

A Sit-Down with FMBC's New Spiritual Leader - p. 4

FREE



Rev. Dr. Carlos D. Williams

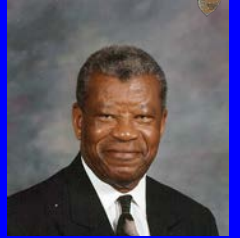
Providing Comfort for Others - p. 9



125th Harvest Celebration
Lakeside UMC
Annex Building
Nov. 9 - 11 a.m.
Speakers:
Rev. Jeffery Postell

Friday
November 7, 2025
Vol. 12, No. 10
ValleyWeeklyllc.com

SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Col. (Ret.) James O. Heyward

"We want the full works of citizenship with no reservations. We will accept nothing less." - A. Philip Randolph

Drake State Announces Endowed Scholarship Honoring Pioneering Automotive Executive

Drake State Community and Technical College has announced the creation of the Ellenae Fairhurst Endowed Scholarship, honoring the life and legacy of groundbreaking automotive executive and entrepreneur Ellenae Hart-Fairhurst.

Once fully funded with a principal gift of \$500,000, the endowment will provide a permanent source of financial support for Drake State students, with a particular focus on assisting mothers—whether biological, adoptive, or legal guardians—

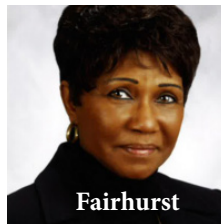
who are pursuing their education full- or part-time.

Ellenae Fairhurst's life embodied perseverance, leadership, and a steadfast belief in the power of education. A native of Dayton, Ohio, she began her career at Ford Motor Company and later became a pioneering automotive dealer. Fairhurst made history as the first African American female in North America to own both an Infiniti and a Lexus dealership, operating the successful Huntsville Autoplex for decades. Her career was marked by in-

novation, resilience, and a commitment to opening doors for others.

Through this endowed scholarship, Drake State seeks to carry forward Fairhurst's legacy of empowerment and opportunity. The scholarship will strengthen families, foster leadership, and provide transformative support to students seeking to achieve their educational and career goals.

"Ms. Fairhurst's story is one of determination, courage, and excellence," said Drake State President Dr. Patricia Sims. "We



Fairhurst

are proud to honor her remarkable legacy through a scholarship that uplifts students and celebrates her lifelong commitment to perseverance and success."

The Ellenae Fairhurst Endowed Scholarship reflects Drake State's ongoing commitment to making education more accessible and affordable for the Huntsville community.

TARCOG Sponsoring Caregiver College

TARCOG will host the free Caregiver College 2025 on Friday, November 21, at the

Huntsville Marriott, from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The keynote speaker will be Dr.

Herb Caldwell, founder of The Mama Joe Project, which focuses on essential support

for both elders and their caregivers. Register at www.tarcog.us or call (256) 830-0818.

State's Preliminary College Enrollment Edges 3 Percent

Undergraduate enrollment at Alabama's public universities is up this fall, according to figures presented to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Preliminary data show a 3.1% increase over last year across the state's 14 four-year schools, with only

three reporting small declines.
Alabama A&M University, 6,777, 3.7%;
Alabama State University, 3,874, 10.7%;
Athens State University, 2,578, 1.7%;
Auburn University, 28,979, 3.8%;
Auburn University at Montgomery, 3,316, -0.2%;

Jacksonville State University, 8,906, 3.1%;
Troy University, 9,422, -0.6%;
University of Alabama, 35,626, 3.2%;
University of Alabama at Birmingham, 12,136, 1.5%;
University of Alabama in Huntsville, 6,792, -0.2%;

University of Montevallo, 2,699, 0.2%;
University of North Alabama, 8,144, 6.9%;
University of South Alabama, 9,530, 3.1%;
University of West Alabama, 2,907, 7.8%;
Total Four-Year Institutions: 141,686, 3.1%

Church St. CPCA Hosts A&M Christmas Musicale

The 94th Annual Christmas Musicale featuring the Alabama A&M University Choir and the Alabama A&M Brass Ensemble will be held Sunday, December 7, at Church Street Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Downtown Huntsville, at 5:30 p.m.

The Choir is directed by Dr. Horace Carney (Eric Wilson, pianist), and the brass ensemble will be conducted by Carlton Wright.

The choir and ensemble appear under the auspices of the Department of Visual, Performing and Communication Arts of the College of Education, Human-

ities and Behavioral Sciences, along with the Office of Student Affairs.

Dr. Mitchell M. Walker, Sr., is pastor of Church Street CPCA, which was established in 1874

as the first Black Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the nation and one of the first established churches in Huntsville, Ala.

The public is invited.

The Valley Weekly

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

Gloria B. & Tim: Perspectives, Page 5
"Jahni" Moore's PowerShots, Page 6
Honoring Our Elders, Page 7
Preston Brown's "Spiritual Game Plan," Page 9
Sunday Lectionary, Page 10
Washington Update, Page 10



AAMU Market, WJAB to Host Food Drive

Alabama A&M University's Bulldog Market, in partnership with WJAB, will host a Food Drive on Friday, November 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the University's main gate on Chase Road.

The event aims to support students facing food insecurity and provide essential items to those in need.

The Market now serves more than 200 students daily, providing a critical lifeline for those who might otherwise go without.

Items needed for the Food Drive on Friday, Nov. 7, include:

- *Nonperishable food items*
- *Personal hygiene products*
- *Toiletries*

- *Bottled water*

Donations can also be dropped off at the McCaleb and McIntosh Building, Room 103, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information or to make donations, email monica.clarke@aamu.edu or call (256) 372-4583.

