



Mr. John A. Childs Jr.

October 23, 1940 - June 20, 2022

John A. Childs Jr., 81, passed away in Anniston on June 20th, following a lengthy illness. Mr. Childs is survived by his son, John A. Childs III (Robbin) of Liberty, TX; two grandchildren, John Jackson and Emily Childs; a brother, Joseph Childs (Nalda) of Glencoe; two nephews, Jason Childs (Michele) of Coldwater and Stephen Childs (Oobi) of Peachtree City, GA, as well as eight great-nieces and great-nephews. He is preceded in death by his wife, Barbara Chlebowski Childs; his sister, Debbie Bobo (Grady), of Canton, GA; and his parents, John A. and Lee Knight Childs of Gadsden.

Mr. Childs was publisher of the *The Oxford Independent*, a weekly newspaper that covered the news of the Oxford community from 1992 until it ceased publication in 2014. He was also a licensed local pastor in the United Methodist Church, serving churches in Cleburne and Calhoun counties from 1993 to 2011. He also founded and operated *Journey Into Freedom*, a drug recovery ministry serving the greater Calhoun County area until 2018.

Childs' life was characterized for having an energetic and adventurous spirit and a great love for people. In the early 1960s, he set out with a few friends from Jacksonville State University to Mississippi in search of work, and he began working as a reporter for the *Delta Democrat-Times* in Greenville. This was during the height of the civil rights movement, which he covered avidly and fearlessly and earned the nickname "Wild Child" among his friends. After

four years in Mississippi, Childs moved to New York City to write for Newsday, then to serve as assistant to the mayor of Babylon on Long Island. His next stop was Washington, DC to work as copy and production editor of the The Washington Post Sunday magazine Potomac. It was during his three years in the capital that he met and married his wife, Barbara, in 1970.

The young couple moved out to Winnemucca, Nevada, where Childs worked for the weekly paper, The Humboldt Sun, for a year before coming back to Alabama and joining the reporting staff at The Anniston Star. At the Star, Childs' reporting earned him a community service award from Associated Press. Childs became business manager at The Star in the 1980, and this began a period of activity in various civic organizations such as the Anniston Downtown Merchant's Association, The Rotary Club, and the Chamber of Commerce. He also served as Director of the Festivanni Arts Festival and was a member of the vestry of Grace Episcopal Church and taught an adult Sunday School class.

A growing spiritual awareness led to Childs taking several religious pilgrimages in the late 1980's and early 1990's, including a trip to the Holy Land. He began to discern a call to ministry, and was given the opportunity to serve in the United Methodist Church in Cleburne County. He served as pastor of Campground United Methodist Church in Muscadine for 12 years, and then served at Bethel UMC in Piedmont for three years, and then Greens Chapel and Hurricane Methodist Churches for three more years. During this time, John became a very devout Christian leader, and would answer the call to prayer at any time. He made many voyages to local and far away hospitals, medical centers, and even residences to pray for those who were sick and hurting.

In the early 1990s, Childs decided to publish a newspaper for Oxford, and this was beginning of Oxford's hometown newspaper that was cherished by its

residents for over two decades, The Oxford Independent. John loved to spin positive news to the town that became his hometown, and he covered everything from football games to wedding anniversaries. If readers wanted to know how much he loved Oxford and its residents, they needed to look no further than his "Crossroads Comments" section on the front page of the weekly periodical. During his time as publisher and editor, the Oxford residents embraced Childs and his mission, and he was considered by all to be a hometown resident.

Another essential part of Childs' ministry was his work with addiction recovery. This work began with his visits to the Cleburne County jail in the mid- 1990's, where his influence was so effective in giving inmates hope that then-Sheriff Darrell Durham presented a plaque of appreciation to Childs for his work there. Seeing that so much criminal activity was drug-related, Childs was moved to begin a recovery ministry, which he eventually called Journey Into Freedom. Characterized by building relationships with those in the program, Childs' ministry was widely respected in the legal and recovery community.

Funeral services for Childs will be Friday, June 24th at 2 p.m. at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church with Father Chris Hartley officiating. The family will receive friends from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm on Thursday, June 23rd at Miller Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, friends are asked to send memorial donations to St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, PO Box 1884, Anniston, AL 36202.

Cemetery Details

Dogwood Trail Memorial Gardens

300 McKibbon St
Oxford, AL

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN **23**. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Miller Funeral Home
50 Hamric Drive East
Oxford, AL 36203
(256) 831-4611
millerfuneralcal@gmail.com

Service

JUN **24**. 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church
1000 W 18th St
Anniston, AL 36201

Tribute Wall

CI

“ Thank you, brother Jon for helping me change my life. I will always remember the wisdom you taught me. I praise God. He put you in my life when he did.
You'd be so proud of me. love you, brother Jhon

Christopher ivey - August 03, 2025 at 01:26 PM



“ 42 files added to the album Life Tributes



Miller Funeral Home - June 23, 2022 at 03:28 PM

SJ

“ I worked with John for several years. He was not only my boss but my friend. I have fond memories of those years. Rest in peach John.

Sheila Jones - June 22, 2022 at 07:06 PM

SM

“ *Mr Child's was always present at as many Oxford events as possible - always with a smile, encouraging word, and questions about everyone involved. We always appreciated seeing him at school. He will be sorely missed.*

Susan McCall - June 22, 2022 at 06:09 PM

GH

“ *He was so good to the Oxford Arts Council, covering all our events and making sure we stayed in the limelight so that we could expand the arts in our city to the point they are today. He was also one of the nicest people I have ever known. Oxford has list a real blessing!*

Gloria Horton - June 22, 2022 at 05:11 PM

V3

“ *One of the sweetest and most humblest men that I ever had the honor to know. He will be greatly missed. Rejoice in Paradise John*



Valerie 3 - June 22, 2022 at 03:21 PM