



## **Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min.**

August 23, 1934 - June 6, 2021

“Preach the word: be ready in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.” II Timothy 4:2

Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, was born August 23, 1934, son of the late John Lee Cooley and Ada (Perry) Cooley. He was the youngest of six siblings.

Dr. Cooley received the B.A. in Social Studies and Religious Education from Shaw University. He received the M.L.S. in Library Science and Education from the North Carolina Central State University (NCC) in Durham, North Carolina at Durham. Additionally, he received the M.Div. (cum laude), Ph.D. and D.Min., respectively, from Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. He holds a Certification in Clinical Pastoral Education.

Dr. Cooley began his pastoral ministry at the age of nineteen. He has served churches in North Carolina, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

In 1974, the Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania invited Dr. Cooley to establish a Certified Chaplaincy Training Program to train chaplains for the Pennsylvania Correctional System. In 1978, he transferred to the Harrisburg State Hospital as Facility Chaplaincy Program Director also with a mandate to establish a similar training program for the Pennsylvania Department of

Mental Health. In 1988, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania conducted a national search for a new Director of Chaplaincy Services and with forty-nine applicants for the position. Due to Dr. Cooley's demonstrated theological knowledge and leadership in all areas of mental health and mental retardation, he was appointed by the governor as Director of Commonwealth Chaplaincy Services and served in that position for eleven years.

In 1980, the Lord led Dr. Cooley to The First Baptist Church of Steelton, Harrisburg, PA, where he served as Interim Pastor and was later called as Pastor. He completed thirty-four years of leadership. Upon his retirement as Pastor of The First Baptist Church of Steelton, he united in Christian fellowship with The Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

Dr. Cooley served as Adjunct Professor to three theological seminaries, Moderator of the Central Baptist Association, Regional Vice President of the Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention, President of the Harrisburg Interdenominational Minister's Conference and later of the Steelton African-American Minister's Alliance.

Dr. Cooley served two four-year terms with the Susquehanna Township School Board and Vice President of the Harrisburg Urban League. He was a Life and Golden Heritage Member of the NAACP and a Life Member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. He was nominated and accepted as a member of Who's Who in Religion and Clinical Pastoral Education and his vita appeared in the 2008 directory.

Dr. Cooley has been married to Dr. Iris (Hairston) Cooley for over sixty years, and they are the happy parents of two adult children, William Braxton Cooley Jr. and Dr. Anjilla Joye Codner.

In Dr. Cooley's own words, "God has allowed me to have more than 63 joyful

years in the ministry and has brought me through many grave illnesses. My wife and children have been faithful to stand and support me through it all. In 2005, I underwent the mother of all surgeries, but it was there and then that my church family, The First Baptist Church of Steelton, rose to the challenge, prayed and supported me and my blood family through. In 2009, I underwent another cancer surgery of the chest to remove a cancerous growth between the heart and lungs, and I was given up by the medical staff to die, but here I stand today by God's grace. By man's words, I am not supposed to be here, but by God's command, I am here. Thanks to my church family and others who prayed, most of all, thanks to God for being real."

Dr. Cooley transitioned from labor to reward on Sunday, June 6, 2021. He was preceded in death by his parents, John Lee Cooley and Ada (Perry) Cooley, and his siblings, Lacy McNair, James D. Cooley, Ruby Cooley, Anthony Lee, Gracie Ferrell and Sidney W. Cooley.

Dr. Cooley leaves a legacy to be honored and cherished by his devoted wife, Dr. Iris Opal (Hairston) Cooley; son, W. Braxton Cooley Jr.; daughter, Dr. Anjilla Joye (Cooley) Codner; son-in-law, Wayne F. B. Codner; sister, Mary Alice Veasey; sisters-in-law, Rita and Dorothy Hairston; his church families, many cousins, nieces, nephews and many devoted friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Dr. Cooley's name may be made to the United Negro College Fund and/or the NAACP. Donation links listed below:

[https://secure2.convio.net/unconf/site/SPageNavigator/Donate.html?\\_ga=2.25112831.475807349.1586216221-160892873.1585936414](https://secure2.convio.net/unconf/site/SPageNavigator/Donate.html?_ga=2.25112831.475807349.1586216221-160892873.1585936414)

<https://naacp.org/donate>

CLICK ON THE PHOTOS & VIDEOS ON-LINE STREAMING OF SERVICE TAB OR MEDIA TAB (MOBILE) AND TRIBUTE WEBCAST TO VIEW SERVICE.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CLICK ON THE SHARE A MEMORY TAB TO POST VIDEOS, SHARE MEMORIES, CONDOLENCES, REFLECTIONS OR SIMPLY YOUR NAME.

# Cemetery Details

## William Howard Day Cemetery

Lincoln and Carlisle Streets  
Steelton, PA 17113

# Previous Events

## Flower Delivery

JUN 19. 8:30 AM (ET)

Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
212 N Progress Ave  
Harrisburg, PA 17109  
(717) 541-0388

## Viewing

JUN 19. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
212 N Progress Ave  
Harrisburg, PA 17109  
(717) 541-0388

## Service

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JUN **19**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
212 N Progress Ave  
Harrisburg, PA 17109  
(717) 541-0388

# Tribute Wall



“ Wallace Funeral Directors created a Webcast in memory of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min.



