



## Rachel Held Evans

June 8, 1981 - May 4, 2019

Rachel Held Evans, 37, died Saturday, May 4, 2019 at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. She was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on June 8, 1981 and moved to Dayton in 1994.

She graduated from Rhea County High School in 1999 and earned her B.A. in English Literature at Bryan College in 2003. She lived in Chattanooga from the fall of 2003 to the summer of 2004, and has been a resident of Dayton ever since.

Rachel loved words and stories, and she built a successful career as a writer and speaker. She wrote four books: “Faith Unraveled”; “A Year of Biblical Womanhood,” which made the New York Times best-seller list; “Searching for Sunday”; and “Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible Again.” But even more than writing or the Alabama Crimson Tide or dark chocolate, Rachel loved Jesus, Scripture, and her family.

She is survived by her husband of 15 years, Dan Evans; her three-year-old son, Henry, and 11-month-old daughter, Harper; her parents, Peter and Robin Held of Dayton; and her sister, Amanda (Tim) Opelt of Boone, North Carolina.

Funeral services for Rachel will be held Saturday, June 1st, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. at the First-Centenary United Methodist Church in Chattanooga, TN. The body

will lie in state at the church one hour before the funeral. Rachel will be laid to rest Sunday, June 2nd, 2019 in Rhea Memory Gardens in Dayton, TN.

Memorial contributions may be made to <https://www.gofundme.com/supporting-rachel-held-evans> for her children's ongoing support or to the Reformation Project at <https://www.reformationproject.org/>.

Please share your memories of Rachel on her online guest register at [www.vanderwallfh.com](http://www.vanderwallfh.com).

The family is being cared for by the Vanderwall Funeral Home in Dayton, TN.

# Previous Events

## Service

JUN 1. 2:00 PM (ET)

First Centenary United Methodist Church  
419 McCallie Ave  
Chattanooga, TN 37402

# Tribute Wall

KA

“ I can't explain how much you've helped me Rachel, your books are one of the reasons I'm here today. I left after an experience in the church which left me feeling like I could never be whole again, my worldview shifted after realizing how unokay the situation was, and how unokay my home was. This led to me coming to terms with my sexuality, but I knew if my parents ever found out, I wouldn't have a home. I just assumed God hated me, I mean it said so in the bible. So at 15 I attempted suicide for the 3rd time. But I woke up, and my therapist recommended reading your books. Your books have changed my life, I still live with my parents, and I'm a long way from okay, but your books helped me find love for myself. I'm stable now, and I have a yearning for faith again, I know God loves me, that they're here and present. And I owe it all to the way you've touched my life. I'm nearly 17 now, I haven't attempted since, and I now have a beautiful girlfriend and an understanding of who I am, and who God made me to be.

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**Kaidyn** - February 26, 2022 at 09:03 PM

MC

“ I know I just knew her as an author, but she helped me grow in my love for Jesus. I am currently visiting Tennessee and every time I go through Dayton, I think of the life she lived.

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**Mcole** - October 10, 2019 at 10:01 AM

TR

“ The Riggles lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans



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**the Riggles** - June 01, 2019 at 03:51 PM

TO

“ *My heart is deeply grieved over your passing. You've taught me so much. The world will not be the same without you. Fellow-Chattanooga sends love and prayers to your family as they process and grieve. Rest In Peace with Jesus, dear friend that I've never met.*



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**Toiler** - May 31, 2019 at 06:23 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Rachel Held Evans.*



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May 31, 2019 at 11:21 AM

CD

“ *Rachel's life has touched so many others lives she never even met, including my Own. There are no true words for grief such as this that her family and friends are experiencing. My heart is with you in your immense loss. You are all So loved!*



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**connie diamond** - May 30, 2019 at 08:01 PM

TC

“ *The Academic Department, Bryan College purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Rachel Held Evans.*



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**The Academic Department, Bryan College** - May 30, 2019 at 03:26 PM



“ *Marya DeCarlen lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Marya DeCarlen** - May 30, 2019 at 09:46 AM



*On earth, you inspired us to be gardeners for Jesus in the word, in communion, in suffering, in confession, repentance, and reconciliation; when 2 or 3 were gathered... and in least of these: the poor sick, marginalized, lonely and left behind...*

*In heaven, you will continue to inspire us to be gardeners for God entering each day with a generous and genuine heart until we see you again face to face, when we will never lose you again.*

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**Marya DeCarlen** - May 30, 2019 at 10:09 AM

EF

“ *Elaine, Pam, and our families purchased the Fair est of All for the family of Rachel Held Evans.*



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**Elaine, Pam, and our families** - May 29, 2019 at 10:01 PM



Stephanie  
McCown

“ Rachel's words touched this misfit's heart like no one ever had before. Her gospel of inclusion and diversity made room at the table for anyone who wanted to be there. Her boundless love for people is such a gift for the world, and will be with us through her words for a long time to come.

