



James Howard Gibbs

June 25, 1938 - July 25, 2025

Jim Gibbs of Arlington, Virginia, passed peacefully in his hometown of Asheville, NC, one hour after the sun rose over his beloved Smoky Mountains on July 25, 2025. He had been travelling with his partner, JoRita Perry, when he fell ill. His family was able to travel to be at his side through his hospital stay and surrounded him with love and comfort at his passing. He was a devoted husband to Grace Boffa Gibbs for 51 years before she died on December 2, 2020; beloved father of Lisa Gibbs-Smith (Rusty Smith), Christopher Gibbs (Jennifer), and Jonathan Gibbs; and grandfather to Audrey, Lauren, Nicholas and Sarah. He was preceded in death by his parents, Howard and Velma Gibbs of Asheville, NC.

Jim (“Jimmy” to his North Carolina family) was born in Anderson, SC, and later moved with his family to Asheville. As a teenager, it was discovered that he had a lovely singing voice, and the revelation of this gift would shape the rest of his life.

After attending Mars Hill College and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he won a position in the United States Army Chorus in 1963, which took him from North Carolina to Arlington, VA. Shortly thereafter, he received his Master’s Degree from University of Maryland. Jim used his musical gifts in service to his country for 28 years, serving under eight presidents and retiring in 1993. He loved the ensemble of “brothers” with

whom he served, and he built lasting and cherished friendships.

Before Jim was a singer, he was a Christian, and the greatest passion of his life was serving God using his musical gifts in the church. He held numerous positions, but none more precious to him than his thirty years as the Minister of Music at First Christian Church in Falls Church, VA. There he enjoyed helping others to express their faith through worship, hymnology, drama, retreats, and concerts. Jim also taught private voice at Northern Virginia Community College and was a frequent guest chorister and soloist.

Jim was an only child, but he created familial bonds with everyone who had the pleasure of being in relationship with him. He had an uncanny ability to remember details and facts, which made him quite the historian, but this skill was far more meaningfully applied to the people he met. He had an extraordinary spirit of inquiry and a desire for real connection. He would ask everyone, from the tailor who mended his pants to his neuro oncologist, all about their background, daily lives, and passions, and he remembered every word they said. He made everyone feel important because he believed it to be true.

Jim's wife, Grace, was diagnosed with dementia in 2000 and he immediately embraced the role of caregiver. His example of patient, loving, and faithful service was a witness to everyone he knew. After Grace passed in 2020, Jim found love again when he was reconnected with JoRita Perry, who he had dated for a summer more than sixty years prior. For four years they enjoyed traveling, storytelling, history and true companionship.

Jim will be remembered for so many things he loved: the Boston Red Sox, UNC basketball, "sweet buns", pinto beans and cornbread, the mountains of Asheville, Southern Comfort Manhattans, Virginia history... But it is his deep love of family, radical generosity, loyal friendship, vivid storytelling, devoted

service to God, “joie de vivre,” and “MO+” positive-momentum outlook on life that we will all remember most and strive every day to emulate.

Interment alongside his beloved wife will be held at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in his honor to First Christian Church (Falls Church, VA) or Insight Memory Care Center (Fairfax, VA).

Previous Events

Gathering

AUG 30. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

1st Christian Church
6165 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22044

Funeral Service

AUG 30. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

1st Christian Church
6165 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22044

Tribute Wall



“ RIP



Frank Titus - August 30, 2025 at 05:33 PM



“ *The Aiken Family purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of James Howard Gibbs.*



The Aiken Family - August 29, 2025 at 06:37 PM



“ *Always, Pinky Malovic purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of James Howard Gibbs.*



Always, Pinky Malovic - August 27, 2025 at 07:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Howard Gibbs.

August 25, 2025 at 10:42 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Howard Gibbs.*



August 25, 2025 at 10:42 AM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Jenn Gibbs - August 13, 2025 at 01:42 PM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Jenn Gibbs - August 13, 2025 at 01:41 PM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Jenn Gibbs - August 13, 2025 at 01:40 PM