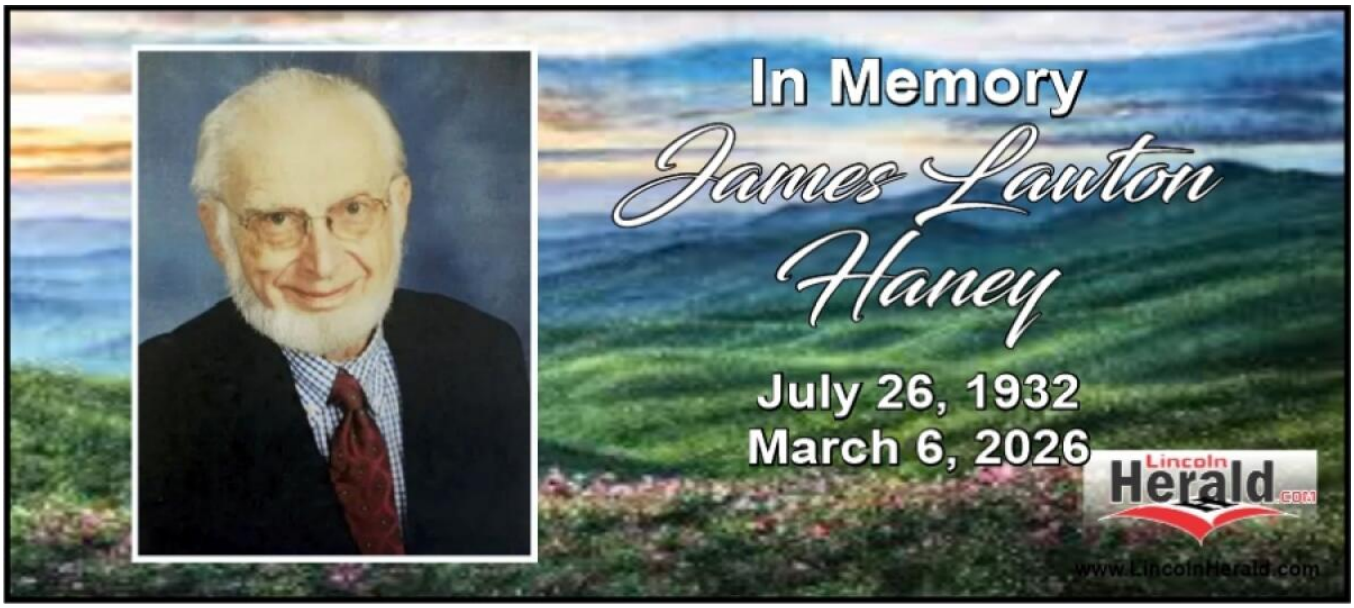


James Lawton Haney!

James Lawton Haney's earthly life came to an end on Friday, March 6, 2026, in Morganton, N.C.

He passed from this life, surrounded by loving members of his immediate family, confident in divine goodness and God's self-sacrificial love manifested toward all creation.

Born in Lincolnton, N.C., on July 26, 1932, to his parents, J. Lawton and Sallie Mosteller Haney. "Jim" was reared in Glenwood in McDowell County, by his parents, a prominent farmer and County Surveyor, and his mother, a homemaker and a former public-school teacher.

Jim was a 1950 graduate of Glenwood High School, where he edited both the school's yearbook and newspaper. After attending Boy's State at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he chose to attend U.N.C. for an undergraduate degree and graduated from there in 1954 with a B.A. Degree in ancient and medieval history with a minor in religion.

While a student at Chapel Hill, Jim was active in a variety of student activities

including the Carolina Playmakers, the Lutheran Student Association, and the Inter-Faith Council. His leadership in bringing prominent leading members of faith communities to the campus as guest lecturers led to his induction in the university's highest honorary society, the Order of the Golden Fleece. In his senior year, his superior scholarship was recognized when he was received into Phi Beta Kappa.

Jim's work with the Carolina Playmakers led to his employment as a leading actor in the production company of "Unto These Hills," for the 1954-1955 seasons, produced by the Cherokee Historical Association at the Mountainside Theater in Cherokee, NC. The lure of the theater gave way to a calling in public ministry in the Lutheran Church, however, Jim entered the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and graduated with a B.D. in 1958. In addition to three years of academic study, he elected to take a year's "internship." Jim chose to serve as "vicar" for Frederick Lutheran Church in St. Thomas, in the Virgin Islands. Minimally sensitized to the spiritual needs of descendants of formerly enslaved Africans, Jim was both energized and humbled by this phase in his preparation for ministry.

In 1958, Jim was called and ordained by the New York and New England Synod of the Lutheran Church in America to become Associate Pastor of The Lutheran Church of Ithaca, New York. Four years later, planning to continue his "campus" ministry in the future, Jim decided that further intellectual development was a necessity. He applied and was accepted in the Graduate School of Yale University's Department of Religious Studies.

Plans to continue serving as pastor to a university church, communities were changed, however, by subsequent events, Jim met a fellow graduate student in Religious Studies, and married on January 14, 1963, in Marquand Chapel of Yale Divinity. Eleanor "Elly" was the daughter of the late James and Mary Garbutt Humes of Milford, Delaware. She was a doctoral candidate in Christian Ethics. As Elly was intent on pursuing a career in college teaching, Jim decided that he would adjust his vocational aims for his future ministry.

Jim and Elly began to look for a college that would have an opening for two faculty members in a Department of Religion. In the spring of 1965, The River Valley Synod of Lutheran Church in America called Jim to become a Professor of the History of Christianity in the Religion Department of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. They would also offer Elly a teaching position in her field of specialization. Though by this time, Elly had her doctorate in hand, but Jim's Ph,D. was not awarded until 1968; nevertheless, the Haney's began their Concordia careers in 1965. Jim would continue his postdoctoral studies in Eastern Orthodoxy under Russian and Greek scholars in England in 1972 and in 1981 at the Universities of Oxford and Durham.