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**Wallace Funeral Directors** - June 16, 2021 at 10:31 AM

RF

“ What a wonderful servant of our Lord! I was honored to serve as a Chaplain Program Director under his guidance from 1998 through his retirement. I am sorry I am just learning of his passing.

*My sincere sympathy to his family and friends. His passing is a loss for us all!*

*Much Love,  
Rev. Dee Faison, FCPD*

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**Rev. Dee Faison** - August 01, 2021 at 07:28 PM

HH

“ To Iris, Anji and Bill:

*Your life partner and father represents all that is good, honorable and worth modeling for the Hairston family descendants and all others.*

*Rev. Braxton's constant example of holy and wholesome mentorship and leadership, coupled with a superlative marital union of over 60 years is truly a love story to behold.*

*We have all been privileged to learn from this truly outstanding human being, who was "always on time" in every facet of his life. He has truly earned his Eternal Rest of the Highest Order though, from a purely human condition, our hearts ache.*

*Warmest regards and Love,*

*Elizabeth Ann and Harold Holmes & Family*

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**Harold Holmes** - June 17, 2021 at 05:37 PM



“ Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..



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June 17, 2021 at 10:22 AM



“ *Delightful Dieffenbachia was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..*



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June 17, 2021 at 10:10 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..*



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June 16, 2021 at 02:56 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..*



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June 16, 2021 at 09:52 AM

LA

“ *Pastor Cooley was my pastor and a dear family friend. I served as church clerk for over a decade and I thank God for the job He gave me. I tried to honor Him with the work I did and the attitude with which I did it. I enjoyed the years working with Pastor Cooley who was a great spiritual leader with a kind and loving heart. I shall miss his presence. To God be the Glory for all he has done.*

*Ludella V. Alsop*

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**Ludella V. Alsop** - June 15, 2021 at 10:47 PM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..*



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June 14, 2021 at 07:20 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Rev. Dr. W. Braxton Cooley Sr., PhD., D.Min..*



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June 14, 2021 at 06:51 PM

OT

“ Pastor Cooley was my earthly father in the ministry and a dear friend. God has blessed me to serve and grow under his leadership. The Savage and Townsend family will truly miss him, forever love him and never forget his compassion, generosity and kindness. Pastor Cooley fought a good fight, he kept his faith in Jesus Christ and he finished his course. Fare well my friend fare well.

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**Oveta Townsend** - June 10, 2021 at 07:43 PM

DB

“ Pastor Cooley was my pastor and dear friend. I am blessed to have grown spiritually, served in various ministries and to have begun my service as a Deacon under Pastor Cooley’s leadership, preaching, teaching and witness. He gave wise and godly counsel, was kind, generous and embodied God’s love. He was a fervent advocate, supporter and cheerleader for the children, youth and young adults of First Baptist. Always seeking to help them envision, realize and reach higher paths that God had for them. Pastor Cooley fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. I thank God for the journey He placed Pastor Cooley on. I miss my friend.



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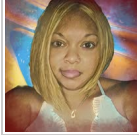
**Dea. Judy Banks** - June 09, 2021 at 09:55 AM

JH

“ Dr. Cooley espoused leadership and participation in ministry. Many of us served during his tenure with responsibility and a yearning to include others. Dr. Cooley led by example and made himself available during times of bereavement and counseling. I have fond memories of his placement of analogy during his sermons. Remembering him and serving under his leadership has been a learning experience for me.

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**Jairus Hughes** - June 08, 2021 at 11:14 PM



“ *So many precious memories I have shared with Pastor Cooley throughout my life journey. Rest In Peace!*



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**Stephanie Williams Tulloch** - June 08, 2021 at 12:54 PM

EG

“ *We are so sorry to hear of Dr. Cooley going home to be with the Lord. He certainly was a wonderful man of God, great pastor, mentor, and leader in the community. He will be greatly missed.*  
*Dr. Thaddeus ( Eloise) Godwin*



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**Eloise Godwin** - June 07, 2021 at 11:27 PM

MH

*So many wonderful memories of Dr. Cooley as my Pastor during my teenage years!! Thank you for blessing my life! Praying for Sis. Cooley and family!! Marilyn Bryant Harp*

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**Marilyn Harp** - June 08, 2021 at 07:46 PM

GM

*To the Cooley family, thank you for sharing your husband, dad, brother with me and our community, Dr, Cooley always gave me words of Godly encouragement. He experienced a wonderful earthly journey serving our God and teaching so many the value of loving and serving God. He was a good and faithful servant and will be missed. Blessings and comfort to His lovely family.*

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**Gloria Martin-Roberts** - June 08, 2021 at 09:29 PM

CP

*I'm so sorry to hear about Dr. Cooley's passing. He was a man who had great wisdom. Condolences to the family.*

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**Carolyn Partin** - June 10, 2021 at 06:25 AM