The Madison County Democratic Party held a press conference at 6156 Pulaski Pike in Huntsville, Ala., on November 4 to officially launch the 2026 election cycle under the banner: “United for All Madison County.” The event spotlighted urgent issues facing local families—including rising prices, economic instability, and threats to democracy—and outlined the party’s bold vision for unity, inclusion and action.

“Why ‘United for all Madison County’? Because division is the weapon our opponents are using to dismantle democracy.

The Republican playbook thrives on fear, exclusion, division, distraction, and chaos—policies that fracture communities, rhetoric that demonizes dissent, and actions that defy democratic norms. This is not just a slogan—it’s a mission. It’s a movement,” said Sheila McNeil, Chair of the Madison County Democrats (right).

This gathering came at a critical moment, note organizers. With inflation driving up the cost of living—from groceries to rent to medical care—families across Alabama are feeling the strain. Meanwhile, harmful federal policies, inaction, and political dysfunction continue to undermine public institutions

and put vulnerable communities at risk. The 2026 election is just 365 days away. We must unite and fight for what is right starting now.

“People are hurting,” McNeil continued. “The price of everything is going up, but wages and protections are not. If the government shutdown continues, it will devastate federal workers, veterans, and families across our state. We demand that our congressional delegation take immediate action to fulfill their responsibilities and safeguard the interests of our people.”

Madison County—Alabama's second-largest county and home to the second-highest number of registered voters — is poised to play a decisive role in shaping the state's future. The Democratic Party is rising to meet the moment.

“The Democratic community is awake. The Madison County Democratic Party is alive and well,” McNeil declared. “We are the ones defending truth, justice, and the freedoms we hold sacred. This is our moment to build a future rooted in unity, accountability, and bold leadership.

The event previewed upcoming voter engagement events, volunteer trainings, and candidate recruitment efforts. Residents are encouraged



to attend, get involved, and help build a movement that reflects the values of unity, justice, and progress.

Among the list of invited speakers were the following:

- *Sheila McNeil, Chair, MCDEEC
- * Anthony Daniels, Minority Leader of the AL House
- * Marilyn Lands, State Rep District 10
- * Randy Kelly, Alabama State Democratic Party Chair or his designee

- * Jason Jones, Chair, Local Alabama Democratic Conference
- * Sara Bradley- Democratic Women
- * Zoie Roberson, NAYA Youth Caucus Chair
- * James Kismon, Union Rep
- * Richard Mathis, Alabama Education Association

For additional information, contact Sheila McNeil, at (256) 472-1048; visit madisoncountydemocrats.com; or e-mail info@madisoncountydemocrats.com.

Huntsville Approves Affordable Housing Effort

Homeownership dreams are taking shape in northwest Huntsville with the City's approval of an agreement with Family Services Center to turn an empty lot on Olson Street into a welcoming, affordable home for a local family.



Family Services Center Inc. is a certified Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). The agreement allows the nonprofit to use \$238,750 in federal HOME Investment Partnerships funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct an affordable home at 6204 Olson St. NW. The project aligns with the City's ongoing efforts to expand homeownership

opportunities for low- and moderate-income families and support neighborhood revitalization in northwest Huntsville.

Under terms of the agreement, Family Services Center will oversee all aspects of the project, including land acquisition, construction and the eventual sale of the completed three-bedroom home to an income-qualified

household. The property must remain within federal affordability standards for a minimum period of 15 years, as required by federal guidelines. It will be subject to ongoing monitoring by the City's Community Development Department.

This project continues Huntsville's strong partnership with local CHDOs to promote stable, affordable housing and neighborhood investment. By leveraging HUD's HOME program, the City and its nonprofit partners help residents achieve the dream of homeownership while ensuring long-term affordability and compliance with fair housing, accessibility and energy-efficiency standards.

Huntsville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Meetings

The Citizens Advisory Committee of the Huntsville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will meet on **Monday, November 17, 2025**, at 5:00 pm, on the 6th Floor of the City of Huntsville Municipal Building, at 305 Fountain Circle SW. The Metropolitan Planning Organization **Policy Board** will meet on **Wednesday, November 19, 2025**, at 4:00 pm on the 2nd Floor, (Council Chambers) of the City of Huntsville Municipal Building, at 305 Fountain Circle SW. To review items on the agenda for these meetings, visit: <http://www.huntsvillempo.org/about/meetings-and-agendas/>. For more information on the MPO, visit: <http://www.huntsvillempo.org/>

The Valley Weekly

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Items for consideration for publication in The Valley Weekly should be submitted at least TWO weeks in advance to above address or by e-mail to info@valleyweeklyllc.com. Items published do not necessarily reflect the views of The Valley Weekly, LLC.

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The Valley Weekly

Ad Rates Single Issue

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	2.5x5 inches	\$150
Sixteenth Page		
	2.5x2.5	\$75
Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$100/Flat Fee

Welcome, Rev. Dr. Carlos Williams, to Huntsville and the Tennessee Valley

The Valley Weekly extends a warm welcome to **Rev. Dr. Carlos Williams** (below, left), the new pastor of the historic **First Missionary Baptist Church** (FMBC) in Huntsville. FMBC has long been a historic cornerstone of faith, leadership, and service in our community, and Dr. Williams' arrival marks an exciting new chapter in that proud legacy.

As publisher, I was especially honored to be among the first to meet Dr. Williams during his first official month in Huntsville. On Friday, October 31, our senior editor, Jerome Saintjones, and I had the privilege of a personal interview that left us inspired by his humility, vision, and heart for service.

