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MINISTER IN HOSPITAL — Dr. Charles Ward, pastor of First Baptist Church on Wilmington Street was listed at press time in fair condition at Wake Medical Center.

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C.W. Ward, minister, dies at 73

By TREVA JONES
Staff writer



Charles W. Ward

The Rev. Charles W. Ward, pastor of First Baptist Church on South Wilmington Street for 28 years and one of Raleigh's early civil rights leaders, died at his home early Thursday after a long battle with cancer. He was 73.

Ward, a Georgia native who was ordained by the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., learned late last year that he had cancer.

He told his son and daughter-in-law that when he died, he planned to go out smiling.

He did.

"The last view I had of him, he was smiling," Ward's son, Charles W. Ward Jr., said Thursday.

Ward graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta in 1942, with a bachelor's degree in English, and later received a divinity degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C., as well as a doctor of divinity from Shaw University.

He came to Raleigh in 1959 to become pastor at First Baptist. In 1971, the North Carolina Council of Churches gave Ward its Distinguished Service Award.

Ward was long president of the Raleigh-Apex branch of the NAACP. Elected to the post in 1971, he was president until late 1982. He was honored later at the NAACP's Freedom Fund dinner.

While Ward was in Wake Medical Center in January, presiden-

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Ward

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tial candidate Jesse Jackson paid him a visit.

That meant a lot to him, his son said.

Besides preaching on Sundays, Ward worked with black and white factions during the early days of integration in Raleigh. He also raised funds for black defendants in court cases and protested against the death penalty.

"What made him special is the fact that he had the capacity to fight a good fight with love in his heart, to be able to oppose his enemies, his adversaries, with love, knowing even though he had to oppose them, he never failed to respect the humanity of all people, the dignity of all people," his son said.

Ward was a past president of the Raleigh Citizens Association, served on the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations, and was at one time president of the Raleigh Ministerial Association and the Raleigh Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance.

He was a chairman of the NAACP's local political action committee, was a member of the Foreign Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, and was a member of the Raleigh Council of Churches and the N.C. Good Neighbor Committee. He

was a member of the executive committee and general board of the General Baptist Convention. He served for several years on the Raleigh Housing Authority.

In the late 1960s, he was a founder and president of the Raleigh Inter-Church Housing Corp., which built Rich Park, a low-rent development on Method Road.

Raleigh City Councilman Ralph Campbell Jr., son of the late civil rights activist Ralph Campbell, said Ward's guidance and wisdom will be missed.

"He, and my father, and other members of the community worked hard in the vineyards, not necessarily for themselves, but for others," Campbell said.

"His congregation, to a large part, was the city of Raleigh, the citizens, even though they may have belonged to a different church."

The Rev. Arthur Calloway, a former City Council member and an Episcopalian minister, said Ward tried for years to improve lives through integration and political action.

"He just did an awful lot for Raleigh, and we're going to miss him," Calloway said.

The funeral for Ward will be at 11 a.m. Saturday at First Baptist Church. Burial will be in Carolina Biblical Gardens.

The family will be at the church from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. Friday. Arrangements are by Lea Funeral Home.