

Mourners celebrate life of longtime chaplain Don Williams at Maine Criminal Justice Academy

The memorial service in Vassalboro brought together members of local, county and state law enforcement agencies and Williams' church community to remember the tireless service of the Baptist minister and law enforcement officer who ministered to his colleagues.



BY [JESSICA LOWELL](#) KENNEBEC JOURNAL

VASSALBORO — For the 250 or so people who gathered on Saturday at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, the memorial service for Don Williams was one more chance to remember a man who had touched so many lives.



Williams, 68, a longtime Baptist minister at Fellowship Baptist Church and chaplain who served with the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office, the Augusta Police Department and the Maine State Police, died April 3 in Augusta after a long illness.

Pallbearers bring Donald Williams' casket in at the start of his funeral at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro.
Kennebec Journal photo by Joe Phelan



Augusta police Officer Carly Wiggin and other law enforcement officers wore black bands on badges during Donald Williams' funeral on Saturday at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro. *Kennebec Journal photo by Joe Phelan*

Kennebec County Sheriff Ken Mason, left, hands Rhea Williams the flag from the casket of her late husband, Donald Williams, at the end of Williams' funeral Saturday at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro. *Kennebec Journal photo by Joe Phelan*



The Rev. Perry Jones speaks during Donald Williams' funeral Saturday at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro. *Kennebec Journal photo by Joe Phelan*



Maine State Police Trooper G.J. Neagle gives a eulogy during Donald Williams' funeral Saturday at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro. *Kennebec Journal photo by Joe Phelan*

He was remembered by colleagues both in the ministry and in law enforcement as a man who was present in their lives, served as an armor bearer to those who worked in law enforcement, a jokester and a gentle giant of a man.

“I believe what made him so influential is the fact that he sincerely loved people,” Pastor Perry Jones said. “I know that whenever I had any interaction with him, or my wife (did), as we watched him interact with other people, we saw a look on his face that he was sincerely invested in that person. He never belittled them or made them feel insignificant. They were important to him. I think it’s a good lesson to all of us. I think it’s a good reminder for those of us in

the ministry here today that ministry is really all about people. It's good to remember as the world changes, the love of God for people never does. He was a good example for all the Christians in this room today."

Jones offered his thanks to Williams' family for their sacrifices in sharing him with his church community and the whole city of Augusta.

"I would urge you to not regret the sacrifice you dad made, that your husband made; because as you can see today, he impacted many, many lives," Jones said.

Maine State Police Trooper G.J. Neagle spoke about his relationship with Williams, having met him when Neagle started as a deputy in Kennebec County.

"At one time, I asked Don what he wanted me to call him — pastor, chaplain or lieutenant? He said 'Don' would work just fine, so 'Don' it was," he said.

Neagle said Williams officiated at his wedding, and later Neagle joined his church.

Williams was a counselor to many in law enforcement in difficult times, Neagle said, and those officers held him in the highest regard, trust and respect.

"Personally, I know Don assisted countless law enforcement officers through incredibly difficult times, including the death of a loved one, the death of a fellow officer. He also talked officers out of committing suicide. Don never violated their trust."

The service opened and closed with solemn ceremony and to the accompaniment of a bagpipe and drums.

At the close of the service, the flag draping Williams' coffin was folded and presented to Williams' wife, Rhea, by Kennebec County Sheriff Ken Mason.

"It's been a tough week and a half for the law enforcement community," Mason said after the service ended.

On the same day when Williams died, [Maine State Police Detective Benjamin Cambell, 31, was killed](#) when he stopped to help a stranded driver on Interstate 95 in Hampden. Campbell's memorial service was held Tuesday in Portland.

Mason said he and his family have known Williams a long time, and Williams officiated at the marriage of his son and daughter-in-law.

"He was just all good," Mason said.

Williams was born Jan. 10, 1951, in Taylorville, Illinois. He became a Baptist minister before he and his wife moved to Maine. He worked first at the Augusta District Court, then became chaplain at the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office. He was the pastor at Fellowship Baptist Church in Augusta until illness forced him to retire.

A [GoFundMe](#) account has been set up in his name by Greg Lumbert, a deputy with the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office, to raise money to pay for medical expenses associated with his illness and to cover funeral expenses.

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