My family's connection to FMBC goes back to 1966, when one of my sisters, Mary Williams, first came to Huntsville to attend **Alabama A&M University**. I was baptized by **Pastor Julius R. Scruggs** at the Church Street location, and he later officiated my marriage to my late husband at the Blue Spring Road campus. All three of our children grew up in that same loving church community—surrounded by members who helped us raise them. FMBC has truly been part of our family's spiritual foundation and village.



As FMBC welcomes Dr. Williams, it continues to shine as a beacon of faith and hope—not only for its congregation but for the entire Tennessee Valley. His leadership promises to build upon the church's strong traditions while guiding it forward in new and meaningful ways.

At *The Valley Weekly*, now in our **11th year**, we remain committed to sharing the stories that uplift and connect our diverse community. Though we began as a printed publication in 2014, our strong online readership reflects the continued desire for accessible and inclusive local news.

To **Rev. Dr. Carlos Williams and family**—welcome to Huntsville and welcome home to First Missionary Baptist Church. We wish you blessings and success as you lead this historic congregation into its next season of ministry and growth.

Until next week ...

Dorothy



NOVEMBER 7 - ALGEE SMITH - Algee Smith is an American actor and singer. After appearing in television roles in 2017, Smith first rose to fame, portraying Ralph Tresvant in BET's *The New Edition Story* miniseries. The same year, he garnered critical acclaim as Larry Reed in Kathryn Bigelow's film *Detroit*. In addition, he starred in the movie *The Hate U Give*. After appearances in projects such as Disney Channel's *Let It Shine* and *Earth to Echo*, Smith landed his first significant acting role—playing real-life singer Ralph Tresvant in *The New Edition Story*. In Kathryn Bigelow's film *Detroit*, Smith starred in the Algiers Motel incident. On June 22, 2017, Smith released his first EP, *Listen*, featuring a blend of R&B and Hip hop tracks. He also performed a song for the *Detroit* film soundtrack called "Grow."

- *Blackcelebritybirthdays.org*



TVW Interviews **Rev. Dr. Carlos D. Williams** of Historic FMBC

by Jerome Saintjones

The Beginning

Rev. Dr. Carlos D. Williams has an ambitious vision for the Huntsville-based First Missionary Baptist Church, the iconic institution led by a series of charismatic leaders since its start in 1880—among them the late great Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs. While some will probably assert that the energetic Morehouse alumnus has big shoes to fill, Rev. Williams can just as easily unroll a list of mentors, Scruggs included, who have prepared him for the Herculean task.

Indeed, Rev. Williams has been blessed with a plethora of Christian mentors since his childhood days back in his native Shelby County, Alabama, where his parents were staunch but loving Christians. His father was a faithful deacon and later became an influential pastor, while his mother fully supported her husband as an inspiring church musician. The two provided for Williams and his two siblings a solid foundation that was consistently reinforced by the neighborhood and church community.

“Everyone raised us,” Rev. Williams fondly recalled, “so there were so many reinforcements.” His father often held afternoon programs, and his mother played the organ for the gathering families. Thus, whenever he was inevitably challenged as a young man, the guiding voices of the community always were



less than a stone's throw away. Moreover, when the deeper trials of adolescence loomed and even when his mother succumbed in his early years to breast cancer, the guiding impact of “the village” had been ingrained in him so much that his paths were usually brightened by the Word.

The Southern Black church, then, surely created a mechanism that molded young men and women for Christian leadership and responsibility as citizens. He believes some of its unmistakable and important impact was lessened within the Black community as a result of the many waves of the Great Migration, when millions of Blacks left the tumultuous and often rac-

ist South in search of better opportunities and living conditions in the northern regions of the United States. Yet, Rev. Williams was among the many youths who remained in the South, where he accepted his call to the ministry more than three decades ago at age 18.

“I have been preaching for some 31 years, but I actually started before I was licensed,” said Rev. Williams. “I always had a boldness about me that the Lord was able to use. I would sometimes lead youth programs or be the speaker for Youth Day programs and so on. The Lord had a hand on me at an early age.”

Greatest Influence

Although the community and Christian influences of his early years were undeniably guiding forces, they did not monopolize the spaces assigned for theological voices. He found many such impactful forces at Morehouse College, which had become part of his family's tradition, as cousins had attended the school years before he walked the campus.

“One of the most influential figures was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,” noted Rev. Williams. “I followed his history and Morehouse path.” Williams added that Morehouse exposed him to—through its intense

curriculum—the interconnectedness of social consciousness and the Gospel.

“I went to Chapel every Thursday,” he said. “There were always great minds as speakers.” Sadly, Rev. Williams had completed three and a half years at the prestigious college when he had to drop out due to financial reasons. His father's company, where worker conflict had been brewing for years prior, finally went on strike and his father was unable to shoulder the cost of the private school. Although Rev. Williams completed his theological training at another institution, the failure to complete his degree at Morehouse still troubles him to his day. Yet, if a program emerged that would finally allow him to secure his degree from the Atlanta school after all these years, he would enroll in a heartbeat, he said.

Rev. Williams remembers with fondness his days as an impressionable student at Morehouse. Today, however, some research suggests that young African Americans are moving away from traditional church membership and attendance. A 2021 Pew Research study of 8,600 Black adults ages 18 and older found that young Black adults are “less religious and less engaged in Black churches than older generations.” It also noted that Black Millennials and members of Generation Z are even “less likely to have grown up in Black church-

es and less likely to say that religion is an important part of their lives.”

While Rev. Williams finds some truth in the study, he reflectively adds that it is equally important to look at the kind of church.

