



## Dr. J. Craig Merrell

August 27, 2019

For Joseph Craig Merrell, life was all about family. That's because he believed that every man, woman, and child walking this beautiful earth is a son or daughter of God. So when he met you, he believed, firmly, deeply, in his giant heart, that you were his brother or sister. You were family; and Craig loved his family.

In 1950, he arrived as the second son of John Yeates and Marjorie Merrell. With his three siblings, John Jr., Karen, and David, Craig thrived in their happy home in Arlington, Virginia. As a young man, two major decisions changed the course of his life. First, while recovering from back surgery, he decided to become a doctor. Second, he answered the call to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in the French-Swiss Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He served a mission as a young man in the Swiss Geneva Mission, and later as mission president for the France Toulouse Mission. On his mission, Craig developed a passion for working with God to heal broken hearts and wounded souls.

While studying medicine at the University of Virginia, Craig was set up on a blind date with Teresa Ann Johnson. They were married on March 6, 1976 and together they raised eight children – Thomas, Michael, David, Stephen, Jonathan, Joshua, Anna, and Sara. Love, music, and faith filled their home. His six daughters-in-law – Wendi, Allison, Rachel, Emily, Cyndia, and Anne –

and 19 grandchildren

Through his work as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon, he was a beloved member of the Tidewater community. He considered his patients as part of his extended family and helping them brought him immeasurable joy. Through his work with Operation Smile, his healing touch extended around the world. He was beloved by his family, friends, colleagues, patients, and community.

Craig was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and influenced the lives of thousands through his ministry whether he was teaching two-year-olds or leading congregations. He was looking forward to retiring this coming year and taking up a full-time grandfathering position on a quiet farm in the mountains.

A viewing will be held from 4:00pm to 6:00pm on Sunday, September 1, 2019 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4759 Bennetts Pasture Road, Suffolk Virginia, 23435. Funeral services will be held 11:00 am, Monday, September 2nd at the same location and all are invited to attend.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Operation Smile <http://www.operationismile.org> or LDS Charities <https://www.latterdaysaintcharities.org>.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP 1. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints  
4759 Bennetts Pasture Rd Suffolk, VA US 23435  
Suffolk, VA 23435

## Service

SEP 2. 11:00 AM (ET)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints  
4759 Bennetts Pasture Rd Suffolk, VA US 23435  
Suffolk, VA 23435

# Tribute Wall

JH

“ Craig Merrell was my Bishop and later my Stake President while I was completing my Pediatrics residency at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, VA (1987-1990). I remember thinking that, when he was talking with you, listening to your concerns, you felt like he had all the time in the world to give to just you. However, as I recognized how MANY people he did that to, I was overwhelmed. He was a wonderful person to talk with, but I couldn't imagine being able to keep up with him in any of his "normal" weeks. He became my quintessential example of a "nice type-A person" -- Type A because he always was going for more and better; nice because you never felt rushed or pressured when you were with him.

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**James Horspool** - May 26, 2023 at 01:27 AM

SH

“ I am so sorry to hear this sad news. I found out because I was sitting thinking about the kindness shown to me and my family and the powerful lessons I learned from President/Dr. Merrell and his family more than 30 years ago when I was 12 years old. It is a testament to the goodness of this man and his loved ones that even though I only lived in their area for a few years, and it was so long ago, I still find myself sitting and thinking about the wonderful influence they have had on my life. My heart is filled with sadness for the family in their loss, and for the world which was a better place with President Merrell in it. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Thank you for the gifts you have shared with all of us. May you be blessed in all you need. Sarah Beth (Horspool) Hobson

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**Sarah Beth Hobson** - May 25, 2023 at 12:43 PM

BM

“ Craig's influence lives on in so many ways and with so many people...family, patients, professional associates, friends, neighbors. I knew him relatively briefly; but I knew his family and what he stood for, and how he lived his life. That is why I think of him every so often (like now, three years after his death). And when I think of him, I think of his goodness; and it inspires me to be better, and he always will. Brian McNatt

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**Brian McNatt** - August 15, 2022 at 11:22 PM

MD

“ Craig Merrell had a huge impact on my life and I know that he has impacted numerous lives through his talent as a Doctor, through his faith and through his wisdom. The wisdom that he imparted to me is always going to be part of me.