*Much love to everyone mourning her and missing her, especially her beautiful family. Rachel was such a gift. Thank you for allowing those of us who never met her sit with you in this season of mourning and grief. She touched countless lives.*

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**Stephanie McCown** - May 26, 2019 at 12:17 AM



“ Heide sent a virtual gift in memory of Rachel Held Evans



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**Heide** - May 22, 2019 at 10:11 PM



“ Julie L Mayfield lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans



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**Julie L Mayfield** - May 19, 2019 at 09:40 PM

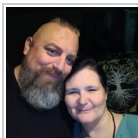
DA

“ *Danielle lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Danielle** - May 18, 2019 at 08:08 PM



“ *Lit a candle for her and her family. Miss you...*



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**Michelle Walpole** - May 16, 2019 at 01:42 PM

KB

“ *My story is similar to Rachel's. Although I never met her, I felt like she was a fellow traveler. May the light that was her shine through all the lives she touched.*

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**Karen brokaw** - May 16, 2019 at 10:53 AM

CD

“ *I didn't meet her, but her spirit met with mine. Rachel will always be with us, her fans. The impact of her testimony's grace, love and courage carries on. My deepest condolences to her beloved family and close circle of friends. May you all feel her embrace as you continue to grieve.*

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**Carolyn Davy** - May 16, 2019 at 02:51 AM

BA

“ Rachel touched me deeply through her blog, her books and her words on podcasts, etc. She will be so missed, she was dearly loved. I pray for her family, her husband and 2 precious children. All I can say is I am so sorry and how thankful I am for such a courageous Christian woman.



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**Brenda Amos** - May 16, 2019 at 12:26 AM

LI

“ Dearest Dan and lovely children... my family is holding you in our hearts and lifting you up in prayer! What a joy to read the writings of Rachel or listen to her speak....she continues to bless many by her strength filled and passionate wisdom...



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**linda** - May 15, 2019 at 11:06 PM

JA

“ Rachel's influence will live on vastly beyond her earthly pilgrimage. She dared to hold her course and that is to be highly honoured.

*Joy Graetz, Brisbane, Australia*

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**Joy Graetz, Brisbane, Australia** - May 15, 2019 at 06:24 PM

RH

“ Please know that you are being prayed for by my husband, my daughters and myself. The death of a child goes against every instinct and against how life is supposed to progress. We lost our middle daughter when she was 22 years old after a 4 year battle against cancer. Our other daughters lost their sister and the future they had planned together. We have found that the pain doesn't go away but you learn how to integrate it into who you are. You learn how to carry it as life continues. Our prayer for you is that you will find a measure of joy in good memories, comfort from others who love you, and hope that death is not the end but a transition to something infinity better.

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**Ruth Hargis** - May 15, 2019 at 04:40 PM



“ Heartfelt prayers and condolences to the family at this difficult time. Rachel was a bright light in a dark world and she impacted far more people than she could have ever known. She is already missed, but she will not be forgotten. Rest, dear sister, in our Father's arms; you ran a beautiful race. Morénike



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**Morénike Iwu** - May 15, 2019 at 10:43 AM

LH

“ We are so sorry for your loss and we are praying for your family.