“There are some myths about what the young are looking for,” explained Dr. Williams. “For some time, many thought that young people were simply looking for gimmickry and flashing lights. But the reality reveals something deeper: They are interested in (1) The Word as an answer to life's questions and (2) a sense of community.”

Rev. Williams said that young people cannot be shamed back into the church, and that there is a demand for ministers—regardless of age—who are sensitive to their needs. The Black Church has often failed its young people in a number of ways, many dating back decades ago, the minister said. He added that some young people have been put off by how their church elders dealt with sin and other church issues in the past; have felt that their opinions and influence had not been considered; have believed that their attendance was valued but their input was not; or have come to believe that their church was permanently cemented in doing things a certain way.

The growth of strong church leaders of the future

See **INTERVIEW**, p. 11

Milennia loment

by Gloria B. Caldwell

In Time ...

We all talk about doing, receiving, wanting things ... in time. Whether it is a goal, a relationship, kids, or to move, to align ourselves with the spiritual being we “claim to be!” But, what is “In time”?

Is “In time”, justification for being afraid, stagnation, wanting things our way without judgment, waiting for what we deem to be “perfect timing”, procrastination hiding itself, disguised as patience, or not knowing how to start? (start)? What is in time? Ill preparation? Lack of ability to start due to self-stagnation? Tell me, what is “In time”?

The better question is, how much time will you



perfect moment may never arrive unless you create it. Instead of waiting for the stars to align, choose to act now. Set achievable goals, embrace the discomfort of change, and take that first step. TAKE IT!!

The journey may be messy, and there may never be perfect timing, but progress is always better than stagnation.

Don't let “in time” be a barrier. Let it be your launching pad.

Start living the life you seek today!

God loves you, and so do I.

He has given you a gift, *open it.*

have? So often, we risk missing the beautiful opportunities that life has to offer. Every moment spent waiting can cost us precious time that we cannot reclaim. Again, how much time do you truly have? Life is fleeting, and the

Strategic Amateurism: Why Leaders Must Grow Down to Grow Up

In today's business culture, expertise is currency. We celebrate mastery, reward recognition, and prize leaders who can cut through the noise with practiced precision. But as the Harvard Business Review warns in *The Power of Being an Amateur*, expertise carries a hidden danger: cognitive entrenchment—the tendency to get stuck in old ways of thinking simply because they've worked before.

The more you become “somebody” in your field, the less flexible your thinking becomes. That's the leadership paradox of the 21st century: success can quietly sabotage growth.

The antidote is what HBR calls strategic amateurism—the practice of deliberately placing yourself in unfamiliar territory, where you have no titles, trophies, or track record to protect. Whether it's learning a new language, cooking from scratch, playing an instrument, or trying stand-up comedy, the goal is simple: when you have no prior success to lean on, your brain rewires itself for curiosity, humility, and flexibility.

That wisdom aligns closely with my Ego-holism Recovering (EHR) framework. Step 1 reminds us to glance back quickly—to acknowledge where our egos may have hardened into habits before pressing forward. Step 4 challenges us to grow up to be a child—to approach leadership not as know-it-alls, but as learn-it-alls. Leaders who embrace these steps rediscover the gifts of openness, wonder, and creative resilience that once fueled their early ambitions.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report underscores the urgency: by 2030, nearly 40% of workers' skills will need updating. The leaders who thrive won't be those clutching their credentials but those unafraid to become beginners again.

Jesus modeled this principle long before any business school did. In Matthew 18:3, He declared, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The same holds true for modern leadership: greatness begins with growth, and growth begins with humility.

In other words, the path to lasting leadership may require us to grow backward before we grow forward—back into that sacred space of curiosity, teachability, and awe where true innovation and spiritual maturity begin.



Tim Allston

Leadership Player-Coach and Four-time Amazon Best-Selling Author

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The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

November 8

Round Top Folk Festival
Burritt on the Mountain
Huntsville, Ala.
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

BULLDOG Football

vs. Grambling State
Louis Crews Stadium
Alabama A&M University
Huntsville, Ala. - 2 p.m.

November 9

125th Harvest Celebration
Lakeside United Methodist
Church
Speaker: Rev. Jeffery Postell
Theme: "Do Not Give Up"
Meridian Street (Annex)
11 a.m.

November 14

AAMU Alumni Hall of
Fame Induction Ceremony
Honorees:
Minister Jonell Calloway
Dr. Samuel McAlpine
Pamela McDonald
Hon. Jameria Johnson
Moore
T. M. Elmore Building
Alabama A&M University
Info
7 p.m.

November 14-15

The Mix & Mingle Tour
Starring: Sheryl Under-
wood, Kyle Erby & Mike
Washington
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
huntsville@levitylive.com

November 15

BULLDOG Football

vs. Florida A&M
Louis Crews Stadium
Alabama A&M University
Huntsville, Ala. - 2 p.m.

Katt Williams
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 8 p.m.

November 21

TARCOG
Caregiver College 2025
Huntsville Marriott
5 Tranquility Base
Huntsville, Ala.

