A close-up portrait of James Charles 'JC' Williams, a Black man with short hair, wearing glasses and a suit with a striped tie. He is smiling slightly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

A SERVICE IN REMEMBRANCE OF

JAMES CHARLES 'JC'
WILLIAMS

DECEMBER 26, 1933 – JUNE 18, 2025

FUNERAL SERVICE HELD ON

06.27.2025

3404 WEST BELTLINE BOULEVARD
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29203

CELEBRATION OF LIFE



I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

JOHN 11:25-26

THE WILLIAMS FAMILY



ORDER OF SERVICE

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

REVEREND DR. JAMEY O. GRAHAM, SR, OFFICIANT

OPENING HYMN

VICTORY IN JESUS

SCRIPTURE READING

OLD TESTAMENT - PSALM 23:1-6

REVEREND G.L. BRIGHT

NEW TESTAMENT - ROMANS 12:9-21

REVEREND RODERICK N. WILLIAMS

PRAYER

REVEREND AL GREEN

SPECIAL SELECTION

MRS. KATHYE J. GARY-ADAMS

INTERNATIONAL OPERA SINGER

CAROLYN SANDERS-CLEVELAND, ACCOMPANIST

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

WORDS OF COMFORT & INSPIRATION

CHAPLAIN STEVE RIMMER, CAPTAIN, USN (RET.)

REVEREND DR. MICHAEL A. BATTLE, SR.

REVEREND JACKIE WILLIAMS & MRS. BARBARA DANIEL

BENEDICT COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

FAMILY TRIBUTE

ANGELA, JAMES AND LISA WILLIAMS

SPECIAL SELECTION

HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW

EULOGY

REVEREND DR. CLIFFORD L. STANLEY

MAJOR GENERAL, USMC (RET.)

RECESSIONAL



OBITUARY

Celebrating the Life & Legacy of Chaplain James Charles "J.C." Williams
U.S. Navy (Retired)



James Charles "J.C." Williams was born on December 26, 1933, in Columbia, South Carolina, to Mary Thelma Javis Williams and James W. Williams. The eldest of 14 children, seven boys and seven girls, he was raised in modest surroundings on White Street, just a few blocks from St. John Baptist Church. Though resources were limited, their home was full of love, laughter, and unwavering faith.

It was at St. John that J.C. was baptized and preached his first sermon at the age of 18, inspired by 1 Corinthians 13:11 – "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me." His early commitment to faith was influenced by his mother, whose vibrant relationship with God, was visible. J.C. would go on to be ordained at just 18 years old in 1951, beginning a ministry that would span more than six decades.

Growing up, he worked to support his family, taking jobs as a pin setter at a bowling alley and a tire changer. These formative years instilled in him a deep work ethic and resilience that would define his life.

J.C. attended Burton Elementary and graduated from C.A. Johnson High School before earning his Bachelor of Arts and later a Bachelor of Divinity from Benedict College and the J.J. Starks School of Theology. He would later be honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from his alma mater.



A devoted pastor, J.C. led congregations across South Carolina, including in Blythewood, Camden and Anderson. His sermons were rooted in justice and the teachings of Christ. As a young minister, he also became involved in the civil rights movement, organizing, advocating, and even risking his life to stand for equity. He later served as President of the Columbia branch of the NAACP, where he worked closely with national leaders, including Thurgood Marshall, to investigate racially motivated incidents.

In 1961, J.C. married Eleather Gilchrist, who had recently moved to Columbia to work as an office manager for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. Their love story was rooted in shared values of faith, service, and integrity. They welcomed three children – Angela, James, and Lisa – and together navigated a life of ministry, advocacy, and global service.

In 1969, J.C. joined the U.S. Navy, becoming the third Black chaplain in the branch’s history. It was a bold decision, and one he never regretted. For nearly 30 years, he provided spiritual leadership, counsel, and care to thousands across the globe. His service took him from Cherry Point to San Diego, from Okinawa to Pensacola, and even to the remote island of Diego Garcia.

