

Longtime pastor Emory Hingst, who died in August, made outsize impact in Tallahassee

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Guest columnist
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When I moved to Tallahassee in August of 1990, one of the first ministers I heard about in the faith community was Emory Hingst.



Hingst died Aug. 26 at age 89.

Known for his courageous activism during the civil rights movement in the 1960s, working for racial and economic justice, Pastor Emory was engaged in many important ministries in our community throughout his long life.

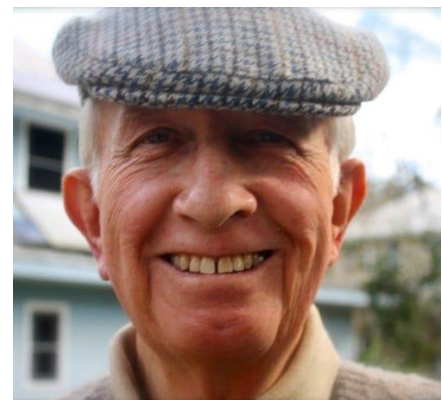
Born Nov. 26, 1934, in Vernon, Texas, Emory knew by age 14 that he wanted to pursue pastoral ministry. He came to Tallahassee in 1967 as the campus minister for Florida A&M and Florida State University.

He was the pastor of the Luther House Church at FSU from 1968-1975 before being called to serve as the pastor of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church from 1976 until his retirement in 1999. After retirement, he remained active in ministry in the community, including serving First Presbyterian Church as a Parish Associate for years.

Fighting hunger with Florida IMPACT

Of the many causes for which Emory Hingst advocated and to which he devoted his time and energy, he served on the Florida IMPACT board for 18 years. IMPACT is Florida's leading statewide, anti-hunger policy organization.

Realizing that simply delivering to those in need what is left over from our collective tables is not enough, Florida IMPACT staff and its supporters including Hingst, worked at leveraging the federal dollars intended for but not reaching Florida's low-income families. It was just the sort of visionary work that endeared Hingst to many.



Appreciating the need for persons at the end-of-life to experience spiritual care from one who understands best their needs and preferences, Hingst volunteered for Big Bend Hospice for eight years, as a sensitive listener, volunteer chaplain, and advocate for patient-centered care. He was not only a big-picture visionary but a wise and loving pastoral care provider to individuals.



[Habitat chapter founder and Elder Care](#)

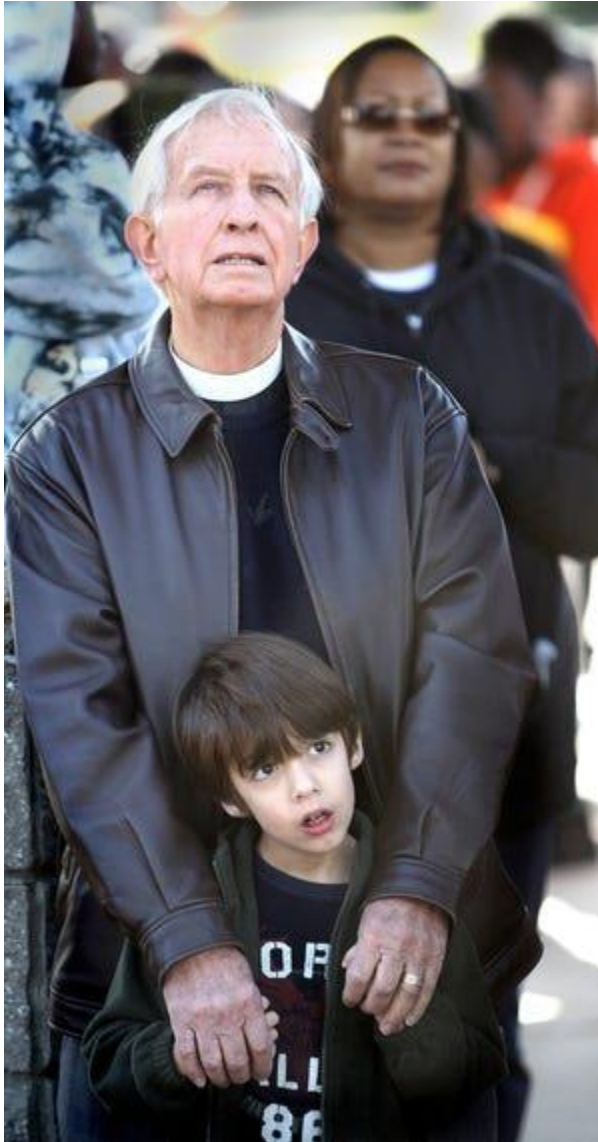
He was the founding president of the Tallahassee Chapter for Habitat for Humanity, helping to support the building of affordable housing for persons in Leon and later, Gadsden County. For years, Hingst helped coordinate our community's CROP walks, fundraising events held in cities and towns across the United States to support the global mission of Church World Service through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