7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

November 28-30

Marcus Wiley
Comedian
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
huntsville@levitylive.com

December 7

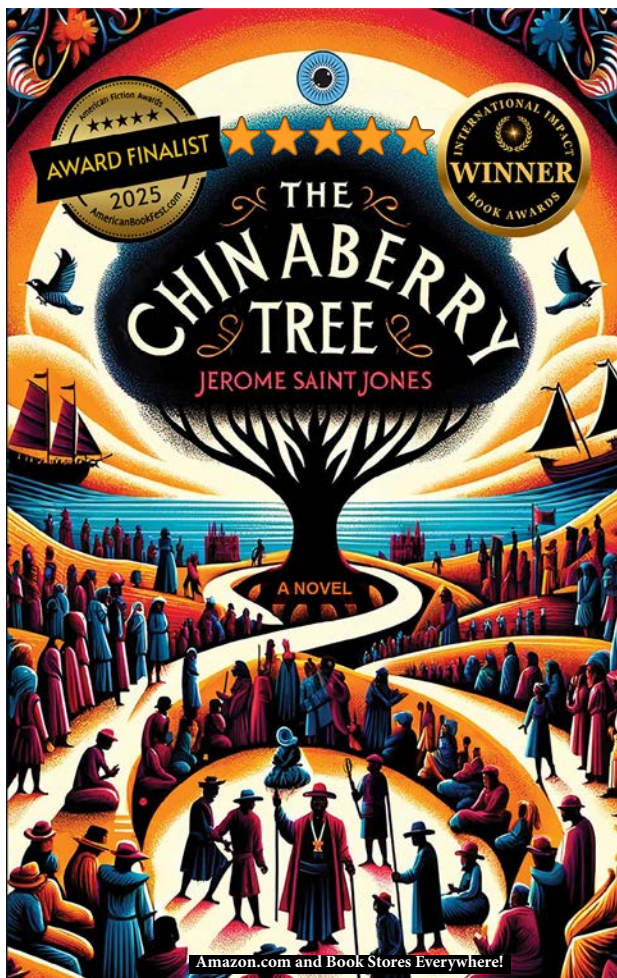
Christmas with C.S. Lewis
Mars Music Hall
Von Braun Center
1 p.m.

December 9

Alabama A&M University
150th Anniversary Closing
Ceremony
Huntsville, Ala.
TBA

December 11

"Wheel of Fortune"
Mars Music Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.



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PowerShot

"The potential
of the collective
community is
greater than
its division."

Tyrone Crutcher

"Freedom is never granted: it is won.
Justice is never given: it is exacted."

- A. Philip Randolph



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Rosetta James Foundation "Spotlight on Our Elders" ... Featuring

Col. (Ret.) James O. Heyward

A native of Sumter, S.C., James O. Heyward, Sr., was a career Army officer who retired from active service in 1983 with the rank of Colonel. Col. (Ret.) Heyward served in key command and staff positions in the United States and overseas, amassing a diverse background of extensive experience in planning, management and operations to include training, logistics, resource management, counseling and investigative work. His last military assignment was Professor of Military Science at Alabama A&M University (AAMU).

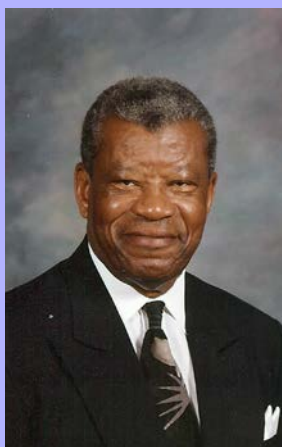
Since his retirement, he held the position of Director of Admissions at AAMU from 1984 to 1997. In this position, he was responsible for directing and coordinating the University's recruitment effort and administering the academic scholarship program. He formulated, recommended and implemented recruitment and admissions policies—all crucial to a stable enrollment of quality students. During his work in higher education, he held key positions in the Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers on the state and national levels, and was affiliated with other professional educators organizations.

Some of Col. (Ret.) Heyward's significant past military assignments were Commander, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Field Element, Fort Monroe, Virginia; coor-

dinating world-wide liaison network in the United States and five foreign countries; Deputy Commander, U.S. Army Military Community, Baumholder, Germany; member, U.S. European Command, J-3, Joint Task Force Division, Germany; staff member, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania; and many others.

Heyward holds a B.S. degree from South Carolina State University and an M.A. from Shippensburg State University. He graduated from the Armed Forces Staff College and the U.S. Army Personnel Management for Executives Program. In 1979, he was inducted into the South Carolina State University Army ROTC Hall of Fame. In 1996, he received the South Carolina State University Distinguished Alumni Award.

Heyward was also a former Paratrooper and received numerous military awards and citations, including the Legion of Merit. Heyward remained active in community activities. He was a member and past president of the local graduate chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; member of Epsilon Kappa Boule, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity; holds membership in the Royal College of Papal Knights in the Americas; former member of the Board of Directors of LIFT Housing; co-chair of the Huntsville Committee to design a Buffalo Soldiers Memorial; and chairman



of the 1999 Huntsville Chief of Police Task Force on Recruiting and Hiring.

Col. (Ret.) Heyward was a member of the Executive Board of the Greater Alabama Council, Boy Scouts of America, Birmingham; Assistant District Commissioner, Talakto District, immediate past president, Urban Emphasis Scout Leaders Council, Cubmaster Pack 906, West Mastin Lake Elementary School. In June 2011, Heyward was an honoree at the Boy Scouts of America, Talakto District Annual Eagle Luncheon in Huntsville. He was a member of the Steward Board and Secretary of Saint John A.M.E. Church, and he served as guest speaker for a number of local and state organizations.

Col. (Ret.) Heyward married the former (late) Willie Mae Thompson, and they had two sons and two grandsons.

"Spotlight on Our Elders" is a weekly feature sponsored by the Rosetta James Foundation to promote **volunteerism** and activism in our community among those who are 70-plus. The Foundation also provides scholarships. Learn more about us at www.rosettajamesfoundation.org. Know an outstanding elder (70+) that you would like to see featured? Send us a photo and 250-word write-up to info@valleyweeklyllc.com.



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AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

Is the Homestead Exemption Another Grand Illusion?

