



## Apostle Dr. Richard M. Avant Jr.

January 10, 1931 - April 1, 2016

Apostle Dr. Richard Milton Avant, Jr., silently departed this life and made his flight to glory on Friday, April 1, 2016, following a season of light afflictions. He was 85 years old. Apostle Avant was born on January 10, 1931 in Philadelphia, PA, the “City of Brotherly Love.” He was born the second oldest of five children born to parents, Ethel Meyers Avant and Richard M. Avant, Sr.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, James and Teddy; his sister, Beulah; as well as his sister in law, Karen Lewis.

He completed his secondary education at Dobbins Vocational High School in Philadelphia. He also pursued his undergraduate studies at Temple University, having received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, as well as an Engineering degree from Spring Garden College in Philadelphia. Apostle Avant began his biblical studies at the Philadelphia College of Bible (now Cairn University). He received his Master’s degree in Theology; a Doctor of Ministry degree; and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Religious Studies from the Friends International Christian University, Merced, CA.

His work experience has been as a Journeyman’s Machinist, Tool Designer Process Engineer, and as a High School Teacher. He retired in June 1993, from the Carver High School of Engineering Science in Philadelphia. While teaching, he was especially proud of serving as a winning coach of the track

and football teams, which enabled him to impact the lives of dozens of young men who are now successful citizens in America.

A vibrant and spiritually-thirsty Richard Avant was called into the ministry in 1978, and God blessed every step of his journey, as he served as a Superintendent of Sunday School and as a deacon for a period of time before being ordained a minister of the gospel in 1979. He was Co-Pastor of the Adonai Baptist Church in Philadelphia, under the pastorate of Rev. James Stevenson. Finally, in 1982, he was called to pastor Calvary Baptist Church in Dover, DE. As Calvary's Pastor, God blessed him to oversee the personal ministries of more than 50 ministers, 37 of whom currently serve on the ministerial staff there; an additional 10 of those ministers are currently Pastors of their own churches. He was truly a Pastor's Pastor.

Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Avant, the membership of Calvary Baptist Church grew tremendously to approximately 900, when he instituted the tithing program. As a result of his total dependency upon God for vision, direction and action, Calvary expanded to two edifices, one of which houses the Youth Church. He also led the church in buying land that will serve as the ground of Calvary's future new edifice. Over 34 years, he oversaw the development or expansion of many auxiliaries at Calvary, including (but not limited to) the Praise & Worship Team; the Praise Dancing Ministry; the Prison Ministry; the Nursing Home Ministry; the Street Evangelism Team; the Hospital Visitation Team; Drama Ministry; Intercessory Prayer Ministry; Homebound Sick and Shut-In Ministry; New Beginning Ministry; Restoration Ministry; the Marriage Enrichment Ministry; Golden Years Ministry; Young Adult Ministry; Overcomers Outreach Ministry; the Church School; the Code Purple Ministry; and the Soup Kitchen. Of course, he was especially proud of Calvary's exceptional choirs and music ministry and of Calvary Bible Institute (CBI), an accredited bible college, which provides well-structured biblical studies programs to those who simply want to "study to show themselves

approved by God.” After serving Calvary for more than 30 years, in an unusual move of God, in the spring of 2013, Pastor Rev. Dr. Avant was consecrated to the Office of Apostle, commemorating his years of doing the work that prestigious office required.

Apostle Avant was the Founder and Past President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA) of Dover and Vicinity. Under his leadership, the IMA sponsored the first city-wide crusade in Dover, which included approximately 15 churches of different denominations and races, who joined in the spiritual fight to win Dover for Christ Jesus. He was the Vice Chairman of the Dover Interfaith, which is a program organized to assist homeless men find housing. He served for over 10 years on the Board of Directors of the Boys & Girls Club of Dover, and he formed a partnership relationship with Grace Presbyterian Church, with an emphasis on breaking down denominational and racial barriers. He was also involved in the One Church, One Family Program, which sponsors or assists a family that is financially disadvantaged, adopts that family, and helps them to improve their quality of life.

He was also associated with the Dover Men of Reconciliation, which is a group of Christian men who seek to break down racial barriers and become more productive in the community; the Dover Coalition Against Gambling Expansion; and Promise Keepers, an organization of men of Christian faith whose goals are to maintain family values and morals. In recent years, Apostle Avant oversaw Calvary’s participation in the Code Purple initiative (which currently houses homeless women and children during the winter months, when temperature fall below 32 degrees), as well as to support the IMPACT Ministry initiative in Delaware, by providing ministers and other volunteers to go to local schools throughout Delaware to pray with students and lead them to Christ.

In spite of his busy career and church affiliations, Apostle Avant would be the first to say that his family was everything to him. He married Thelma Holt and was blessed to father 3 beautiful children (Saundra, Richard III, and Lydia). He also was blessed to enter into Holy Matrimony with Bessie Avant, with whom he labored in ministry for 23 years, until her untimely death. When God took Bessie home to glory, he blessed Apostle Avant with another angel, Rev. Bridget Avant, with whom he enjoyed 16 glorious years of wedded bliss, until God called him home. He dearly loved every member of his blended family, but he was especially fond of his grandchildren, as they kept him “young at heart.”

Apostle Avant was an avid Eagles football fan; was a die-hard supporter of the football and basketball teams at Delaware State University; and he faithfully attended the annual Penn State Relays. He will be remembered as a man of great integrity; a man of true compassion; and a man after God’s own heart. He loved deeply and believed everybody is somebody in God. He will long be remembered as a “hugging” pastor, as he showed Godly love to the lost and found alike.

