

Georgia Pastor Gunned Down While Repairing Church Roof. Nearly 30 Years Later, Cold Case Ends With Arrest

Nearly 30 years after a Georgia pastor was shot to death while repairing the roof of the church he faithfully served, authorities have arrested a suspect in a case that has remained unsolved for decades.

According to initial reporting by WSB-TV 2, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation announced Wednesday that Zachary B. Harper, 47, has been charged with felony murder and malice murder in the June 1, 1996, killing of Pastor James Hand.

Hand, 54, was serving as pastor of Full Gospel Church of Snipesville in Jeff Davis County when he climbed onto the church roof to make repairs. Investigators said he was shot multiple times while working, and deputies later discovered his body on the roof.



Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Department of Corrections

The murder stunned the local community and launched an investigation that stretched across nearly three decades.

Authorities said investigators with the GBI and the Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office continued pursuing leads over the years. New information developed during the investigation ultimately led to Harper being charged in the case.

Harper is currently serving a life sentence at Jenkins Correctional Facility for an unrelated murder. Investigators have not publicly disclosed what evidence connected him to

Hand's death or what they believe the motive was. The investigation remains active, and once complete, the case will be presented to the Brunswick Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

A Pastor Faithfully Serving Until the End

The circumstances surrounding Pastor Hand's death make the tragedy especially sobering.

He was not traveling, attending a conference or even standing behind the pulpit. He was caring for the church in a practical way, repairing its roof when his life was taken.

For many pastors, ministry extends far beyond preaching on Sunday mornings. Shepherds often spend countless hours maintaining church buildings, helping families in need, counseling hurting people and serving wherever there is work to be done. Pastor Hand's final act reflected that servant-hearted commitment.



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While many questions about the case remain unanswered, one thing is clear: investigators never stopped searching for answers. After nearly 30 years, a family, a church and an entire community may finally be one step closer to seeing justice carried out.

As the body of Christ, let us remember Pastor Hand's loved ones, the congregation he served and everyone who has carried the weight of this tragedy for nearly three decades. We can pray that the legal process reveals the full truth, that justice is faithfully administered and that God brings lasting peace and healing to all those whose lives were forever

changed by this heartbreaking loss.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.