Would state and local governments save more money by eliminating the ruse called Homestead Exemption?

• That's the incisive policy question few homeowners — or even local officials — ask out loud. And, the short answer is: Yes — in most states, eliminating or consolidating homestead exemptions would save governments administrative costs and simplify tax equity, but there's a political cost that makes such reform nearly untouchable.

Let's walk through the full reasoning, economically and politically.

1. Administrative Complexity vs. Net Benefit

Homestead exemptions — especially when layered by age, disability, and income — create an expensive bureaucratic maze. Each exemption type requires:

- *Annual applications and income verification.
- *Data cross-checks with state and federal tax records.
- *Property ownership and occupancy validation.
- *County database adjustments and audit mechanisms.

For small savings — sometimes \$15 to \$75 per household per year — county revenue offices may spend \$10 to \$40 in staff time and system maintenance processing each exemption.

That makes the net public benefit negative in purely fiscal terms.

In contrast, broad-based rate adjustments or automatic credits (like “circuit breakers”) could deliver relief with less red tape.

2. The “Illusion of Generosity”

As noted, the program's true purpose has drifted:

Originally, homestead exemptions were intended to prevent displacement during hard times (Depression-era roots).

Over time, they became political pacifiers — allowing officials to boast about “protecting homeowners” while quietly raising millage rates to maintain revenue.

That's why you often see government reports touting “\$X million in homeowner relief,” but when you divide that by the number of recipients, it's often \$30–\$60 each.

So yes — much of this is an illusion of generosity, sustained because it sounds compassionate and “pro-senior,” even when it has almost no material impact.

3. Who Actually Loses If It's Eliminated?

Politicians, not taxpayers.

Removing the exemption could save counties administrative cost and slightly raise net revenue.

But it would also expose how little the program was truly worth — triggering

backlash among older voters who believed it helped them.

Lower-income retirees (under ~\$12,000 AGI) would lose modest but genuine relief. For them, \$100–\$200 per year can matter.

That group could instead be targeted through a more direct mechanism (like refundable property-tax credits or income-based rebates).

The key point: for 90–95% of homeowners, the fiscal tradeoff leans in favor of elimination or consolidation.

4. Economists' Perspective

Fiscal analysts from groups like the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), and Brookings have long argued that:

- *Homestead exemptions are politically sticky but economically inefficient.
- *They distort perceptions of fairness (renters and commercial owners shoulder more tax load).
- *They rarely reduce property-tax regressivity.
- *The administrative cost often outweighs the real public benefit.
- *A more rational system would be: Automatic circuit-breaker credits, triggered when taxes exceed a fixed % of income.
- *Unified exemption rules across state and local levels (not separate age/income filings).

*Periodic indexation for inflation — to avoid “frozen” \$12,000 thresholds from the 1970s.

5. The Cold Arithmetic

Let's imagine a county with 30,000 homestead filings:

Each filing costs ~\$20 in administrative labor and system costs = \$600,000 yearly.

The average savings per filer is \$40 = \$1.2 million in tax relief.

But the county recoups most of that via slightly higher millage to meet budget needs.

So effectively, the county spends \$600,000 administering a placebo.

6. Why It Persists

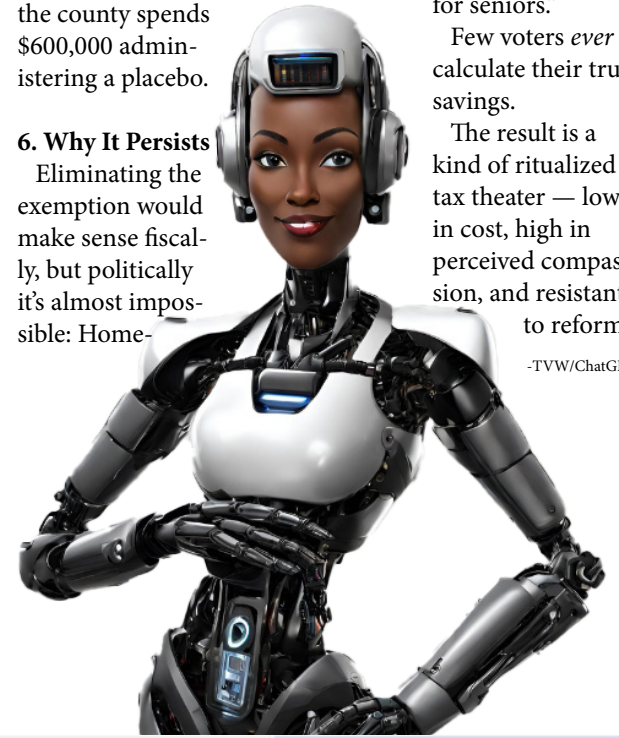
Eliminating the exemption would make sense fiscally, but politically it's almost impossible: Home-

owners believe it protects them. Local politicians use it as campaign proof they “fought for seniors.”

Few voters *ever* calculate their true savings.

The result is a kind of ritualized tax theater — low in cost, high in perceived compassion, and resistant to reform.

-TVW/ChatGPT



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VALLEY DEATHS

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Funeral services are incomplete and will be announced at a later date for **MR. MICHAEL HUMPHREY** (b. 1944); **MR. WALTER CLIFFORD SOBRYAN** (b. 1944); and **MR. TIMMY STEVENS** (b. 1968).

Funeral service for **MRS. QUENTIN MITCHELL TAYLOR** (b. 1973) will be held on Saturday, November 8, at 10 a.m. at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Elder Gilbert Mitchell officiating.



