

The Virgin Islands Consortium

73-Year-Old Man Who Was Carjacked And Beaten Dies In Florida Hospital

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ST. CROIX -- The passing of Deacon Augustus Bannis, member of the Calvary Baptist Church here who was carjacked, beaten and left for dead on August 17 while gathering almonds for his wife at the David Hamilton Jackson park in Grove Place, has left immediate family, church family and friends distraught and devastated.

Mr. Bannis, universally loved by those who knew him, died before noon yesterday in a Miami, Florida hospital, surrounded by grieving family, The Consortium has learned through sources close to the family. He was in a coma during his entire stay at the medical facility and was never able to recover.

Mr. Bannis' pastor, Anthony Benjamin, was en route to Florida when he died after being told by family members that the elder's condition had deteriorated. Pastor Benjamin is currently consoling the family on the mainland.

Mr. Bannis' family have seen their lives drastically altered following the sad events of August 17. Along with church family, they've held services at the location where Mr. Bannis was carjacked, praying for whomever committed the crime, and for justice.

"We would really love for those persons who perpetrated this act to know God is merciful and that God is just. And that we, as children of God, are merciful and just. We are not looking for vengeance in this situation. We are not looking for the worst for anyone out of this situation. We are looking for the very best in the midst of this situation.

"We would like them to acknowledge that they did something wrong and they should throw themselves at the mercy of the law. I would encourage them to give up themselves and if they are afraid to do that, come see me. Come see the pastor. Come sit down and talk with me. Again, we're not looking for vengeance, we're looking for justice," Mr. Benjamin [said on Sunday](#), August 23.

In mid-September, Mr. Benjamin held a brief press conference at the same park where Mr. Bannis had been beaten unconscious. The event marked one month since the near-fatal incident, yet no updates had been given from law enforcement in relation to the apprehension of suspects. Mr. Benjamin was also calling on the community to share what they know, if any, with him or law enforcement, so justice could be served.

"One month ago today, a 73-year-old man was carjacked, beaten and left for dead while gathering almonds in this very park," Mr. Benjamin began. "One month later, he is still fighting for his life in a Miami, Florida hospital, unable to do anything for himself."

He added: "But not for the help of a Good Samaritan, who saw him non-responsive on the ground somewhere around here, he might have been dead."

Even so, there's been no arrest of suspects who may have been involved in the crime, and police haven't given indication of possible leads. Pastor Benjamin had said that Elder Bannis' condition was outside the scope of medicine, and that it would take an act of God for his full recovery.



Deacon Augustus Bannis and his

wife.

Timeline of Events

At 11 a.m. Monday, August 17 Bannis had taken the short five-minute drive from his Estate Upper Love home to the David Hamilton Jackson park in Grove Place to gather almonds, a favorite pastime of his. He left his cellphone and wallet at home.

Around 2 p.m. when Bannis had not returned home, his wife alerted relatives. At round 4 p.m., she informed the church secretary that her husband had not returned from Grove Place earlier in the day. Church members called the hospital to inquire if Bannis had been admitted. Hospital personnel did not release any information to the family and instructed them to call 911. Church members also searched the Grove Place neighborhood where Bannis had gone, but did not find any signs of the man or his car.

After Bannis' family members filed a police report late Monday night, police put out an all-points bulletin (APB) for the victim at around 9:30 p.m. Within minutes of the APB being issued, Pastor Benjamin received a call on his cellphone that Bannis had been carjacked and brought badly beaten to the Juan Luis Hospital earlier that day.

At the hospital on Monday night, family members were notified that Bannis was found at the park at around 12 p.m. severely beaten and was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Feature Image: Deacon Augustus Bannis.

Image Credit: Calvary Baptist Church.

[Watch the original video](#)