

VIEWING: 9:00 A.M.-12:00 P.M.

FUNERAL: 12:00 P.M.



A CELEBRATION
OF THE LIFE OF

WILLIAM MITCHELL
WILLIS

SUNRISE
FEBRUARY 25, 1923

SUNSET
SEPTEMBER 27, 2021

REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY, SENIOR PASTOR
ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
301 SOUTH ALFRED STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

WILLIAM MITCHELL WILLIS

A Tribute to a Man of Substance

by Deacons Alton & Patricia Wallace

Once in a while, the world is fortunate to encounter a man of substance, compassion, and humility. A man who looks at the world's challenges and sees them as opportunities to do God's will. William Willis was just that kind of man.

Will was born on February 25, 1923 in Alexandria, Virginia, the second of seven children of the late Coulter and Pearl Willis. They lived at 909 Princess Street and the family attended Alfred Street Baptist Church where Will's father, Coulter, was a prominent baritone in the Senior Choir. His mother, Pearl, was the choir's organist. His brother, Carlton, served as an usher, while his sister, Coulter Mae was the pianist for Sunday School and with the church orchestra. Yes, ASBC had an orchestra even back in the 1940s. Will attended Parker Gray School which was founded by Rev. Andrew Adkins, the sixth pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church. After graduation from Parker Gray, he attended Virginia State University for 2 years before duty to his country called.

SERVING HIS COUNTRY WITH VALOR

In 1943, Will was drafted into the United States Army at the age of 20 and was deployed to Europe the day after D-Day, June 6, 1944 — the day of the Normandy invasion which initiated the Western Allied effort to liberate mainland Europe from Nazi occupation during World War II. Will served in a trucking company called the Red Ball Express, an enormous truck convoy system created by Allied forces to supply their forward-area combat units moving through Europe. Will served his country well in World War II and was honorably discharged in January 1946. He continued to serve his country as a civil servant when he began work with the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947 where he served in logistics for 34 years until his retirement in 1981.

SERVING HIS FAMILY WITH LOVE

The day after returning from the war, he was introduced to the love of his life, Emma Cooke, who was a student at Miner Teachers College in Washington, DC. After a two and a half year courtship, Will and Emma were married the day before Christmas on December 24, 1948, and were blessed with three children, sons Eric and Robert (both deceased) and daughter Carol. Will was a wonderful husband and father, and honored his marriage vows until death took away his beloved Emma on August 13, 2005.

SERVING HIS COMMUNITY IN FUN AND IN OUTREACH

Will was a man of many talents, but you would never know it from his humble disposition. He loved all sports and was able to master many. He played semi-pro football in Alexandria, bowled on two leagues in Washington, D.C., served as a baseball umpire for the city of Washington, D.C and was an avid golfer.

But putting all the fun aside, Will was most serious about serving his community through outreach efforts. After retirement, he poured all of his energy into helping the least of them by volunteering to help those less fortunate. He began a 20 year journey of service to Alexandrians InVolved Ecumenically, better known as ALIVE. Will has probably been in more homes in Alexandria than anyone because of his pick-up and delivery of household goods for needy residents of Alexandria. For his service with ALIVE, Will was presented one of three regional awards given by

Fannie Mae for his charitable contribution to Alexandria. His other passion was volunteering for many years with Carpenter's Shelter, whose mission is to end homelessness through services, education, and advocacy. For his civic contributions to the City of Alexandria, Will was awarded the Marian Van Landingham Lifetime Service. This summer, Carpenter's Shelter dedicated their community center to William "Sarge" Willis. His unselfish regard for and devotion to the welfare of others is evident.

SERVING HIS CHURCH WITH SERVANT LEADERSHIP

According to everyone, Will liked to be in charge. And in charge and involved he was at Alfred Street Baptist Church. Will was baptized in August 1936 and in his eighty-five year membership here, he was a mover and shaker. He was ordained a deacon in July of 1963 and was elected Chairman of the Board of Deacons. Upon the death of Rev. Atkins in November of the same year, the chain of command fell to Will since he was the chair of

deacons. So now Will was in charge of business operations as well as spiritual operations of the church. He led a Pulpit Group for thirteen months that ensured that the pulpit was filled with a minister at every Sunday service, as well as at all other activities that required a minister. During this time, he reestablished the Board of Deaconess after an 85 year hiatus. He chaired the new Budget and Procedures Committee and the Policy and Procedures Committees (which would later become the Constitution and By-Laws Committee) in 1993. In 1998, Will and Deacon Dave Rollins began the ASBC Hyperthermia Program, which is still in operation today. Will also sang in both the Senior/Trinity Choir and the Male Chorus.