Celebration of Life for **MR. XAVIER CHAMBERS** (b. 1994) was Sunday, November 2, from the Moseley Chapel, Oakwood University Seventh-Day Adventist Church, with Pastor Debleaire Snell officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. LILLIE G. ("SWEETIE") BONE WALKER** (b. 1931) was Saturday, November 1, at New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor Ricky L. Sykes officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. VINDA MENDENHALL** (b. 1963) was Saturday, November 1, at Indian Creek Primitive Baptist Association Tabernacle, 6378 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, Ala., with Elder Dr. Thomas Beavers officiating.

Funeral service for **MS. LIZA MAE LOFTON** (b. 1934) will be announced later by Williams, Farr, and Purnell Funeral Home of Sikeston, Missouri. Ms. Liza Mae Lofton is the mother of Nelms Memorial Funeral Home staff member Ms. Liza Lofton.

Funeral service for **MS. LISA STEGER** (b. 1962) was Monday, October 27, at Northwest Church of Christ, 5008 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, Ala., with Brother John Branch officiating.

HMBCC Meeting Scheduled

The Huntsville Metro Black Chamber of Commerce will meet on Tuesday, November 8, at 12 noon at Madison County Commission Office District Six, 3210 Hi Lo Circle, Huntsville, Ala. Contact: jerry.mitchell@naaa-chamber.org.

Valley Weekly

Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S

Today's Spiritual Game Plan:
"Providing Comfort for Others"

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

Just recently, a well known Huntsville family traveling on a private jet, died in a plane crash. I can't imagine what the family, as well as friends, are going through. During times like this, it can be very difficult because everyone, quite naturally, attempts to find closure as to why this all happened.

In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul wants to tell us the truth. And the fact of the matter is, life can be painful. When Jesus died upon the cross, it was painful. We all see the unexpected tragedies that happen in life and the repercussions that are felt in a major way.

But guess what? We are not alone. There were many people in the bible that endured hardships. For example, Job was a righteous man and yet He still had to endure pain and suffering. The apostle Paul was no stranger to pain either and yet through it all, he says, 'I still want to give God praise.'

You see, if we ever want to provide comfort for oth-

ers, there are some things we need to understand. First, we need to realize that God is sovereign. So no matter what happens in our lives God is still in control, even though there will be mistakes made and failures from people. God is working them out in our lives for our good. Secondly, we need to understand that God will be with us to change the condition of our circumstances. For example, God did not simply just deliver the Hebrew boys from the fiery furnace, He joined



them in the furnace. So even though the fire was still hot, the fire was not normal, because Jesus joined them in it. So, if God has not taken you out of something, let Him join you in it, so that the condition of your situation will change for the better. Thirdly, God loves us and always has a great plan for our future, even though we may not see it yet, just give it time.

Prayer: God of all comfort, help us to provide others with the comfort that

you have given us. Question: When was the last time you provided comfort for someone going through a difficult time ? What did you do?

Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters, and make sure you purchase a copy of my books, *Spiritual Game Plans For A Successful Life* and *A Champion Game Plan for Life*, at amazon.com.

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Valley Weekly Washington One Minute

by Ron Hamm

Here are the latest top issues and events in Washington, D.C.:

NOTE: *Monday was Day #34 of the federal government shutdown (tying the record for the most extended shutdown set on January 25, 2019). Tuesday was Election Day, with key races for VA and NJ governors, NYC mayor, and California's Prop 50 on redistricting.*

1. CONGRESS. The Senate is in session, while the House remains out (there have been no votes in the House since Sept. 19). Last week, the President called on the Senate to eliminate the filibuster, so that the Senate would only need a simple majority vote to reopen the government (Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-SD, demurred, calling it a "bad idea"). According to Punchbowl News, last Wednesday the Senate Democratic Leadership polled its members about voting for a FY2026 appropriations package that would combine the Defense, Labor/HHS/Ed, Transporta-

tion/HUD, and Commerce/Justice/Science appropriations bills, thereby showing a glimmer of movement toward ending a shutdown. Last week, the Senate passed three joint resolutions disapproving the President's tariffs on Canada and Brazil, and to end the national emergency used to impose global reciprocal tariffs of 10-50% on most countries (with four Republicans crossing the aisle each time to vote with the Democrats: Sens. Paul, Murkowski, Collins, and McConnell). On Oct. 21, Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes sued the U.S. House of Representatives to force it to swear in Rep.-elect Adelita Grijalva (D-AZ), who won a special election on Sept. 23 to succeed her late father.

2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH. Last Friday, the White House announced that public tours of the White House will resume on Dec. 2, 2025, after being suspended in September for the construction of the State

Ballroom. On Saturday, the White House issued a fact sheet about the recent China-U.S. trade deal, in which the U.S. agreed to abandon a threatened 100% tariff on Chinese goods, while reducing an earlier 20% tariff to 10% (bringing the overall China tariff rate down to 47%). China agreed to suspend restrictions on rare earths for one year, announced in October, and committed to purchasing 12 million metric tons (MMT) of U.S. soybeans during the last two months of 2025. They also agreed to buy at least 25 MMT of U.S. soybeans each year in 2026, 2027, and 2028.

On Saturday, federal Rhode Island Judge John McConnell clarified his earlier ruling from Friday, which ordered the administration to tap into a \$5 billion reserve fund to pay 42 million SNAP recipients whose benefits stopped on Nov. 1. He stated that the administration could make full payments by Monday or partial payments by Wednesday.

