

Special Thanks

Words cannot express the deep gratitude we feel for all the support shown by family, friends, and the greater community during this difficult time. We are humbled and encouraged by the testimonies and warmth from all those who knew Jesse J. Ruffin, Jr. and who are sharing in our grief and joy. Special thanks to the East Mount Zion Baptist Church family, Realtist Members, Carolyn's Law supporters, Maple Heights city representatives, and Watson Funeral Home for your contributions to this homegoing service.

Internment

Highland Park Cemetery
21400 Chagrin Blvd
Highland Hills, Ohio 44122

Repass

East Mount Zion Baptist Church
9990 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106
Highland Hills, Ohio 44122

Funeral Services Entrusted To
Watson's Funeral Home
10913 Superior Ave, Cleveland, Oh 44106
216-721-0066 Watsonsfuneralhome.com

Design By: RUFFIN ARTISTS

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8

In Loving Memory



Deacon Jesse J. Ruffin Jr.

September 4th 1953 - January 9th, 2026

Homegoing Service

Saturday, January 17, 2026

10:30 a.m. Wake / 11:00 a.m. Service

East Mount Zion Baptist Church

9990 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Order of Service

Minister Officiating - Words of Comfort and Prayer

Reverend Dr. Brian A. Cash

Music Selection

EMZ Director of Music & Gabriel Erkard (Nephew)

Scripture Reading

Pastor Larry L. Macon Sr. - Mt. Zion Oakwood Village

Prayer

Clarence Ruffin (Uncle)

Resolutions

EMZBC - Sister Gwen Brown / Deacon Andy Hatcher (Friends)

Carolyn's Law - Sister Gwen Brown (Friend)

NAREB/REALTIST/REALTOR - Lydia Pope, Lionel Lewis, Layisha Bailey

Music Selection

Sean and Naomi Ruffin (Grandchildren)

Remarks

Grace Rice (Significant Other)

Tosha Anderson (Daughter)

Jaia Naveh Ruffin (Eldest Grandchild)

Carmen Ruffin-Stiner (Daughter)

Reynold Ruffin (Brother)

Obituary

Dr. Julia Ruffin (Sister)

Eulogy

Jesse Ruffin III (Son)

Legacy Portrait Drawing Video

Jesse Ruffin III

Final Prayer and Recessional

Pastor Brian Cash



Acknowledgments

“We, the Ezelle-Patton family and three generations of descendants, offer our heartfelt condolences to our cousins, the Ruffin family. Our beloved cousin Jesse—always a gentleman and a loving family member—will forever be remembered as personable, playful, and gently humorous. We are grateful to have witnessed him shining his light as a deeply devoted husband and family member, and as an awe-inspiring warrior and petitioner of Carolyn’s Law for justice and compassion, passionately advocating dignity, comfort, and loving care for all. Determined to leave this world better than he found it, Jesse’s presence will be deeply missed. Yet we find comfort knowing he remains with us in spirit—forever close, and always just a thought away. His memory remains a lasting source of comfort and strength.”

-The Patton, Ezelle, and Chasar Families

“He was a Christian-hearted, good man of character, who was very family-oriented, loving, giving, and caring. Jesse James was also a person who was always willing to give you a lending hand without any complaints, was very professional, and was always about his business. He lived his life like an example for his children and grandchildren.”

-With Sympathy, The Stiner Family

“We want to extend our deepest sympathy and condolences for the loss of our dearly beloved cousin, Jesse. We will forever remember his travel stories. He will be greatly missed.”

-Love Always, Cousins Andy and Mashanda Ruffin and Family.

“We, at the Gathering of Christ Church Cleveland, were grieved to hear of the passing of Brother Jesse Ruffin Jr. Our sincere condolences and prayers are with him and his loving family. May The Most High GOD of Heaven receive him with grace and joy.”

-The Gathering of Christ Church Cleveland

To The Family of Jesse J. Ruffin, Jr:

“We were deeply saddened to hear of his passing. He was such a special person and a shining star in so many lives. We can honestly attest that he was a force to be reckoned with when he was passionate about a cause. He was fighting tirelessly to champion a cause with Carolyn’s Law which we pray will not end. Please know that our thoughts and hearts are with you all during this extremely difficult time. As we celebrate the life of Jesse J. Ruffin Jr., praying that the love and support of those around bring you comfort. “

We love you,

-The Williams & Tyus Families

Ruffin Real Estate Co:

“Mr. Ruffin was a very loving, kind and good person who taught us all of his Real Estate knowledge to help us grow. He will be missed”- Annette Burris .

“Mr. Ruffin assisted so many people, had a giving heart that was always willing to help. Every meeting he always made sure we had a full course meal and never came to a meeting empty handed. I am really going to miss Mr. Ruffin”- Vanessa Brown

“Our NE Ohio community lost a great leader. The long-standing Real Estate Broker of Ruffin Real Estate Company, one of the original pioneers of home ownership for African-Americans and a strong advocate for better care in the nursing homes for all. Rest in Heaven.”-April Priestly

“Mr. Ruffin wasn’t just a realtor, a broker, he was a true trailblazer! The challenges he faced and lived early in his career not only paved the way for others, but opened doors for us to be successful. He was selfless in that, he shared and passed along his professional knowledge and expertise. I am grateful for the weekly meetings and homework assignments. The word “farming” will forever have a special meaning to me. Mr. Ruffin, thank you for every lesson, every challenge, every conversation, and especially every laugh. You will truly be missed!”- Ronaye Steele

“Mr. Ruffin was like a Father, Mentor, Friend and Boss to me. He was truly loved and will be missed.”- Gerald Still

“Mr. Ruffin was a pillar to the community and will be very much missed. Thank you for all you have done” - Jammie Bell

Obituary

Jesse James Ruffin, Jr. was born on September 4, 1953 in Cleveland, Ohio to the late Deacon Jesse James Ruffin, Sr. and to the late Gladys Mae Asberry Ruffin. He was the eldest of five children followed by Reynold, Gladys, Julia, and Jonathan. Throughout his childhood, Jesse took care of his siblings while his parents worked, helping to instill within them beliefs and morals that his parents instilled within him. Jesse accepted Christ at the age of twelve and was baptized under the leadership of Pastor C.T. Nelson of the Greater Friendship Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, where he later served as an usher.

Jesse attended John Hay High School in Cleveland, Ohio. He was hired by the City of Cleveland Water Treatment Plant in 1973, where he successfully completed his water treatment purification operator’s licenses in Class One and Class Three for the State of Ohio during his employment until 1979. He worked with the Fairport Harbor Water Treatment Plant from 1980 to 1982. He then transferred to the Painesville Water Treatment Plant from 1982 to 1986. Jesse studied coursework in real estate at the Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, at John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio, and at Hondros College in Independence, Ohio while working simultaneously as a full-time water treatment purification operator. He obtained the State of Ohio Real Estate Sales license in 1980, continued to work at the Painesville Water Treatment Plant, and worked part-time as a real estate agent at McMullan Realty in Cleveland, Ohio. Jesse received his Real Estate Brokers License from the State of Ohio Realtors Board in 1987. From this achievement, Jesse was commissioned as a notary public in 1987 and began his career in real estate to establish Ruffin Real Estate Company, Incorporation, located in Maple Heights, Ohio in 1987 and worked until October 12, 2025. However, his legacy will always live on through his children that carry his mantle! He also established Jeca Management and Investment, LLC in 1990, co-founded Asberry-Ruffin-Turner (ART) Family Reunion in 1993, which later became Turner Families United, Incorporation in 1994, and finally the Carolyn’s Law, Incorporation in 2018. Jesse was a member of the Akron/Cleveland Board of Realtors, Cleveland Realist Association, Ohio Association of Realtors, Ohio Association of Realist, National Association of Realtors, National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), and received an award in 1993 for his outstanding service as the C.A.R.E.B. Finance Committee Chairperson and an honorary award from NAREB.

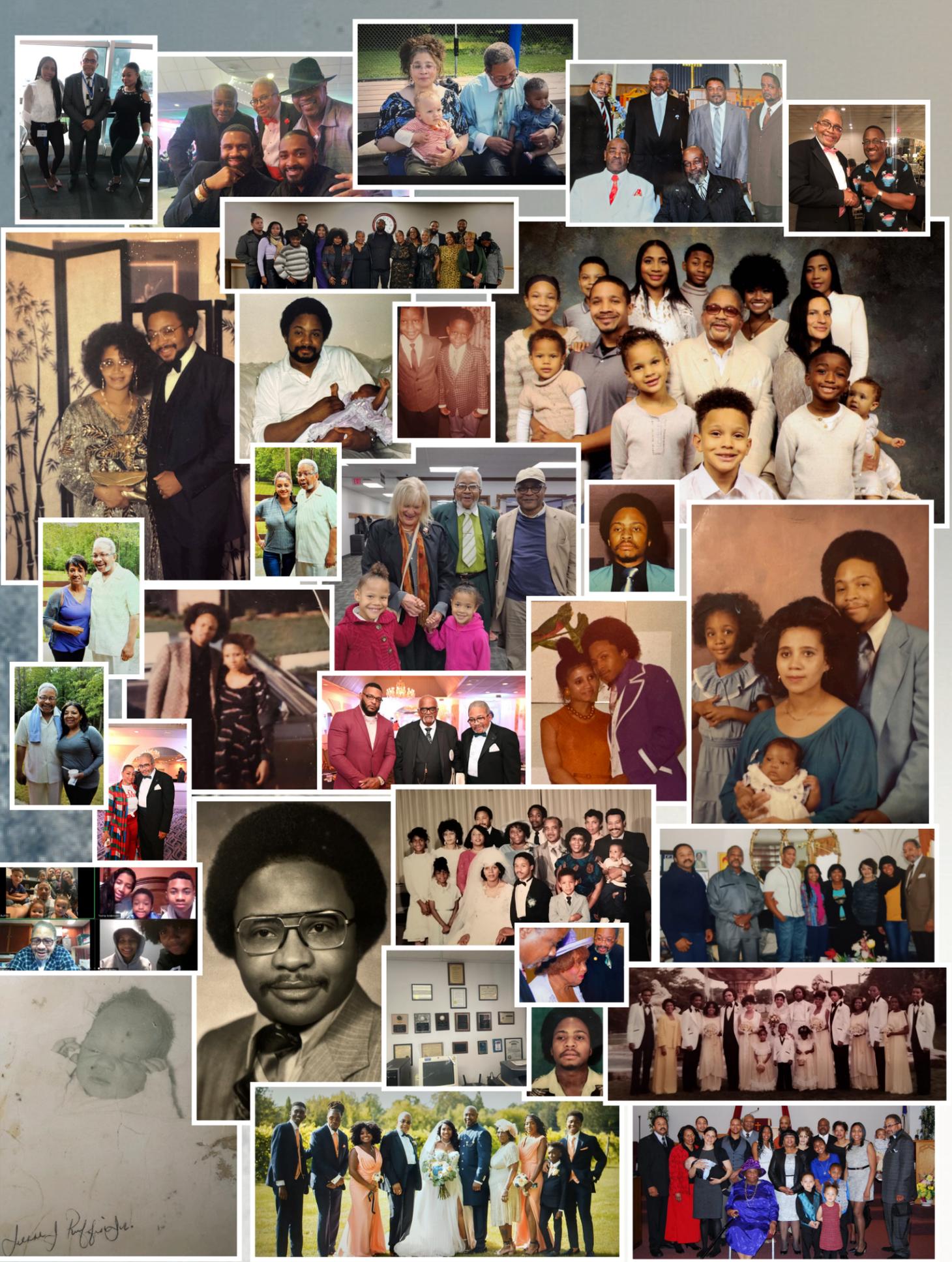
Jesse met his soulmate Carolyn Laverne Allen in 1974 in Oakwood Village, Ohio, and they were married on February 1, 1977 in Cleveland, Ohio. From their marital union, they had three children; Carmen Monique, Tosha Marie, and Jesse James, III, whom he enjoyed raising. Jesse and his family continued to fellowship at the Greater Friendship Baptist Church until they joined East Mount Zion Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio in 1981. Jesse had a strong faith in Christ and served many roles in his church as a member of the Male Chorus and Brotherhood, and was ordained as a Deacon on October 22, 1995 under the leadership of Reverend Dr. A. Charles Bowie (deceased) and current leadership of Reverend Dr. Brian A. Cash. He was also appointed Chairman of Deacons from 2009 through 2014 and continued as an active member of East Mount Zion Baptist Church until his death.

Jesse enjoyed taking road trips with his family to different states over the years to visit relatives and spend quality time together. Jesse and Carolyn continued to work together in the family business at Ruffin Real Estate Company until 2014. His beloved wife of forty-one years transitioned on May 5, 2018. Following Carolyn’s death, based on several injuries sustained from staffing shortages in various healthcare facilities, Jesse honored his wife’s trials and tribulations by establishing an Initiative Petition Amendment to the Ohio Constitution called the Nursing Facility Patients’ Bill of Rights, also known as Carolyn’s Law. Jesse spent years organizing petition drives to gather signatures from registered Ohio voters in all eighty-eight counties to get Carolyn’s Law on the ballot board, receiving over 60,000 signatures to date. Carolyn’s Law was certified by the Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost on June 30, 2021 and was approved by the Ohio Board of Elections on July 14, 2021.

Jesse’s longtime family friend of thirty years, Grace Rice, who helped advocate for Carolyn’s Law, later became a genuine companion and significant other to him throughout his final years of life. Jesse enjoyed playing chess, watching boxing marathons, preparing banquets for family and friends, and loved spending time with his grandchildren. He had special handshakes for the grandsons, special hugs for the granddaughters, and called all his grandchildren his “little pooh-poohs”.

Deacon Jesse James Ruffin, Jr. transitioned peacefully on January 9, 2026 at his home surrounded by his children, siblings, and close family members. Jesse was preceded in death by his grandparents Jimmy and Minnie Ruffin and Peter and Penny Asberry; parents Deacon Jesse James, Sr. and Gladys Mae Ruffin; his wife Carolyn L. Ruffin; his sister Gladys Erkard; his father-in-law Leroy Allen, Sr.; his mother-in-law Carolyn T. Allen; his brothers-in-law Leroy Allen, Jr. and Wayne Prowell; his sisters-in-law Diane Michelle Ruffin and Laura Ruffin; and a multitude of aunts, uncles, and cousins.

He leaves to cherish his memory with his significant other Grace Rice (Michael, deceased); his brother Reynold Ruffin (Diane (Shaw) Ruffin); his sister Dr. Julia Ruffin, his brother Jonathan Ruffin (Laura, deceased); his brothers-in-law Dr. James Thomas Erkard, Jr. (Gladys, deceased, former spouse) and Marlon Allen; his sisters-in-law Tanya Prowell (Wayne, deceased) and Patricia Allen (Leroy Jr., deceased); his daughters Carmen M. Ruffin-Stiner (Marcus) and Tosha M. Anderson (Dwayne); his son Jesse James Ruffin, III (Carole); his ten grandchildren: Jaia Naveh Ruffin, Tristen Taron Ruffin-Williams, Sean Michael Ruffin, Naomi Zyana Ruffin, Uriah Joshua Ruffin, Sheik Anderson, Selah Faith Ruffin, Hannah Grace Ruffin, Sophia Gabriella Ruffin, and Josiah David Ruffin; his nephews James T. Erkard III, Gabriel Jordan Erkard, LeRoy Allen, Pierce Allen, and Robert Prowell (India); his nieces Nicole Bowman Mack (Rodney), Christina Michelle Ruffin, Mariah Gladys Ruffin, Natricia Allen, and Chanel Marie White (née Prowell, Allen White); and with a host of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family, church family, and friends.



James Ruffin