Hingst served for years on the Advisory Council of Elder Care Services and was a faithful volunteer for Kindred Spirits Charitable Trust, providing friendship and personal support to prisoners on Florida's Death Row. As a fellow minister in our area faith community, one could count on Hingst to attend interfaith clergy gatherings, World AIDS day services, and other community services of remembrance and hope, sharing his wisdom and compassion.

Together with his beloved wife, Ann, they envisioned an intentional co-housing community focused on conservation and cooperation in Midtown and by December 1993, along with three other families, moved into Daystar. With monthly community potlucks, weekly happy hours, regularly scheduled workdays and special communal events on the green, the sense of belonging has deepened through the years as the community has grown and changed.

Fair trade store

In 2005, Emory Hingst and his wife garnered local support for a shop, “Ten Thousand Villages,” like one they had visited in Montreat, North Carolina. “Ten Thousand Villages” is a nonprofit fair-trade organization that markets handcrafted products made by artisans from countries around the world.



Customers who shop at these stores supplement the income of crafters in third-world countries as they learn about justice and equity in fair trade. The Tallahassee store was located on Timberlane Road and graced our community for ten years, another evidence of his visionary thinking matched by his deep personal kindness for others.

A remarkable faith leader

On Aug. 26, our community lost a remarkable faith leader whose influence has been in the tapestry of our communal lives for years and promises to live on.

I read of Rev. Hingst’s death on the same day that I read a quote from the widowed wife of Medgar Evers, the NAACP field secretary of Mississippi who was gunned down in his driveway by a white supremacist in 1963. In a discussion with the press at the grand opening day of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum on Dec. 9, 2017, Myrlie Evers-Williams was asked about her view of the current situation regarding racial justice.

“I see something today that I had hoped I would never see again. That is prejudice, hatred, negativism that comes from the highest points

across America. And I found myself asking Medgar in the conversations that I have with him: Is this really what's happening again in this country? And asking for guidance because I’m a little weary at this point.”

Author and historian James Tisby, who was part of the press that day, writes what happened next.

“I fully expected her to expound on the weariness of fighting for racial justice for decades. To vent about her frustrations with people who still oppose the laws and policies that would move us closer to racial progress. To say that she was passing the torch to another generation and that she had earned her rest. But she took her comments in a different direction, one that pointed to the strength and resolve of the staunchest defenders of justice.”

In her ninth decade of life, Myrle Evers-Williams, did not say she was done. Instead, she said, “But it’s something about the spirit of justice that raises up like a war horse. That horse that stands with its back sunk in and hears that bell — I like to say the ‘bell of freedom.’ And all of a sudden, it becomes straight, and the back becomes stiff. And you become determined all over again.”

Spirit of justice

That spirit of justice was strong in Emory Hingst. He showed that in the ways he was a big picture person with great vision, yet attentive to the details of the lives of individuals.

He showed it in his concern for systemic solutions to hunger, and by walking in the CROP walk year after year. He showed it in his concern for fair wages for those in villages around the world and those who live right here at home. The spirit of justice was strong in Emory Hingst as he cared for the future of our nation in nurturing the hearts and minds of college students as well as tending to the real needs of senior adults through Elder Care Services.

In a prayer before the Constitution Revision Commission in 1997, Rev. Hingst asked God to “Kindle in us the desire to be more completely tuned into the excitement of constructing bridges of care and avenues of mutual growth and shared opportunity in the citizenry movement beneficial to all. Be with us, O God, at this moment and every moment of our lives to direct us to strive for justice for all.”

May the beloved Rev. Emory Hingst and his well-lived life help us, like Myrle Evers-Williams, to become “determined all over again” as we reflect on his spirit of justice.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 7, at First Presbyterian Church.

The Rev. Candace McKibben is an ordained minister and pastor of Tallahassee Fellowship