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**Magnus Drechsler** - October 24, 2020 at 10:44 PM

LM

“ I remember how he was always taking me and my cousins on rides in their green tractor. I really miss my grandpa.



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**Lilianne Merrell** - August 19, 2020 at 12:57 PM

LW

“ He was the best Doctor, I ever met. Just found out today. My heart goes out to the family and friends. He was so caring and a great doctor! He will be missed.

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**LaDonna Wilcox** - January 28, 2020 at 06:34 PM

TE

“ Great surgeon with the best bedside manners. The last I saw him he mention of his retirement plans and how he was going to enjoy the rest of his live. My prayers to his wife, family, and the staff of his practice.

telisa - September 25, 2019 at 11:30 AM



“ If you'd like to see the website the Family did create please see [rememberdrmerrell.com](http://rememberdrmerrell.com)

Joshua Merrell - September 17, 2019 at 10:00 AM

NP

*i would like to say im so sorry for your loss i was in California but he will be missed he was a one of the greates doctors i ever had and he will be missed terribly*

Nancy Pedraza - January 29, 2020 at 05:55 PM

MJ

“ I knew of Dr. Merrell and have contemplated on seeing him with just the fear of the word, "SURGERY." When I first met him in his office on March 2019, he took his time going over the scenario for my surgery, put me at ease and assured me I was going to have a six pack by the time he's done with me. I am pleased to say, I am satisfied with the outcome from the surgery, had an appt. to see him on Monday however due to his schedule being over booked, I wind up seeing his counterpart, the next day I hear this devastating news of his passing. I never got the chance to say, "Thank you" for giving me back my confidence. Rest in peace to a great Surgeon and a great man! And to the family, our condolences.



Marilyn Jualin - September 12, 2019 at 06:41 PM

RW

“ Dear Family,

*We were so very saddened to learn of Dr. Merrell's passing. Craig was a wonderful man who gave so much to so many in the community. Suffolk, and all of the Hampton Roads community benefitted from his selfless service and we are grateful to have had him here. Please know that we are thinking of, and praying for, you all during this difficult time.*

*Ron Williams and staff of the Suffolk Treasurer's Office*

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**Ron Williams** - September 09, 2019 at 09:27 AM

KM

“ *Our family loves Dr. Merrell. We met him around 1990 when he very successfully treated a melanoma on the knee for my wife. At one time or another he has treated someone in our near family and was always so kind and loving to each of us. He was so talented in fixing a sever horse kick injury to our daughters nose and a surfboard accident causing a face injury to our grandson. As you can imagine we will never forget him. With Love  
Keith and Debbie Moore*

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**Keith and Debbie Moore** - September 06, 2019 at 01:01 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. J. Craig Merrell.*



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September 04, 2019 at 01:26 PM

EK

“ I was never a patient of Dr. Merrell's but knew him through my wife who was a patient. I must say with great certainty that Dr. Merrell cared greatly about his patients and gave them wise counsel on every aspect of their health. Granted, he was always behind on his appointments because "hurry" was not in his playbook but it made waiting easier knowing that he was going to spend an equal amount of time with you (or your spouse in this case) and you would never feel rushed! Still can't believe he is gone, but he was a most special man. May God bless you and keep you my dear friend and may His face shine upon you! Ed Kruer

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**Ed Kruer** - September 03, 2019 at 07:54 AM

AB

Dr Merrill was my dr,my friend and my mentor.i am devastated by his loss.this man built me up when I was at my lowest .I fought breast cancer and beat it .dr. Merrill built my breast breast and I felt like a women again.i was happy again.he did several surgeries on me.did great work.it was a honor to have him as my dr.i painted him a picture of heaven and just gave it to him a couple months ago.he was so happy.i feel for his family and friends.im sure they fill lost with out him.i do.god has gained a extra archangel

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**Anne brinkley** - September 06, 2019 at 04:44 PM

MH

“ Dr Merrell was so much more than a physician. He was a friend to all. Every time I saw him, he asked about my adopted daughter, who suffers from birth issues due to drug abuse from her birth mother. He sat and talked with me, listening to every word, offering guidance in any way. I could say so much about these conversations, but I'll leave it at that. He proudly shared his faith. I loved that about him. Rest in peace Dr Merrell. You will be missed by so many. I, being one. You have a special place in heaven.