It is no wonder that his favorite scripture was the entire book of James which states that faith without works is dead. Truly, Will Willis was a perfect example of the song which says, Let the work I do speak for me. And his favorite song was "It is Well With My Soul"—as it should be, since his whole life was a sterling testimony of service to his country, his family, his community, and his church.

ORDER OF SERVICE

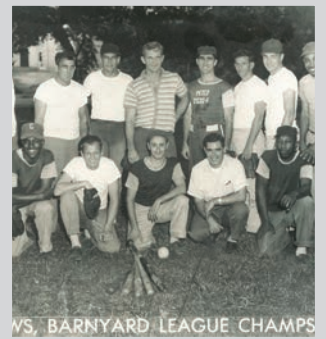
Prelude Instrumentalist
Invocation Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Hymn of Rejoicing: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

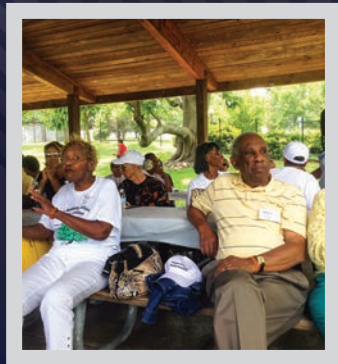
Scripture Readings

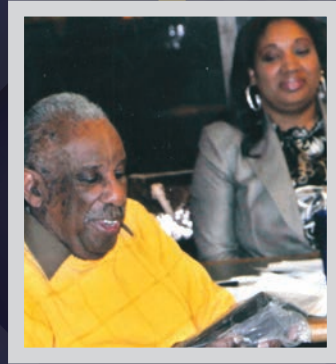
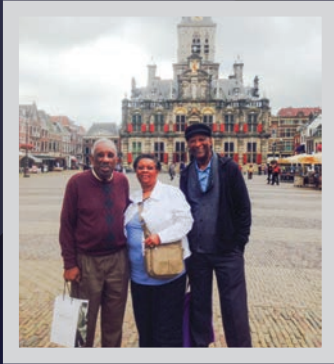
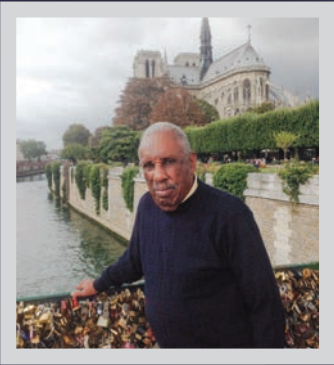
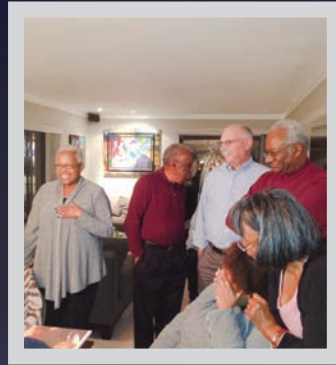
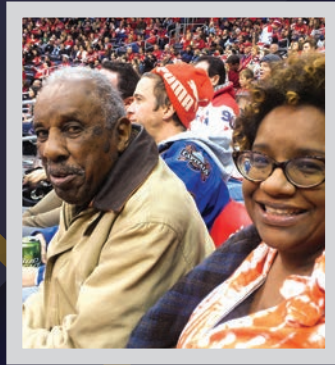
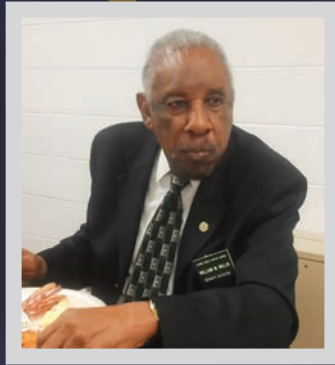
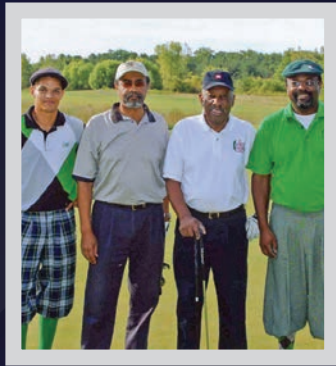
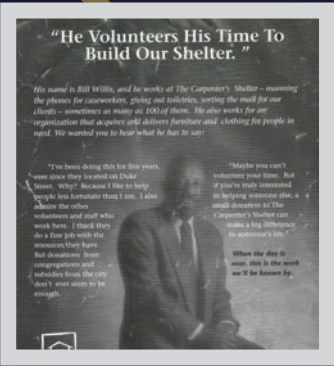
Old Testament Rev. Ed Jackson
Epistle Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams
New Testament Rev. Marcia Norfleet
Prayer of Comfort Rev. Thomas Pumphrey
Musical Selection: "If I Can Help Somebody" Lynda Prioleau
Tributes/Reflections Ken Naser, *first Executive Director of ALIVE!*

