



*Dr. Ralph May,
Pastor Emeritus*

Jan. 8, 1939 - Dec. 24, 2024

Please note the service date and time have changed.

Dr. Ralph May, Pastor Emeritus, 85, of Morganton, NC passed away on Tuesday, December 24, 2024. He was born on January 8, 1939 in Arkansas to the late Winfred May and Flossie Stewart May. Dr. May started his pastoral duties at Riverside Baptist Church in Asheville where he served for six years. He then moved to Zion Baptist Church in Morganton where he served for twenty-seven years. He was a veteran of the US Air Force and was stationed in Germany. During his tenure at Zion Baptist he built three mission churches. He served for three years as the chaplain of the Oak Hill Fire Department and one year as chaplain of the Burke County Sheriff's Department. He was the lead pastor during the construction of Zion Baptist Church. He spent three years as Moderator for the Catawba Valley Baptist Association. He was an honor graduate of Fruitland Baptist Institute. He was a published author of "The Great Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm" and the song, "The Unashamed in 1995," which was later recorded by Quinton Mills. Dr. May received Pastor Emeritus from Zion Baptist Church in 2019.

In addition to his parents, Dr. May was preceded in death by his brothers, Jerry May, Walter May, and Tommy May, and sister, Joyce Little.

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He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Sandra Buckner May; son, Travis May (Leslie); daughter, Scherrie May Vicks (Randy); grandchildren, Whitney Hovater, Mackenzie Golden, Austin Worley, and Kassidy Shelton; thirteen great-grandchildren; sisters,

Carolyn May, Annette Cauthen, Patsy Jacobs, and Bessie Hampton; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

The family will receive friends from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, January 19, 2024 at Zion Baptist Church. The funeral will begin at 4 p.m. in the church with Rev. Keith Rose and Jimmy Fowler officiating. There will be a memory box in the vestibule of the church. If you have a special memory you would like to share with the family, please bring the note and place it there. Military honors will be provided by the US Air Force and the Caldwell County Veteran Honor Guard.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that you would please donate to cover expenses via [GoFundMe](#) or [Venmo](#).

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall



I'm so sorry for your loss praying . He was a great pastor.

—Tammy Whisnant

Ralph and Sandra May were written into our story during the initial years of our ministry. We are grateful to have shared those early years together. We give thanks for their faithfulness to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Now Ralph is home and we look forward to seeing him again some sweet day.

—Dr. and Mrs. Richard Hipps



—Anonymous



Dear Sandra, Just wanted You to know that Pat and I loved You and Ralph Dearly!! even though there was some distance between us physically, there was a closeness in Spirit. our Hearts and Prayers are with you and the whole Family. Praying that The God of all Comfort be with the

Whole May Family in these Trying Times. Love to All!!!!

—Earl Jones



To Sandra and Family, I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Preacher May. I grew up at Zion and listened to thousands of Preacher May's messages over the years. I consider him the most knowledgeable minister I've ever met! Preacher May led me to the Lord at 15 years old and he was the one who also baptized me. I had many wonderful memories of him while playing golf at Quaker Meadows and walking through the halls of Zion with him talking about all kinds of things. He was a great role model to all of us young men at Zion and always would lend an ear when you needed him. He was a brilliant Bible scholar, a great friend, and a long-standing Pastor who did so much in the lives of everyone at Zion Baptist for decades. I know he heard "well done, good and faithful servant" on Christmas Eve as he finally got to see the one he had given so many messages about. God Bless you Ms. Sandra. Sincerely, Ashley Taylor

—Ashley Taylor

My heart and my prayers for the whole family. To Sandra my sister by love. I thank God for sharing life with my brother Ralph, though miles apart we were locked together in spirit. Growing up on the farm in our early years brother was a real prankster. He was also my Big brother teacher. He taught me how to ride a pony bareback, how to sane for crawfish, cook them over open fire, how to swim (by being thrown in the creek) it worked. In later years he was my Bible research and study partner. He would give me assignments and I would often do the same for him. There will be another hole in my heart. See you soon brother. Love

—Carolyn May



Our condolences and prayers from the current pastor and congregation at Riverside Baptist Church. Though many years ago, we appreciate the faithfulness of Dr. May during

his pastorship at Riverside. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Hebrews 13:7&8

—Pastor Jason S. Owens /Riverside

I am so thankful for the 83 years brother was part of my life. As children growing up on the farm he was full of his pranks and teasing. He was also my teacher he taught me to saute and cook crawfish, ride a pony, swim (by throwing me into the creek) so many things. In our later years he was my Bible study partner. He often gave me assignments as I did him. It was a joy we loved sharing. My heart now has another empty spot, but my memories will last forever. See you soon brother. Love You

