

Pastor Willie Riley Jr. (Age 89)

Sunrise: September 4, 1934
Sunset: Monday, January 22, 2024

Willie Riley Jr. was born on September 4, 1934, to the union of Will and Laura Riley in Quitman, Mississippi. He received his formal education in the Racine Unified School System. He continued his education at Gateway Technical Community College, which led him to start his own furniture upholstering business.

Willie accepted Christ as his Savior at an early age and was ordained a Minister at the age of thirty-two. He was united with Greater Mount Eagle Missionary Baptist Church and later joined Greater Saint Luke's Missionary Baptist Church, both in Racine, Wisconsin. He actively served as a teacher, Sunday School Superintendent, and Minister in both churches. It was during his time at St. Luke's that God gave him a vision of becoming a Pastor of his own church, and he answered the call.

Willie founded Searching Together Missionary Baptist Church in 1982 and began services in his garage with his family and five charter members. He loved all people but had a special love and passion for training, teaching, and encouraging the youth. He dedicated his life to sharing the good news of the Gospel, desiring that all would come to know Jesus as their Personal Savior. As a result of his faithfulness to God and love for mankind, the membership expanded, causing the church to move from his home to two different locations over the next six years to accommodate the growth. The Lord blessed his ministry to increase not only in numbers but spiritually as well, leading the church to relocate to its present location (825 Twenty-First Street, Racine, Wisconsin), where he continued preaching until his health began to fail.

In addition to leading others to Christ, Willie was one of the lead singers in the well-known Golden Jubilees singing group, where he sang for more than fifty years.

Willie was united in Holy Matrimony with Alice Marie Finley on January 31, 1953, in Racine, Wisconsin. Their union was blessed with ten children.

Willie enlisted in the United States Army on October 14, 1954. He was honorably discharged on October 13, 1962.

Willie was employed by American Motors (Chrysler Kenosha Engine Plant) as a machine operator and Foreman for forty-five years.

In Willie's leisure, he enjoyed fishing, gardening, cooking, watching Westerns and the news, singing, bowling, and being surrounded by family and friends.

Willie Riley Jr. departed this life on Monday, January 22, 2024.

He was preceded in death by his father, Will; mother, Annie L.; daughters, Priscilla (Daniel) Owens and Carolyn (James) Newton; sisters, Magnolia Booker, Mamie Oliver, and Bertha Swanigan and brothers-in-law; brothers, Leon and JC; and a granddaughter, Shemika Riley.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his adored wife, Alice; sons, Willie Earl Riley and James (Jokaya) Riley of San Diego, California; Darrell, Eldridge, and Jermaine Riley of Racine, Wisconsin; daughters, Cynthia (Marion) Aldridge of Cary, North Carolina; Barbara Buckley and Enovel (Nathaniel) Smith of Racine, Wisconsin; forty-four grandchildren; sixty-six great-grandchildren; and twelve great-great-grandchildren; brother, Arthur (Tina) Riley; brothers-in-law; sisters-in-law; and his Searching Together family.