



James O. Murray

May 2, 1929 - March 13, 2023

James Orval Murray, 93, of Greer, South Carolina, husband for 54 years of the late LaMar Wells Murray, died peacefully at home on March 13, 2023.

He was a native of Kannapolis, North Carolina, son of the late R. Perry and Gertrude Murray. It was evident early in Jim's life that music would be his calling. He completed two years of music study at Mars Hill College, and then received his Bachelor of Music degree from Baylor University. While completing his senior year at Baylor, he met LaMar Wells, who was the Minister of Music at his home church in Kannapolis, North Carolina, where they were later married. Jim served as Minister of Music at First Baptist Church in Franklin, North Carolina, followed by music ministry at Trinity Baptist Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Jim served in the United States Army for two years, and was part of the Army Band, assigned to the base in Orleans, France. Following completion of his military service, he was Minister of Music at First Baptist Church, Jonesboro, Georgia, and then at Woodland Heights Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. He responded to the call to become Minister of Music at First Baptist Church, Greer, South Carolina, where he served for 30 years, and in 1993 was named Minister of Music Emeritus. He later served interim positions at several nearby churches before a long-term interim at Fountain Inn Presbyterian Church. During his years of church ministry, Jim developed active children, youth, and adult choirs, along with handbell and instrumental groups. He was a member of the South Carolina Singing Churchmen.

At age 50, Jim fulfilled a long-time dream of flying airplanes when he obtained his private pilot's license. After retirement from Greer First Baptist, he began building his own 2-seater aircraft, which he enjoyed flying for many years. Jim also enjoyed being an amateur radio operator.

Jim was known for his booming laugh and broad smile and is remembered and respected by many of the people, young and old, whose lives he positively touched during his many years of church music ministry.

Surviving are his loving daughters, Dr. Sharon Murray and Denise Smith both of Greer; three grandchildren, Josh Smith of Greer, Maria Beasley (John) of Greenwood, South Carolina and Mark Smith (Jaden) of Kenai, Alaska; and five great-grandchildren.

In addition to his wife and parents, Jim was also preceded in death by his sister, Sara Joyce and his brother, Dr. Kenneth Murray.

A private graveside service will be held.

Memorials may be made to Greer First Baptist Church Worship Ministry, 202 West Poinsett Street, Greer, Sc 29650 or Greer Community Ministries, P.O. Box 1373, Greer, SC 29652.

Online condolences may be made at www.thewoodmortuary.com

Tribute Wall

AS

“ Sharon and Denise and family,
What memories of blessings and joy I have for your Dad and family.
Each of you have special times shared with you. Too many to
mention, but your Dad’s love of music, working with all ages with
kindness and patience was a gift.
Prayers continue for you.
Gary and Adrienne Smith.

Adrienne Smith - March 18, 2023 at 12:49 PM

KK

“ In 2006, I pastored my first church, Peoples Baptist of Greer and
Jim helped us with the music and I was so thankful. One of the most
likeable people you could meet. I grew up in first Baptist Greer, so
he was always there for me. I send wishes of comfort to the Family.
with Love,
Kevin Koger

Kevin D Koger - March 17, 2023 at 02:45 PM

CK

“ Mr. Murray introduced me to bell ringing. I have many memories of
this. I picked bells up again at the First Baptist Church in Columbus
GA. I have played bells for over 22 years at the First Presbyterian
church in Greer.
Charlotte James Koehler

Charlotte Koehler - March 16, 2023 at 07:48 AM

JC

“ James O. Murray left an impactful legacy of music ministry for all at Greer First Baptist. From "Music Workshop" every summer to musical productions (Cool In the Furnace was my fav) to countless vocal & handbell choirs, he was tireless in his efforts as well as highly gifted and organized. He was always composed, kind and exact. Oh, how I loved the hymn sings he led on Sunday evenings! To this day, beautiful hymns come to mind at just the time I need them. I still have the two hymnals I received from GFBC and refer to them often. Recently I discovered a certificate of membership into the "Crier Choir" that my parents received when I was born. He recruited early and made certain that everyone knew they had a place in the choir. As I was nervous one night before my first church solo, he eased my fears by lightheartedly advising me "If you make a mistake, make a big one!" He truly was a music minister, encouraging our Christian walk and growing our faith through song & sound. It is immeasurable the spiritual impact he had on me and so many others. He was a faithful servant to His Lord and the church. I'm certain that he is enjoying so many heavenly rewards now!

Jennifer (Dacus) Campbell

Jennifer Campbell - March 15, 2023 at 09:04 PM

DT

“Denise and Sharon,
I am sorry to learn about the death of your precious Daddy. I have such good memories of being in the children's choir and the fun we had learning songs at Vacation Bible School. While in youth choirs, Mr. Murray taught us to appreciate all kinds of music and he was the most fun chaperone for the choir tours. I still love the old hymns so much because of him. I always enjoyed his twinkling eyes and quick smile. He loved each of us and made us feel special. Several years ago I wrote him a note of appreciation so he would know just how much his ministry impacted my life. Today, as he has been welcomed into heaven, I know he heard these words from Jesus “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I am praying God will comfort your heart, uplift your spirit, and carry you through this time of sadness to a place of peace. Debbie Masters Teague

Debbie Teague - March 15, 2023 at 05:04 PM

LB

“I was one of many children who were privileged to have been in choirs with Mr. Murray. If you were six years of age or older, and went to any choir at Greer FBC, you were led by Mr. Murray. He did it all! My favorite was Music Camp every summer. I loved the games he came up with. And even though most of the songs were songs of the faith, he would keep us engaged with including some just for fun or some fun songs such as “Who Did”. Great memories and as an adult, I really came to appreciate the effort he put into his calling. I am sure that he is hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant”.

leslie dacus blackwell - March 15, 2023 at 04:08 PM

KC

“ Whenever I am asked to name someone who was a great influence in my life, "Mr Murray" always pops into my head first. As a child learning " Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" with all the fun motions, to The Makers Dozen, and the many youth mission trips with Greer First, Mr.Murray gave me a solid foundation of faith through music and the example of Christian living he exemplified. He was so loved and a Godly influence to many. Praying for his family during this time of grieving and celebrating a life well lived.

Kim Coggins - March 15, 2023 at 11:36 AM

RA

“ Words cannot express the sadness I feel when I learned of Mr Murrays passing. He was one of inspirations growing up. He made me feel important and was always willing to teach us but also let us have fun. Handbells, choir, festivals, beach trips were fond memories for me. I always think of Mr Murray when I hear the Olympic fanfare as we played this with pride at a handbell festival.with our t shirts he had made that said GFC "ding a lings" He instilled in me the love of all kinds of music but even more so he kept me grounded in the faith and our Lord. He will be missed greatly but oh what a legacy he left for those that were fortunate to know him. Rest High.

Rayna Smith Abbott - March 14, 2023 at 06:31 PM

AP

“ I want to say how sorry I am to hear of Mr. Murray's passing. He was a wonderful man who had a huge influence in my life as a child in his children's choir all the way through high school when I served under him as his Minister of Music intern. He taught me so much about music, but even more importantly about music "Ministry", and that is was more than just about the music. I remember the trips we took to the beach for the youth choir festivals, and to White Oak for the handbell festivals. Those were some of the greatest times we had, and times I will always remember. I could probably write a book of memories we had on those trips they were so much fun. Most importantly though was the encouragement he was to me when I felt God calling me to music ministry. He was excited for me and knew I would do well. Your family will be in my thoughts and prayers as you go through these days ahead. I can only imagine the welcome he received when he stepped into Heaven and was welcomed by Mrs. Murray, and then escorted to the Heavenly choir where he can now sing for all eternity.

Avery Paris

Avery Paris - March 14, 2023 at 06:23 PM

LA

“ Praying for your family.

Leala Avery - March 14, 2023 at 05:42 PM

SM

Thank you, Leala.

Sharon Murray - March 24, 2023 at 07:05 PM

JC

“ Sharon and Denise,

It is with great sadness that I learned today about your father's passing. What a great man he was and what a wonderful life he lived! To me, he was always "Mr. Murray." I was one of the fortunate ones who grew up at Greer First Baptist and had the privilege of being in his choirs, instrumental ensembles, and attending music week with him at Furman on more than one occasion. I even went up with him in his airplane many years ago. Mr. Murray made a positive impact on so many people in so many places for so many years none of us will ever know the extent of what he did. I enjoyed being in his choirs when I was one of the young people at First Baptist, and also when Suzanne and I were part of the adult choir years later. He was always encouraging and supportive. His life was characterized by love, kindness, faithfulness, and humility. Although I haven't seen him often for several years, it was always comforting knowing he was there. I will miss him and be forever grateful that he touched my life.

with deepest sympathy,

Jack Coggins

Jack Coggins - March 14, 2023 at 11:48 AM

SM

Thank you, Jack.

Sharon Murray - March 24, 2023 at 07:05 PM