He leaves to cherish his memory his loving wife Bridget Avant of Dover, DE; 3 children: Saundra Avant-Thomas (husband Hilton Thomas), Sicklerville, NJ; Richard Avant, III, Philadelphia; and Lydia Avant, Hazelton, PA; 5 step-children: Deborah Penn; Nate Penn (Claudia); Tanya Penn; Bertrum Stevens, Jr., Dover; and Michael Green (wife Janaia), who lives in Abu Dhabi, Dubai. He also leaves a brother, Albert Avant, of Philadelphia; 3 brothers in law: Clarence Lewis (wife Barrie); Charles Lewis; and Bradford Lewis (wife Syvetta); and a sister in law; Theo Braunskill (husband Arnold); as well as a host of grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other relatives, too numerous to list.

To send flowers to the family or plant a tree in memory of Apostle Dr. Richard

M. Avant Jr., please visit our  
Heartfelt Sympathies Store.

# Tribute Wall

TB

“ My thoughts, love and prayers go out to the Avant family. My heart breaks along with you. Apostle Avant was truly a man of God and he touched my life in so many ways. I will truly miss him and can't wait to see him on the other side.

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**Tyrone Bowers** - April 11, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ I would like to send my condolences to the Avant family. Pastor was truly a man of God and he treated everyone like Jesus would treat us. I will always remember his smile and words of encouragement. He made me welcome at Calvary and it is my church home. I will miss Pastor, but I know that God does not make mistakes. The Lord has given my Pastor the rest he truly needed and deserves. He had done enough. Now I will pray that I will see him again when my journey is over.  
Sisterly,

*Dee Blake*

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**Dee Blake** - April 09, 2016 at 12:00 AM

HF

“ I am very sorry to read in the news, of the loss of Richard. Although I didn't know him or you personally, I also have felt the pain of losing a loved one. I send my sincere condolences to his family and friends. I know and pray God, “The Greatest Comforter” (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4), is able to comfort you during your time of loss.

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**Hagans Family** - April 09, 2016 at 12:00 AM

WD

“ Vermell and I extend heartfelt condolences to Bridget and the other family members of Apostle Dr. Richard Avant, Jr. on your great loss. Apostle Avant was a giant in the community and his work impacted many throughout the State of Delaware and beyond. We have many fond memories of Apostle Avant. The one that stands out was the wonderful December 2015 evening that we shared with Apostle Avant, his wife, members, and friends of Calvary Baptist Church at the Annual Christmas Show sponsored by Calvary. It was a most enjoyable and inspirational evening. He has now moved on to a better place as a reward for a life well spent as a husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, church and community leader, and servant of God.

Sincerely,

*William & Vermell DeLauder*

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**William & Vermell DeLauder** - April 09, 2016 at 12:00 AM

TE

“ A TRUE LEADER FOR THE LORD, HE WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED FOR ALL THE GOOD HE DONE, AND FOR BEING A TRUE SERVANT. GOD HAS REWARDED HIM FOR BEING FAITHFUL UNTIL THE END, AND HE NOW REIGNS IN HEAVEN. FAMILY, KEEP HOLDING ON TO THE MASTERS HAND AND IN TIME MAY YOUR LOSS BE A LITTLE EASIER TO BEAR.

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**The Mills Family, Easton, Md.** - April 07, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ Your friends at NCALL want to share our thoughts and prayers with the Avant family during this difficult time. Pastor Avant served NCALL faithfully on the Board of Directors from 2008 until recently. His leadership and that of our other Board members helped NCALL's nonprofit affordable housing work to grow and broaden. It also allowed us to take on the "Restoring Central Dover" neighborhood and downtown revitalization project that is now underway. Many thanks for Pastor Avant's faithful work with us and to his family and church family for enabling him to be such an important part of the community. Joe Myer, Board and staff at NCALL.

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**Joe Myer** - April 07, 2016 at 12:00 AM

GC

“ Our deepest most heartfelt condolences go to the family and friends of an extraordinary man. Apostle Avant, we'll never forget how you traveled north to eulogize our father along with members of your church to help make sure that he had a wonderful service ,and an honorable one. Thank God to the highest for having you in our lives, and we rejoice in how much you have enriched them..In sympathy,  
The Curtis Family

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**George Curtis** - April 06, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ I am so sorry to hear of the loss of your loved one. Please take comfort in the bible during your time of grief. Revelation 21:3&4 tells us that soon death, sickness and pain will be done away with. Also, John 5:28&29 tells of the resurrection hope when we can be reunited with our loved ones again. Please look forward to that time, and until then may your entire family be comforted and blessed.

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**Doretha Sampson** - April 06, 2016 at 12:00 AM

WB

“ May the peace of the almighty God sustain and encompass the family of this extraordinary manifestation of ecclesiastical evangelical expository anointing. Well done good and faithful Servant. The Lord be praised for the impact you have had on so many lives and the anointing invested in you that you so willingly and zealously imparted. Thank you for allowing the Lord to empower you to make such a great difference in the kingdom, and our fair state. You are loved you are valued and appreciated; and shall ever be remembered as the spiritual conduit that you were to so many of us. Rest well beloved pastor after God's heart. Peace and power.

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**W. Carver Brown** - April 05, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MJ

“ I am sorry for your loss, please accept my sincere condolences. I hope the family will find some comfort and strength in Jesus promise of the earthly resurrection(Acts 24:15)and the renewed Paradise earth, where death will be no more and no family will mourn the death of a loved one.-Revelation 21:3,4;John 5:28,29;Luke 23:43. May GOD(Psalms 83:18)grant you peace and comfort now, during this grievous time.-Matthew 5:4.

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**M Jones** - April 03, 2016 at 12:00 AM