—Carolyn May



Sandra and family I am heartbroken for my Pal and confidant's passing. I know he is at rest with the others who have gone beforehand. I hadn't spoke to him in a week or two, but he was always in my thoughts. We shared so many stories and I will have so many memories. I think I must share the note I sent him on Weds morning 12/25/24 as I was unaware he had passed. It reads, Merry Christmas my friend to you and Sandra! I am sure you are surrounded by family members. Have a great day! I know now that he had a very Merry Christmas in the arms of the Lord..! Although he didn't get to read this. he knows how I will miss him!

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—Danny Briggs

He was my best friend marriage candler my finance manager and my pastor and Sandra was kind enough to share him with me my son may not have ever got referred to Baptist hospital and diagnosed him what his sickness was he beat us to the hospital every time anyone was scheduled for surgery and he was a special person that moved in people's lives and lead them to the lord

—Bruce Powell

Sandra I am so sorry for your loss. Ralph was my Pastor ,Preacher, Teacher, leader and friend for some 50 years. I have know you both through ups and downs and loved every minute of our friendship. The last words Ralph said to me: I'm going home. I'm tired and I want to see my Father face to face. My nickname Fred was given to me by him. He's smiling from ear to ear right now. Sandra I will help you any way I can. I love you. I will always love and miss Ralph

—Susan R Hammond (Fred)



Dear Sandra and family: There are not enough words to express our sympathy, love and prayers for you at this time. Pastor Ralph was truly a "Pastor" in every sense of the word. So wise in our conversations recently and so full of the glory of God. He will be missed , and is loved dearly. The last time I talked to him, and was getting ready to leave,among other things he said "I will see you at THE HOUSE." How precious he was and is to me. Love and blessings to you, as we all look forward to seeing our loved ones at "THE HOUSE." Our Father's House! Heaven gets sweeter all the time...

—Debbie Ford

Dear Sandra and family: I am and have so many fond memories of Ralph's... if there's anything...

Dear Sandra and family... Ray and I are so sorry for your loss....If there's anything we can do, anything at all...please feel free to let us know.....Ralph played a significant part in our life many years ago...he came along just when we needed him most..he talked to us about GOD and what it meant to be saved....there were several of us there that day and he helped lead us to the LORD. The next day we were in church and we still are all these years later...It could have turned out a lot different for us without Ralph paving the way....We'll always be so grateful to him...and one day soon and very soon we're gonna "see him at the house" GODs got this ...and he's got you too! WE LOVE YOU

—Sandy Hightower



I am truly sorry for your loss. Prayers for you and the family. I remember as a child always getting excited when y'all came to visit. Ralph and I had a long talk a few months back. It was wonderful and I will treasure. I Love You All

—Nancy Cagle



Sending many prayers to the family with all of my love!

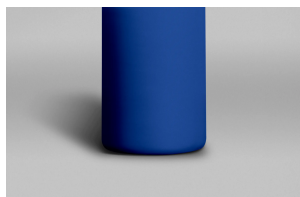
—Amy Pinckney

Ralph May will be truly missed by my wife Genise and Myself. He was a special friend and Mentor to me during my tenure as Minister of Music at Zion Baptist Church. I Loved Him like a brother. He was a Great Pastor with exceptional knowledge of the Bible and, Our Lord and Savior. Ralph and Sandra will always be in our Hearts and Minds. I know we will see Him in Heaven.

—Barry Mock



Sandra my heart goes out to you in this very difficult time. I always loved you and Ralph and have the best memories of



always loved you and Ralph and have the best memories of time we spent together. Sending prayers.

—Susan Buckner

Sandra, Travis, Scherrie, and families. Rex and myself are sorry for the loss your family has just gone through. Pastor Ralph was part of mine, Rex's and the boys life. Our Riverside family was and will always be special for us. Pastor Ralph is now in the presence of his heavenly father. What a reunion that must have been. May you all know the smile he gave his LORD when he shut his eyes here and opened them there.

—Barbara Ingle



Sandra n family, I am in shock after seeing this news. I am so going to miss Ralph with all his wisdom and prayers. God had such a great man today share his word and needs him in Heaven to help others. I will miss his calls asking about myself n mom. I knew when he called it was sincere and loving. I am so proud to have him in my life path with God. Prayers n love for all of you at this time.

—Roger Austin Hart