.

He is also survived by 14 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren, one great-great grandchild; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Also surviving are five sisters: Betty Williams of Birmingham, AL; Truzella Brazil, Ernestine Grimes and Iwilder (Kenneth) Reed of Milwaukee, WI; also Eula Mitchell of Philadelphia, PA. One sister, Cleola Willis and two brothers, Eugene Shuttlesworth and Clifton Shuttlesworth preceded him in death.

Arrangements are incomplete and will be announced later.

Mayor Mark Mallory issued the following statement of the passing of Civil Rights Icon Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth:

"Cincinnati and the world lost a great man today; Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth was a true example of one who was born to serve. He spent his entire life working to improve the lives of others. His strength and courage will be truly missed. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends."