



## Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr.

July 3, 1940 - February 2, 2021

### Legacy of Love

Reverend Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr., 80, of Richmond, Virginia departed this life on Tuesday, February 2, 2021. He was born on a farm in Brunswick County, Virginia on July 3, 1940 to the late Hallie and Fannie Merritt Reavis. Ralph was one of seventeen children.

Ralph grew up in a Christian home with praying parents who valued honesty, industry and education. He gives credit to his brother Carrell who mentored him early in life. The church gave Ralph the kind of discipline that served him well in later years.

Upon entering James Solomon Russell High School in Lawrenceville, Virginia, Ralph's plan was to study the trade of brick masonry, as many of his school friends were doing. When he attempted to enroll in the trade, he was told that the class quota had already been set. According to Ralph, "That left me only one choice – to take math and science courses like Biology, Chemistry, Algebra I and II and Geometry".

While in high school Ralph was a member of the Latin Club, the Physics Club, the Student Council, the football team, the baseball team and a member of the choir. During a State Student Participation Association of Virginia meeting,

Ralph decided to seek the office of Chaplain. In his campaign speech, he told the Association members that he would make a good Chaplain because he had felt the call to become a minister of the Gospel. Because of his participation in the State Student Association, Dr. M. C. Allen, who was the current President of Virginia Seminary, extended an invitation to Ralph to attend Virginia Seminary, which was later renamed Virginia Union of Lynchburg. During his freshman year at Virginia Seminary, he confided to close friends that one day he would be back as the President. He answered the call by the Board of Trustees to serve as President of Virginia University of Lynchburg in march 2000, from which he retired in 2015.

Ralph's preparation for his tenure as President continued after his graduation from Virginia Seminary. He earned his Baccalaureate Degree in Sociology and his Masters of Divinity Degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, his Master of Sacred Theology from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia and his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia Graduate School of arts and Science, Department of Religious Studies.

In 1961, Ralph married the former Marion Langhorne. They became the proud parents of one son, Ralph Reavis, Jr. in 1965.

Ralph was licensed to preach the Gospel in 1958 at Poplar Mount Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Virginia. He and Mrs. Reavis proudly served as Pastor and First Lady of seven different churches in Virginia. He faithfully served as the Pastor of Riverview Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia for twenty-six years.

Dr. Reavis was employed as a Professor at Virginia Union University's Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology. He also taught Church History as a visiting Professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C. and African American Religious History at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

In addition to his pastoral academic career, Dr. Reavis spent many years in the struggle for civil rights and community development. During the 1960's, he spent twenty-one days in jail in an effort to desegregate lunch counters in Lynchburg, Virginia. Dr. Reavis met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and became involved in the civil rights movement with him. He walked many picket lines and marched many miles for freedom.

Family members referred to Uncle Ralph as the family historian. He truly loved history. If anyone was ever afforded the opportunity to spend just a little time with him, somehow his conversation led him to enlighten you on events in history. He beamed with excitement as he talked about history.

In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing hunting, collecting antiques and reading. He was well versed on so many different subjects.

Dr. Reavis traveled extensively teaching and preaching the Gospel throughout the United States and also in Europe and Germany.

Dr. Reavis was a member of the Baptist Minister's Conference, NAACP, SCLC and Prince Hall Masons. He had amassed numerous awards during his lifetime. He was a true author and had written more than five books.

There are many words that can be used to describe Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr. such as: son, husband, father, brother, student, minister, preacher teacher, counselor, role model, pastor, friend and president. But, the one word that has depicted his life's journey from an early age is visionary. If you look up the word visionary in the dictionary you will see that it means, "marked by insight". This was Dr. Reavis' special gift that led him to so many accomplishments and that assured him the Presidency of Virginia University of Lynchburg.

In addition to his parents, he was also preceded in death by his wife of 54 years, Marion Langhorne Reavis and thirteen of his siblings.

Left to cherish his memory are his devoted son and daughter-in-law, Ralph Reavis, Jr. and Dorice M. Reavis; grandson, Ashton C. Reavis; four siblings, Carrell Reavis, Sr. of San Diego, California, Jerry Reavis Duplechein, of California, Mary Reavis Yelverton and Thelma Reavis Allen (James); a host of nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters-in-law, Howard Langhorne (Atty. Arelia), Charles Langhorne (Frances), of Lynchburg; Langston Powell, of Lawrenceville, Raymond Wilkerson, Sr., of Richmond, Lucy Hicks (Richard, Sr.) of Lynchburg, Nancy Reavis, of New York and Evelyn Langhorne, of Northern Virginia; other relatives, three very close friends who were like brothers to him, Dr. John W. Kinney, Dr. Percy High and Dr. Alfred Vaughan, the doctors, nurse practitioners, and the entire staff at Magnolia Memory Care of Chesterfield, and his many, many colleagues and friends to numerous to name.

A True Man of God, Grace, Love and Inspiration

# Previous Events

## Walk through Visitation

FEB **5**. 9:30 AM - 6:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home -Laburnum Chapel  
2110 E. Laburnum Ave.  
Richmond, VA 23222

## Graveside Service

FEB **6**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Fort Hill Memorial Park  
5196 Fort Ave.  
Lynchburg, VA 24502

# Tribute Wall



“ To View the Webcast of the Funeral for Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr., Please Click the Link below.



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**March Funeral Homes** - February 04, 2021 at 08:55 PM

CH

*My sincere condolences to the family of Rev. Ralph Reavis. Rev. Reavis baptized me at the age of 12 when he was the pastor at Mt Sinai Baptist Church in Suffolk Va. in 1981 he returned to Suffolk to officiate my wedding. He was such a kind and understanding man of God.*

*Candice H. Payne*

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**Candice H. Payne** - February 05, 2021 at 04:45 PM



*Well done, good and faithful friend and brother! Percy and Esther High*

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**Esther High** - February 05, 2021 at 06:18 PM

JL

*We are sorry for the loss of your father. Your family is in our prayers.*

*John and Patricia Lilly and Family*

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**John Lilly** - February 05, 2021 at 08:27 PM



*Ralph my dear friend and brother in Christ.... missing you already. Our sincere condolences to your family and the many lives that you touched and those who touched you. To the family we leave this poem. "Tis sad to say farewell to those we love while on earth we stay; but, there's joy on knowing we will meet again someday."*  
*Millard F. & Jacqueline Blick Boone RIP*

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**Millard Boone** - February 05, 2021 at 08:46 PM

JS

*Our sincere thoughts and prayers to the Travis family as you celebrate the life and legacy of this giant of a man. I had the privilege of sitting under his tutelage as a student at the School of Theology at Virginia Union University in the mid 90's. May he rest in peace in the bosom of his Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ!*

*Rev. Dr. James W. Shearn  
Murfreesboro, NC*

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**James W. Shearn** - February 07, 2021 at 05:08 PM

PB

*To the family of Pastor Reavis. I want to extend my deepest condolences. We've had the pleasure of hearing him preach the word at Manassa Hill Baptist Church in Amelia, Va. Where our Pastor Antoine Edwards is Pastor. He will be well missed by all who knew him. Always had a good encouraging word. May God continue to bless you all*

*Patricia F. Bragg*

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**Patricia Bragg** - February 08, 2021 at 09:41 PM



“ Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr.

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October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM

DJ

“ Sincere Condolences to the family of Dr. Reavis. We pray that God continue to comfort and give you peace.



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**Daniel Walker, Jr** - February 07, 2021 at 01:18 AM

MH

“ Sorry for your loss. Praying for your comfort. Much love.

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**Michele Harrison** - February 06, 2021 at 11:11 AM

JO

“ Brother Reavis so sorry to hear about your dad. The last time we spoke you told me his health was declining. Of course I don't have to tell you that he is in a better place-a place that we are striving to get to. I will keep you and your family in prayer during this difficult hour.

*Jerry and Donna Overby*

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**Jerry Overby** - February 06, 2021 at 10:11 AM

ES

“ *Ralph, Jr. and Family:*

*Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers as you mourn the loss of your FATHER, grandfather and sibling. May the legacy of his love for family and humanity continue to comfort you in the coming days, months and years ahead.*

*E. McKinley Spellman of  
Alexandria, Virginia*

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**Eugene M. Spellman** - February 06, 2021 at 03:40 AM

RV

“ My prayers goes out to the family of Rev. Reavis, He was a good friend and schoolmate. I enjoyed visiting with him in the assistant living center. We will really miss visiting with him. Rocksy Pulley. Chester, VA

Rocksy Pulley Chester VA - February 05, 2021 at 08:18 PM

DH

“ The prayers and thoughts of the Hathaway family are with Ralph, Jr, and family as you celebrate the life of a true giant and general in the Kingdom of God. He truly modeled what it means to love God, love family and love the people of God. I have been blessed to call him a friend and mentor for most of my life. Thank you for sharing him with us. And never doubt that somewhere beyond the veil of this life he is still watching over us.

Dr. Milton A Hathaway - February 05, 2021 at 07:48 PM

KF

“ So sorry for your loss. I am thinking of you at this sad time, and sending warm memories of your father, father-in-law and grandfather. Much love to you all.

Karyn Langhorne Folan - February 05, 2021 at 04:43 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr..



February 05, 2021 at 04:42 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr..*



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February 05, 2021 at 03:45 PM



“ *Dr. Reavis was an inspiration in my life and ministry. I will cherish the wisdom that he imparted to me and countless others.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dr. Alvin L. Campbell*

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**Alvin Campbell** - February 05, 2021 at 03:39 PM



“ *My wife , Rev. Dee and I wish to offer our sincere condolences to the family of Rev.Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr. I enrolled in Va. Union School of of Theology , since renamed to Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology , VUU, at a late age in 1985. Dr. Reavis was one of my first professors , who would later become a mentor and a constant encourager to me. His spirit and personality was a joy to be around. I am so glad that the Lord afforded me the opportunity to visit him along with Revs. Millard Boone and Tedd Little, before this virus closed the door of personal contact.Rest in peace " Doc " for truly you have touched many lives in a positive way.*

*Rev. Dr. James Edwards, III*

*Retired Pastor/Author*

*Class of ' 88*

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**Rev. Dr. James Edwards, III** - February 05, 2021 at 01:32 PM

EP

“ *Ellyn and Zerrick Pearson purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr..*



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**Ellyn and Zerrick Pearson** - February 05, 2021 at 12:50 PM

JP

“ *Brother Ralph, Jr., and Family:*

*Thanks for sharing your Dad with me (and countless generations of clergy)! As a young minister growing up in Richmond, he was a Big Brother! In 1982, when I started teaching at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University, we shared office together for many years and encouraged each other through our dissertation work. Surely, as a faculty member, we shared deeply about the Black Church and the heritage of our people. He was a living lexicon of Black Church History! His books and wisdom have nurtured more than we can imagine. His unpretentious nature, down-to-earth truthfulness, and his plain-long realness will be missed by so many!*

*Shed your tears (he is your Dad). Say your prayers. Above all, give God thanks for such a man as he!*

*Jerome C. Ross, Ph.D.*

*Pastor, Providence Park Baptist Church, Richmond, VA*

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**Jerome C Ross, Ph.D.** - February 05, 2021 at 12:45 PM

DT

“ We were saddened to loose a Reavis family member. We grew up in Lawrenceville and knew Ralph all of our lifetime. We extend sincerest sympathy to his immediate family members.

*Dianne Thomas and Reuben Robinson  
( Children of the late Eddie and Viola Robinson)*

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**Dianne Thomas** - February 04, 2021 at 09:45 PM

LJ

“ To the Family of the Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr.

*My thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. Dr. Reavis baptized me at Riverview and a few years ago I had the honor to preach in his presence at the Allix B. James Chapel on the campus of Virginia Union University. His words and presence will always be a part of my development and growth from a 15 year old teenager to a 55 year old woman.*

*May the Peace of God and the Love of Christ surround and comfort Ralph, Jr., and the Reavis Family.*

*With Deepest Sympathy,*

*Rev. Lisa R. Janes and the Janes Family*

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**Lisa Janes** - February 04, 2021 at 05:39 PM



“ *Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. Ralph Reavis, Sr..*



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February 04, 2021 at 12:30 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

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**March Funeral Homes** - February 04, 2021 at 11:14 AM

JF

*Ralph Jr., Dorice and Ashton*

*We send our deepest sympathy, love and prayers to you on the passing of Rev. Dr. Reavis. He was truly a giant who helped so many people achieve their goals. His knowledge and love of history was evident in his conversations with you. He has labored tirelessly for so many years. “May the work he has done speak for him”. He received his wings on Tuesday and now he is resting with God in Heaven. We love you!*

*John and Bertha Fleming*

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**John and Bertha Fleming** - February 06, 2021 at 01:50 AM