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**Mary Hope** - September 02, 2019 at 04:40 PM

EW

“ I have known the Merrill family for 35 years. Theresa and I had our boys in swimming lessons at the old downtown Portsmouth YMCA in the '80s. Dr. Merrill has been my dermatologist for several years, and I could not have asked for better care. My favorite memory is catching up with news of Teresa and the children and grandchildren with each visit. Theresa, please know that my prayers are with you all. Ellen Wood

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**Ellen Wood** - September 02, 2019 at 08:08 AM



“ He was an incredible man, friend, etc. I don't know what to say. He taught me so much being a home teacher and at his farm with his family. You'll be missed, Brother Merrell.

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**Kent Hinckley** - September 01, 2019 at 09:21 PM

JF

“ To Dr. Merrell's family and friends: We met him 22 years ago when my 4 year old son was attacked by a dog in the face. Dr. Merrell was the doctor on call at Maryview Hospital. He took excellent care of my son. Nicholas and I were both continued patients of his. He continued to take great care of Nicholas who has skin cancers at a young age. We think of him as family. I know there are so many others around who have just as much admiration for this father, doctor, and friend that we have. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his entire family, staff, and friends. God needed this angel home for another purpose. Thank you for all of the endless blessings that you and your family have bestowed upon others. God bless each of you in your future journeys. Love each of you! Jackie Fostek and Nicholas Fostek

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**Jacqueline Fostek** - September 01, 2019 at 06:22 PM

DM

“ I would like to thank Dr. Merrell posthumously for his excellent work to remove a cyst from my finger back in the 1990's. I have thought of him fondly many times over these years and am so grateful for his help. I offer my deepest condolences to his family. He certainly was such a fine man.

*Hugh Middleton, D.M.A., NCTM*

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**Dr. Hugh Middleton** - September 01, 2019 at 03:22 PM

CB

“ Our Heart, Thoughts and Prayers go out to Merrell family. We have had the pleasure to get to know Craig and some of the family through the years. A man of deep faith, a giver of life to those in need of medical care. A wonderful family man. Craig will be missed by All.

*Bob and Cindy Brewer*

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**cindy brewer** - September 01, 2019 at 07:24 AM

DH

“ Trying to wrap my head around this.... J Craig Merrell MD passed way yesterday from an automobile accident on I-664 Suffolk, VA. When I left John Hopkins' Care In 2007, I chose this Plastic Surgeon to help me monitor my skin. His Father had a history of Melanoma, and he used advanced technology in mapping skin lesions. I saw him every 3 months for a couple of years and graduated to 6 month surveillance. He's removed basal & squamous cell lesions from me. In 2014 I decided I needed to give back to the Melanoma community, Merrell jumped right on board, rearranging a family vacation, bringing his staff & family to work 3 years in a row at AIM At Melanoma 5K Run/Walk in, Oak Grove Park, Chesapeake, VA. I provided an air conditioned camper for him to do head to toe skin exams. Each year he found not only Basal & Squamous Cell Cancer but Melanoma. Combining our efforts we raised upwards of \$40,000.00.

Dr Merrell is the father of 8. In 1984 he joined on board with Bill & Kathy Magee in OPERATION SMILE, traveling the world performing and teaching how to repair cleft lips & palate and other craniotomy-facial malformations. He has been awarded Honorary Ambassador OPERATION SMILE. He was a very humble guy....God gave him a gift to use for good & that he did.

I last saw him in late May. He was selling his practice, retiring and moving his family to their West VA farm. My heart aches knowing he won't get to do this, he won't see his huge family of kids and Grands grow and achieve.

My deepest condolences to his wife & family. May he Rest In Peace & May Perpetual Light shine upon him. 🍀🍀🍀



Debbie Childers Hennessy - August 30, 2019 at 09:22 PM



“ *Serenity Wreath was purchased for the family of Dr. J. Craig Merrell.*



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August 30, 2019 at 04:38 PM



“ *Thomas, Michael, and Stephen,*

*We send our sympathy to you and your family on the death of your father. He touched many people through his services as a medical doctor and a man of faith. We remember you all fondly from Nansemond River. Your dedication to your education , your church, your family, and your careers were inspired by your dad and your mom. Blessings to you. Mr. and Mrs. Dailey*

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**Jane Dailey** - August 30, 2019 at 04:12 PM



“ *Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. J. Craig Merrell.*



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August 29, 2019 at 05:52 PM