*Lynn & Beth Hixson*

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**Lynn & Beth Hixson** - May 15, 2019 at 09:29 AM

SM

“ *Susan Mayo lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Susan Mayo** - May 14, 2019 at 04:43 PM

KS

“ *Kim Scarvey lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Kim Scarvey** - May 14, 2019 at 04:28 PM

KS

*Rachel was an inspiration to me and many, many people. I loved her books and listening to her speak. My thoughts are with her family and friends. May she rest in peace.*

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**Kim Scarvey** - May 14, 2019 at 04:31 PM

KH

“ *Kara Hughes lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Kara Hughes** - May 14, 2019 at 04:40 AM

 KH

“ *My thoughts are with her family at this time. I have to hope that as someone else wrote, that as we believe Jesus rose from the dead; so God reached down and took her to sit beside him on his throne. May she rest in peace.*

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**Kara Hughes** - May 14, 2019 at 04:40 AM



“ *I have followed Rachel Held Evans for a couple of years now, though had never read her books. Having grown up in Evangelical "Republican" Christianity, with a father who is now a retired pastor, was the norm for me. It wasn't until I was a middle-aged adult and got involved in prison reform and meeting so many people that were not like me "white middle class" that I realized how secluded I was. As my faith journey transformed, my family thought I was no longer "saved." I am sad to say that I purchased Rachel's books after she passed away. Yesterday as I held "Searching for Sunday" and started turning the pages, it was like her story was my story ...and I cried. I wish so much I had read these earlier. Following Rachel on Social Media has helped me, but these books are going to help propel me forward in a much desired and necessary way. Someday when I write my book about my life, being rejected and shamed by my evangelical family, and being loved by my Hispanic husband in prison....I will dedicate my book to Rachel Held Evans.*

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**Deborah Cardenas** - May 13, 2019 at 12:52 PM

PA

“ Oh how I regret her children may not remember who she was in the flesh. Of course, they will know her through the words of her millions of "fans." And their numbers will continue to grow, I have no doubt. Count me among them. I knew her through her books, through words that will forever encourage me to be courageous. She stood in the Temple and shouted at Empire. She was a prophetess. I like to think she is ecstatic now, seated with the God she spoke for, dancing with Jesus, still cheering us on. I have only gratitude for her life. I pray for her family.

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**patrice** - May 13, 2019 at 11:39 AM



*Forgive me for commenting, but your opening line seems like a very insensitive comment to post for her family to read.*

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**Heather Mashal** - May 15, 2019 at 02:08 AM

RG

“ I never met Rachel, but through her books, I felt I had made a friend. Her honesty, compassion, and genuine faith have been an inspiration to me in my ministry. May she enjoy forever the embrace of the God she loved so much.

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**rebecca goldberg** - May 12, 2019 at 10:49 PM

LJ

“ I had the honor of meeting Rachel when she spoke at a local Methodist Church. She was as real and down to earth in person as you would hope her to be. She sat and talked with us, we laughed, joked and shared. I will always be grateful for her books, her words. In my own crisis of faith in the extreme evangelical community, her writings gave me the thread of hope I needed. Jesus held onto me and Rachel’s writings encouraged me to keep seeking Him. I too am now blessed within the Episcopal Church. Her family will continue to be in my prayers and thoughts. My deepest, heart felt condolences to you all.



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**linda jarman-schram** - May 12, 2019 at 10:46 PM

PM

“ Eshet Chayil. Though I never met Rachel, I continue to be inspired, comforted and taught by her writings. She continues to be a source of light through them. Peace and love be with you dear Evans family. I am praying for you. You are not alone in your grief.

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**Patricia Martinez** - May 12, 2019 at 10:18 PM

JT

“ Janet Thompson lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans



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**Janet Thompson** - May 12, 2019 at 10:03 PM

GM

“ Rachel's death was a shock. She was, for me, a leading light in progressive Christianity. Her family will miss her so much. I hope they find support and satisfaction in the knowledge she has reached with love into the hearts of so many. Graeme McIver, Christchurch, New Zealand.

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**Graeme McIver** - May 12, 2019 at 07:26 PM

GB

“ Rachel's untimely death came as a huge shock. I never met her or even exchanged emails. But I found her books and blogs a huge source of inspiration, as they spoke of a kinder, gentler kind of Christianity. RIP



Geff Booth, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

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**Geoff Booth** - May 12, 2019 at 05:53 PM

MK

“ She was a wonderful, inspiring writer--filled with insight, humor, passion.

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**Melissa Knox-Raab** - May 12, 2019 at 11:31 AM

RD

“ Daniel and I are very sorry for your loss and are praying for your family!

