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Graduates Honored During Summer Commencement Exercises on Aug. 4

(Click here for additional photos)

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner–Webb University hosted
Summer Commencement on Monday, Aug. 4 in the Lutz-Yelton
Convocation Center at 10 a.m. More than 200 graduates were honored for their
achievements during the ceremony.

Many graduates participated in the ceremony through prayer, scripture reading, and
commencement speeches. T. Faith Lambeth (Statesville, N.C.) offered the invocation, while
Jasmine Dale (La Vergne, Tenn.) shared passages from the Old and New Testaments. Three
awards were given to stellar graduates. Lambeth received the Degree Completion Program
Academic Award; Jonas C. Nader (Mt. Gilead, N.C.) was given the Senior Scholastic
Achievement Award; and the 2014 Darlene J. Gravett Citizen Scholar Award was presented
to Karen Cochran (Candler, N.C.), who earned a Master of Science in Nursing in May.

Commencement speakers were Amber N. Parsons (Mount Holly, N.C.), who earned a
Bachelor of Science in Accounting through the Degree Completion Program; Vahisha
Steadman (Charlotte, N.C.), who earned a dual Master of Divinity/Master of Arts/Education
Specialist in Mental Health Counseling; and Rick S. Thompson (Moore, S.C.), who received a
Master of Accountancy.

Parsons began her academic journey at
Gardner-Webb more than 12 years ago.
Although at times she admits she was intimidated and overwhelmed, she is grateful she
persevered. "I'm not just walking away from this accomplishment with my degree. I'm also
walking away with a level of confidence and enthusiasm I've never experienced before," she
told graduates. "There were many times I considered giving up, but knew I couldn't. I
couldn't give up on myself. I had a goal of getting my bachelor's degree, and I was
determined to reach that goal!"

In 1978, Rick Thompson earned a bachelor's degree in business from Gardner-Webb, and
more than 35 years later, he crossed the stage to receive a master's degree. "It is both an
honor and a privilege to return to Gardner-Webb and graduate for a second time," he
reflected. "The decision to begin a graduate program was an important milestone for me. I
have told many people over the course of my career, 'When we stop learning, we stop
leading.'"

For Vahisha Steadman, her educational journey was marked by close personal connections with fellow students and professors. "Both Dr. David Carscaddon and Dr. Sophia Steibel have struggled, survived, and sustained life's difficulties that I fear would have left me irrevocably broken," she offered. "But they showed me with their faith and their faults, with their strength and their vulnerability, that nothing is too hard for God and we do not have to bear our burdens alone. It's all about relationship."

She charged her fellow graduates to take stock of their relationships. "Today, we celebrate our achievements, our accomplishments, the culmination of our focused effort, purpose, sacrifice, and study," she shared. "Tomorrow and the days to follow, how shall you relate the degree in your hand and the connections of your heart to the great task and destiny that is uniquely yours? It's all about relationships."

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate *(For God and Humanity).*