

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications


7-11-2013

Gardner-Webb University Professors Attend Baptist World Alliance Meeting

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

Gardner-Webb University Professors Attend Baptist World Alliance Meeting

 webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/gardner-webb-university-divinity-professors-attend-baptist-world-alliance-convention/

Office of University Communications

July 11, 2013

Annual Event Brings Together Baptist Leaders from Over 40 Countries

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Two Gardner-Webb University professors recently attended an international meeting that involved over 400 Baptist leaders, theologians, teachers and pastors from over 40 different countries around the world. Dr. Donald Berry, a professor in the University's Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, and Dr. Steve Harmon, a professor for the GWU School of Divinity, each facilitated certain portions of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Annual Gathering, which was held July 1-6 in Ocho Rios, Jamaica.

Berry and Harmon have each been involved in the BWA for a number of years in various capacities. Berry has participated on the Mission and Evangelism Commission and most recently has increased his involvement in the Human Rights Advocacy Commission and served on the Resolutions Committee. During the meeting, he chaired two separate discussions for the leaders involved in these areas. "My participation in this event allowed me to see the world in one meeting and that helps enrich the curriculum I teach at Gardner-Webb," said Berry. "By using examples from the sessions I witnessed, I can make my students' study more current and relevant. In addition, there were several times that I had to explain where I served, so more people know about Gardner-Webb University through my BWA participation."

L-R: Timothy George, Dean, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama; Elizabeth Newman, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, Virginia; Tony Peck, General Secretary, European Baptist Federation; Curtis Freeman, Research Professor of Theology and Director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University Divinity School, Durham, NC; Denton Lotz, retired General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance; Paul Fiddes, Professor of Systematic Theology, Oxford University; Steven Harmon, Adjunct Professor of Christian Theology, Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity; Tomás Mackey, Professor of Theology at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Harmon's participation in the gathering offered him the opportunity to reflect on many full-circle moments, as his seven-year-old son Timothy accompanied him on the trip. As a member of the Commission on Doctrine and Unity, he and others in his group made the

official presentation of the report of the Baptist-Catholic conversations, “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: A Report of International Conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, 2006-2010.”

The comprehensive study represented years of Harmon’s time and energy. He launched his official research on the Baptist-Catholic conversations in 2006, immediately following his son’s adoption. “I wrote a good portion of the paper I presented for the meeting in 2006 while Timothy was a six-month old infant strapped to my chest, flanked by my propped-open Vatican II and Baptist Confessions books,” Harmon reflected. “For Timothy to be with me for the formal beginning of the process of receiving the final report was an experience that I will cherish forever.”

Harmon believes another important element for him was witnessing Timothy, who was adopted from South Korea, meet and interact with representatives of the Korean Baptist Convention. “In many ways, the most significant highlight of the week for me was having a Korean pastor tell me earnestly after meeting my son, “Thank you for adopting him,”” Harmon shared.

“My participation in this year’s annual gathering has made me a much more effective teacher of theology in the School of Divinity,” he continued. “It has given me a global perspective on the nature of the Baptist identity and has helped me make fuller connections between my heritage and the tradition of the whole Christian church to which Baptists belong. That perspective informs virtually everything I do in teaching my students at GWU. In turn, I think Dr. Berry and I have also helped the global Baptist community become more aware of Gardner-Webb University.”

The Baptist World Alliance The Baptist World Alliance is a global movement of Baptists sharing a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ bonded together by God’s love to support, encourage and strengthen one another while proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit before a lost and hurting world. For more information, visit their website at bwanet.org.

The Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity (SOD) is one of four graduate, professional schools offering graduate degrees within the academic program of the University. Celebrating its 20th year in 2013, over 500 people have graduated with a Master of Divinity or a Doctor of Ministry since the school’s inception in 1993. In honor of this achievement, Gardner-Webb will be profiling SOD programs, events, and people.