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**Rebecca Duncan** - May 11, 2019 at 12:17 PM

RD

“ *Rebecca Duncan lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



Rebecca Duncan - May 11, 2019 at 12:15 PM

MC

“ *I have been away from the Bryan campus for more than 50 years and did not get to know the Held Family, but we have always been "The Bryan Family," so I am very very sorry for the loss of this beautiful young lady. May the Lord surround all of you with His abiding love! Mary Frances Rudd Carlson*

Mary Frances Rudd Carlson - May 10, 2019 at 10:07 AM

AE

“ *Praying for for Family and Friends.. I went to school with Rachel ,she was always such a joy to be around. She will truely me missed by a lot of people. I'm so glad that I got a chance to be in her life and I am proud to call her my friend.*



Amber Ellis - May 09, 2019 at 05:09 PM

MS

“ *My wife and I have lived across from the Rachel and Dan for years,could not ask for better neighbors will miss her smiling face ,may the Lord bless the Family ,Mike and Shelia Smith*



Mike and Shelia Smith - May 09, 2019 at 08:36 AM

MW

“ *Marlene Wilkey lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Marlene Wilkey** - May 09, 2019 at 06:24 AM

KP

“ *Kathy Patton lit a candle in memory of Rachel Held Evans*



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**Kathy Patton** - May 08, 2019 at 04:52 PM

TE

“ *I have a lot of words, yet no words. My heart is broken for this family's loss of their daughter, mother, sister and wife. I loved her bubbly outlook on life so much. I am sure Rachel is skipping streets of gold with a big smile. Her thoughts and voice will live forever. Prayers for everyone. Love always Teresa Congiolo*

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**teresa** - May 08, 2019 at 03:22 PM

PH

“ *Rachel was a gift and she will be missed. I am so deeply sorry for the loss of this sweet spirit. praying for the Held & Evans families.*

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**Paulakay Hall** - May 08, 2019 at 02:13 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



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**Vanderwall Funeral Home, Inc.** - May 08, 2019 at 09:25 AM

CJ

*Rachel was a woman of deep compassion and unlike many, she would readily enter into people's pain and sit with them in their struggle. Praying that Dan, Peter, Robin and Amanda will have many who will be that kind of person for them.*

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**Carter Johnson** - May 08, 2019 at 04:02 PM



*Gracious and loving God, thank you for the radically grace-filled life of Rachel. Grant her family your tender, comforting love as they walk through this dark valley.*

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**Kimberly Laskowski** - May 09, 2019 at 08:02 AM

DO

*Lord have mercy on Rachel's family and friends. Hold them tenderly in your loving arms. Heal their shattered hearts and wounded souls. Breathe strength, peace and comfort upon them and remind them constantly they are not alone.*

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**Darla OConnor** - May 09, 2019 at 07:49 PM

JS

*Even though I had never met Rachel. I read of her in Tennessee Newspaper. I felt lead by the Lord to write & share with "Her Dan" & Family. Rachel had a GOD given Gift & Talent that she used for the Lord's Glory & Honor. Now Dan just remember that being she was a true Christ like Christian, We as Christians do NOT have to Grieve for Rachel. She completed her purpose to be on earth. She's walking with Jesus on those Golden Streets to that Mansion that Jesus had prepared for Rachel.*

*Dan you may be tempted to ask that question, Why Now? Just accept it as GOD's Will for her. When you are most lonesome for her that is the time to get out the Snapshot picture book & then remember all the wonderful times together & also with your kids.*

*In Philippians 4:vs 19. "And this same GOD who takes care of me will supply ALL your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." ( This eliminates Worry ).*

*Tell your kids that Mom has went on ahead of us to Heaven & we will get to see the Face of Jesus & to see Rachel & your Mom. "IF" each of you kids Believe & Accept into your Heart & Life the Lord Jesus. Dan besure keep Praying for each kid's Salvation.*

*I have been a Born- Again Christian 61 years & I have never regretted any moment of my life. I am 77 yrs & looking forward to my departure from this o'l World. I grew up with verse in the book of Proverbs 22:vs 6. " Train Up a Child.... Train means to Repent over & over. That is different than to teach. Praying with your kids Dan will do more & give them more than you will ever know in this World.*

*2nd Corinthians 4: vs 18 NIV.*

*" What is seen is Temporary, but what is Unseen is Eternal."*

*I will be Praying for you Dan & your Family, a Christian Brother.*

*O'l Deacon Jimmy Coffeejim37167@gmail.com*

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**Jimmy R. Schultz** - June 01, 2019 at 05:15 PM