As a minister called to teach at Concordia College he also felt that he should share in the work of the wider ministry of the L.C.A. Consequently, in spite of increased family responsibilities due to the birth on July 17, 1968, of his son, David Michael Haney, he accepted a position on the Synodical Worship Committee in that year and served as its chairman from 1973-1978. In 1974, he was "drafted" to serve on the national committee to plan for the L.C.A.'s participation in the nation's Bi-Centennial in 1976. That year, Jim was also elected as delegate to represent the Red River Synod at the national assembly of the Church in Boston.

Jim retired to McDowell County in 2001 after teaching at Concordia College for a total of 37 years. While he taught a variety of courses in Christian History, he specialized in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. He is remembered especially among Concordia students for the fourteen travel-study seminars he directed during successive sessions of the annual summer school, preceded by a semester-long preparatory course. As an element in Concordia's May Seminars Abroad Program, Jim exposed his students to current and historical contemporary cultural challenges that Christians confronted in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union.

In addition to committee assignments and a "lengthy" term as chairperson of the eleven-member Department of Religion, Jim found time in 2001 to translate from Russian and to publish as Volume 6 in the Edwin Mellen Press' Series, Studies

in Russian History, a biography of the biblical translator and pioneer missionary to the Altai Region of Siberia, Archimandrite Makarii Glukarev (1792-1847). Earlier, in addition to his dissertation, “The Religious Heritage and Education of Samuel Simon Schmucker: A Study in the Rise of ‘American Lutheranism’,” he had published articles in scholarly journals including “The Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference” and the Polish journal, “Roezniik Naukowo-Dydaktysny WSP w Krakowie.” An intense interest in family histories in their cultural settings led him to publish privately several works beginning in 1988 with “The Seeker’s Passage: A Chronicle of the Life of Gerhard George Gerding” (1760-1823); “A Haney-Mosteller Family Record: Ancestors and Descendants of Lewis A. Haney and Margaret Rebecca Mosteller” in 1989; “Stumbling Toward Zion: A Mosteller Chronicle, with a Family Record of the Descendants of Israel Mosteller and Barbara Leonhardt Mosteller” (1991); and finally, “The Marstallers in Pfungstadt on the Modau” (1998).

The return to his “roots” in Western North Carolina brought an abrupt end to Jim’s ministry in church and college. It became, however, the occasion for him to re-direct his interests to local historical interests and historical conservation. He had begun his work as a consecrator of historic houses in the 1960’s with his restoration of the Oak Grove Church and Schoolhouse, built in 1853 on his great-great grandfather’s plantation. By that date it was the oldest log cabin used as a church and school still standing in McDowell County. This restoration project led him to purchase and restore the homes of Abram C. and Nannie C. Neal Gardin (1878), and the Lewis A. and Margaret Mosteller Haney home (1872). He joined other local citizens in organizing a McDowell Preservation Commission in 2000 and edited “The McDowell County Historic Preservation Guidelines” for its use.

In 2002, Jim was elected to the Board of Directors of the Historic Carson House and was elected its chairman in 2008; a position he held until 2016, during which he saw the conversion of the barn into museum space and the building of the Jubilee Arbor, dedicated to the memory of the enslaved people who served the Pleasant Garden Plantation. Active in acquiring period furnishings for the house museum and its additional special collections, Jim wrote, or edited, a number of

publications that treated aspects of McDowell County's cultural history. These works included "McDowell County, North Carolina, 1843-1943" (Photographs with extensive historical notes), in 2002; "Gold: 'Shining Dust' in the Cultural History of McDowell County, North Carolina," with a Photographic Essay (with the assistance of Swann, 2004); "Glenwood School: progressing by Fits and Starts, 1904-1972" (2006); and in 2019 Jim transcribed, edited, and added analytic notes in "Appendices" to the "Eighth Census of the United States of America, 1860, McDowell County, North Carolina" from the original "enumeration" by C.L.S. Corpening, thereby making available to the public crucial information for understanding one Appalachian county on the eve of the Civil War. Finally, Jim completed and donated to the Carson House Archives a copy of "James Hervey Greenlee's Memorandum of Matters and Things as They Occur, 1847-1902." The only known diary kept by a thoughtful, perceptive, owner of enslaved people, in the second half of the 19th century contributes significantly to the little-known social history of McDowell County through the diarist's observation of people and current events.

A host of former parishioners, students, former colleagues, and friends, whose lives have been touched by Jim's generous nature and God-given talents, join Western Carolinians in expressing their gratitude for Jim's life and service.

In addition to his parents, Jim was preceded in death by his only sibling, Anne Haney Allen, in 2024. He is survived by his son, David Michael Haney; a granddaughter, Megan Anne; and a grandson, James Robert. Family members who also mourn his passing include a nephew, Frederick Allen (Cindy); a niece, Sallie Anne LaChance (Steven); and numerous cousins.

A memorial service to celebrate Jim's life will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at Trinity Lutheran Church (ELCA), 2700 Trinity Church Rd, Vale, NC, with Pastor Tommy Lineberger officiating. A graveside service for family and very close friends will follow the same day at 3:00 p.m. in the Haney-Gardin Cemetery, 989 Marlowe Rd, Marion, NC.

Memorials may be made to The Historic Carson House, 1805 US Hwy 70 West,

Marion, NC 28752.

Westmoreland Funeral Home & Crematory of Marion N.C. is serving the Haney family.