J.C. broke barriers and blazed trails as the first African American to serve in numerous leadership roles across the Navy Chaplain Corps. He was the first: Black Brigade Chaplain at the U.S. Naval Academy, Director of the Naval Chaplain School, and a pivotal figure in modernizing the Chaplain Corps’ recruitment and mentoring efforts.

Throughout his military ministry, he was committed to the spiritual care of all people, those of his own faith, those of other faiths, and those of no faith at all. He often said his calling was to be a bridge, between the hurting & hopeful, the doubting & faithful, the forgotten & beloved. His leadership reflected that truth.



Following his retirement in 1996 with the rank of Captain, J.C. and Eleather settled in Augusta, Georgia. But "retirement" was in name only. He was a tireless servant-leader, pastoring at New Hope Baptist Church in McCormick, SC; mentoring Naval Academy hopefuls as a Blue and Gold Officer; chairing the Columbia County Department of Family and Children Services; leading marriage retreats and leadership workshops; and founding the McCormick Community Enrichment and Development Corporation to support the next generation.

In each community he served, military or civilian, J.C. fostered unity, healing, and hope. He organized international aid through Navy vessels, brought Protestants and Catholics together in Virginia, and helped battered women find safe refuge in Georgia. His life's work was about spiritual transformation, communal dignity, and faithful presence.

He leaves behind a powerful legacy: his beloved wife of nearly 64 years, Eleather; three devoted children, Angela F. Williams (Roderick), James C. Williams, and Lisa L. Williams (Chris Palmer).

His siblings Barbara Daniel, Bettye Vaden, Jackie Williams (Louise), Yvonne Henry, Rosetta Brown, and Portia Williams; and a host of nieces, nephews, extended family, colleagues, and spiritual sons and daughters.

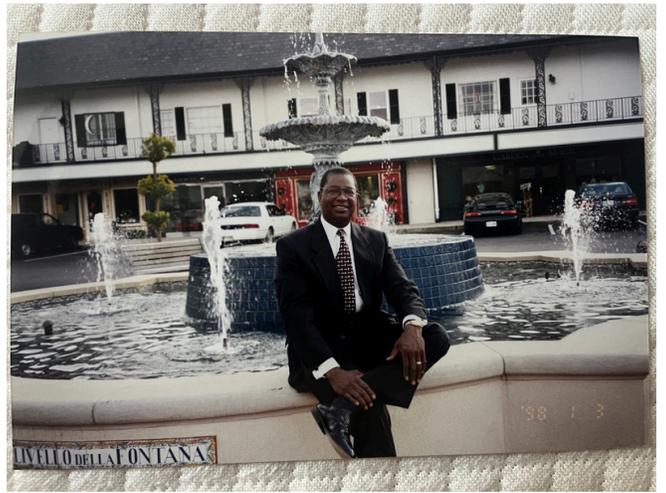
He is preceded in death by his siblings Mary Henry, Ethel Watts, Eugene "Ike" Williams, Larry Williams, and three brothers lost in childhood.

Chaplain Williams lived his faith boldly. He shattered ceilings. He opened doors. He stood in the gap. And in doing so, he built a legacy that lives on in every life he touched.