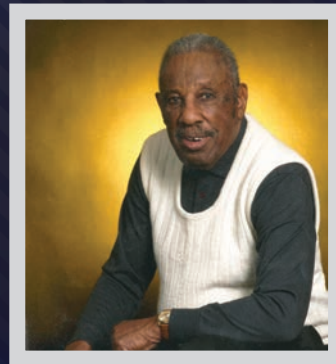
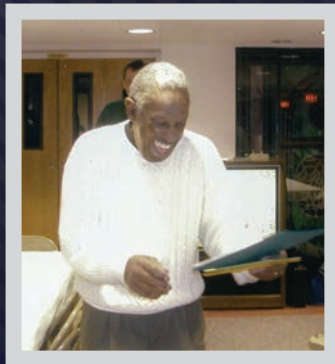
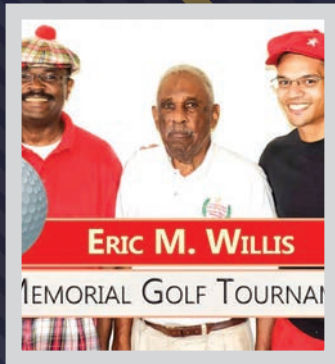
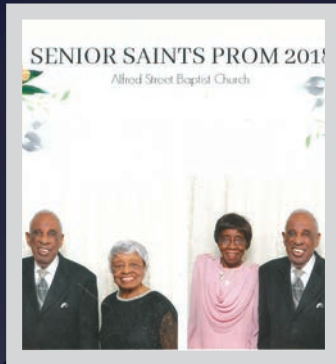
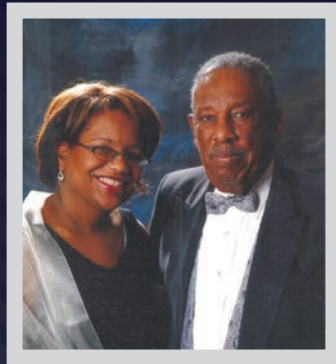
Mary-Parker Lamm, *Deputy Director of Carpenter's Shelter*
James W. Dyke, Jr., *Nephew*

Musical Selection: "It Is Well" Melvin Bryant, Jr.
Eulogy Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Hymn of Rejoicing: "When We All Get Together"
Closing Prayer and Benediction Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Recessional: "When We All Get To Heaven"









“SO YOU SEE, FAITH BY ITSELF
ISN’T ENOUGH. UNLESS IT
PRODUCES GOOD DEEDS,
IT IS DEAD AND USELESS.”

– JAMES 2:17 (NLT)

HONORARY
PALLBEARERS

Dea. Robert L. Bogan

Dea. Emeritus Leo A. Brooks, Sr.

Dea. Mark A. Morris

Dea. Isaiah P. Morrison, III

Dea. David A. Rollins

Bro. Phillip D. Ferguson

Dea. Charles J. Monterio, Sr.

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

Please make a donation in the name of William M. Willis
to the Carpenter’s Shelter (www.carpentersshelter.org)
or ALIVE! (www.alive-inc.org)

SERVICES ENTRUSTED TO

Snowden Funeral Home
246 N Washington St, Rockville, MD 20850

INTERMENT

Lincoln Memorial Cemetery
4001 Suitland Rd, Hillcrest Heights, MD 20746