3. SUPREME COURT. On Wednesday, the court heard arguments in two cases – Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump and Trump v. V.O.S. Selections – to determine whether the President has

the authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose his reciprocal tariffs and tariffs related to fentanyl trafficking. According to the SCOTUSblog website, the justices will discuss former Kentucky clerk Kim Davis' challenge to same-sex marriage at their private conference on Friday (it takes two conferences for a case to move forward; if the justices deny review, that announcement could come as soon as Nov. 10).

4. EDUCATION. On October 27, a federal judge ordered the U.S. Department of Education to reinstate approximately \$1 billion in canceled mental health grants, citing "numerous irreparable harms" caused by the Trump administration's decision

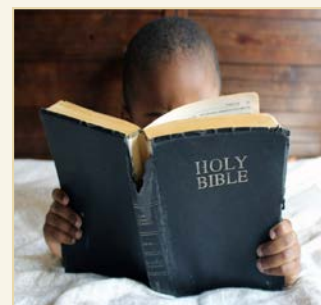
to end the programs. The ruling affects about 50 colleges, school districts, and nonprofit entities across 16 states that sued after the administration canceled the School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program and Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant in April. The judge found the grant cancellations were likely "arbitrary and capricious" because they were not based on individual reasons or relevant data. The Education Department announced it will appeal the order, stating its new \$270 million grant competition strengthens mental health programs by prohibiting funds from being used for "promoting or endorsing gender ideology, political activism, racial stereotyping, or hostile environments."

5. NEW POLL. An NBC News poll of 1,000 registered voters conducted from October 24-28 shows that voters favor Democrats over Republicans in the fight for Congress by 8 points, 50%-42%. This is the largest lead for either party on the congressional ballot in the NBC News poll since the 2018 midterms, when Democrats won 40 seats. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. Additionally, 45% of Americans blame Republicans for the government shutdown, while only 33% blame Democrats.

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This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, November 9, 2025
Twenty-Second Sunday
after Pentecost



(Track 2, Year C)

First Lesson:
Job 19:23-27a
Psalm 17:1-9

Second Lesson:
2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17
GOSPEL:
Luke 20:27-38

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Continued from Page 4

INTERVIEW: Rev. Dr. Carlos D. Williams of Historic FMBC *by Jerome Saintjones*

hinges upon how youth are involved in church activities today, Rev. Williams said. For instance, young men and women should be given access to the inner workings of the church's trustee board, finance committee and other offices. This is a process that must be methodically achieved over time.

As a new minister at FMBC, the pastor realizes that any vision must walk hand-in-hand with steady acclimatization. Thus, there will be the usual baby steps, the consultations with the scores of ministries and church surveys designed for the greater membership. There will always be conflict among church bodies, Rev. Williams said, but a major task of a spiritual leader is first "to help people grow in faith," so that their knowledge and love of Jesus asserts itself even before many issues find their footing.

He added that those stubborn barriers that

remain can be countered with a strong adherence to the Gospel in a clear and effective way; the gradual realization that the church is a place of substance and solidity and not of trendy, pop-up slogans that fade with constant demands for something new.

Toward this end, the church has to replenish itself through seminars that "still believe that the Word of God is the authority," said Pastor Williams. These theological schools have to instill the belief that "all matters of faith and practice" are still absolute in the scriptures. It is also mandatory that Christian mentors direct their leadership hopefuls to sound seminaries, he maintained.

Nonetheless, future leaders will have to grapple with, in many cases, the effects of declining attendance and perhaps outdated models; financial stresses and deferred maintenance issues; a shift in perceptions and expecta-

tions of the church among the young; competition for the attention of the faithful; and developing pure discipleship as a hedge against decline.

One guide that Rev. Williams cited as a must-read for young seminarians is Thom S. Rainer's Churchleaders.com article, "Autopsy of a Dead Church." In the 2023 piece, Rainer lays bare many common ailments of failing churches. Some problems include the failure of churches to find a way to identify with the communities in which they ultimately find themselves situated. Those communities often have changed significantly over time. Once-affluent communities may have tanked over time, but there is still a need to reach out and/or to set up community-focused ministries.

Other signs of death include over-emphases on the past; loss of evangelism; uncertainty in direction; too little prayer; shorter

pastor tenures; and little vision and a declining sense of mission.

How Firm a Foundation: The Scruggs Influence

Today's FMBC boasts up to 700 active members, an admirable admixture of professional and working class worshippers who are both loving and welcoming, said Rev. Williams.

He said the church has benefitted immensely from the long leadership of a strong leader like Rev. Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, who he also calls a mentor. Rev. Williams served as a guest pastor under Scruggs for several occasions.

Further, the foundation that Rev. Scruggs maintained has helped secure FMBC's place as an institution poised for future success on the spiritual plane, Rev. Williams said.

"First Baptist has a loving community of believers who understand and proclaim the Gospel," he reported. "Like many

other churches, all members here are not disciples. My role, though, is to love and to help all of them grow in grace and to become solid in what they believe. But unlike some churches, we are not marketing a Jesus we do not know. It's not about the numbers here. It's about strong, full youth involvement and the steady development of a Jesus-centered church.

The Legacy

Rev. Williams was how he envisions the church seven years from today. His reflection this time was more deliberate.

"I hope to see the church continue to reflect diversity, particularly in youth leadership and their opportunities to serve," said the native Alabamian. "Pastors do not have all the gifts and must rely on their village to make things happen. The Lord wants love,

and as an Equal Opportunity preacher, I believe in speaking the truth with boldness and love."

When the day finally comes when persons speak the name Rev. Dr. Carlos D. Williams in context of distinguished leaders throughout FMBC history, Rev. Williams said he hopes he is remembered as "a sound preacher who was also a faithful and loving shepherd; he preached The Word and lived the life."



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