

Ali made the world “a better place,” pastor tells Louisville mourners

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Baptists in Louisville, Ky., joined other Christians, Jews and Muslims June 5 at a packed mosque, where they mourned the death of their hometown hero, Muhammad Ali.



Jason Crosby Ali grew up as Cassius Marcellus Clay in Louisville. There, he was known as a boxing prodigy before the world knew him as an Olympic champion who embraced Islam, changed his name to Muhammad Ali, suffered for his principles and became a global ambassador of peace.

He died June 3 at age 74, after living with Parkinson’s disease for decades.

Louisvillians of all faiths gathered in River Road Mosque at the Louisville Islamic Center to celebrate Ali’s life and remember his legacy, [the local NBC affiliate, WAVE, reported](#) [local NBC affiliate, WAVE, reported](#).

“He was not only an ambassador of Islam,” Muhammad Babar of Muslim Americans for Compassion told the mourners. “He was an ambassador for

humanity, and he's beloved by people across the planet, irrespective of their faith or ethnicity."

Rabbi Gaylia Rooks of The Temple quoted The Champ's own words: "... All people are part of one family. God created us all. And all people have to work to get along."

Jason Crosby, pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church, told the crowd: "What set him apart was the way in which he poured out his heart through nonviolent action and deed to fight for a better world. And he indeed succeeded in making our world a better place."

Crosby later said he participated in the service "to say there are Baptists who believe Muslims like Muhammed Ali can help Christians be more Christian."

Kevin Cosby, pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church and president of Simmons College in Louisville, will participate in Ali's public memorial service Friday, June 10.