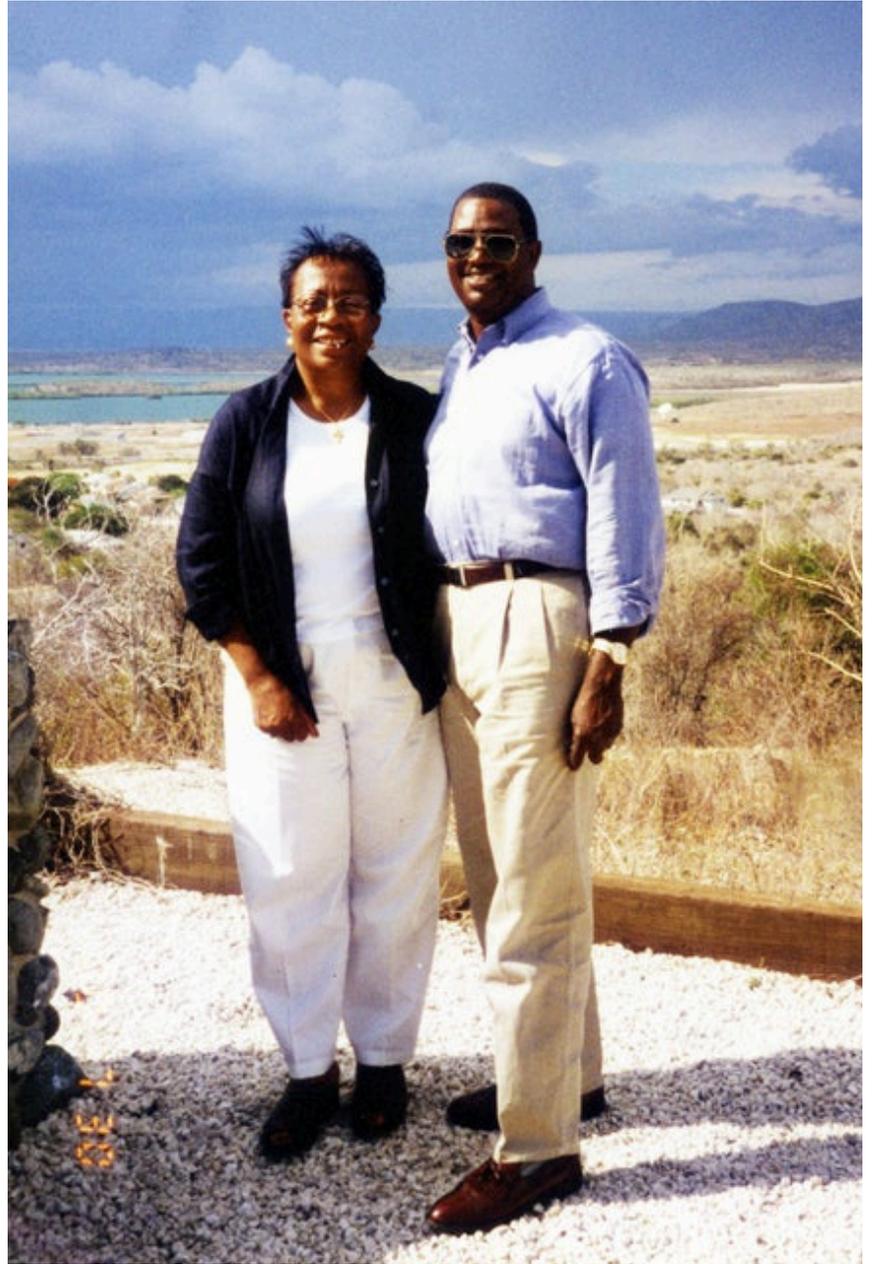
Even in his twilight years, J.C. maintained his sharp wit, signature humor, and unwavering love for his family. He often teased Eleather, his partner in life and ministry, whom he lovingly called his "greatest gift."

As we reflect on his extraordinary life, we remember not only the titles he held or who accolades he received, but the man who was faithful, humble, wise, and kind. A chaplain. A leader. A bridge-builder. A servant of God.











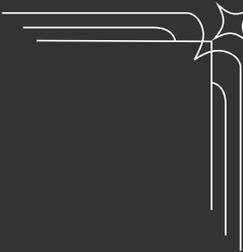
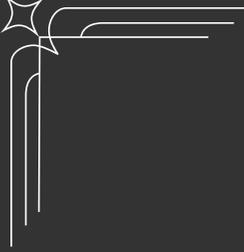


The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still
waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For
His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no
evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You
prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will
dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

PSALM 23



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The family of Chaplain J.C. Williams extends heartfelt thanks for your prayers, support, and presence. Your kind words, warm memories, and comforting spirit have lifted us during this time of remembrance.

SPECIAL THANKS

Leevy Funeral Home - Columbia, SC
Pridgen Funeral Home - Lanham, MD

MILITARY BURIAL

Fort Jackson National Cemetery • 12:00 p.m.

REPAST

St. John Baptist Church Fellowship Hall

