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### Gardner-Webb Professor to Share Insights on Islam

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# Gardner-Webb Professor to Share Insights on Islam

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Office of University Communications

April 2, 2012

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Many American Christians want to better understand Muslims, but the challenge of filtering the truth from the swirling stereotypes is almost insurmountable. Gardner-Webb religious studies professor Dr. Don Berry, an expert on Islam, will cut through those false assumptions during a Dimensions program on April 10 at 9:25 a.m. in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center. The community is invited to attend.

Rather than a traditional lecture, the program will feature an interview between Berry and Dr. Tracy Jessup, GWU's vice president for Christian life and service and senior minister. The interview will cover Berry's academic interest in Islam, the history of the Islamic faith, the differences and similarities between the Bible and the Qur'an, the relationship between Islam and Arab culture, and the challenges and opportunities for Muslim-Christian relations today.

According to Jessup, when Gardner-Webb University was chosen for the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge in 2011, GWU President Frank Bonner said the most important question for the University would be, "How do we support interfaith cooperation and diversity while standing firm in our Christian faith?"

"I think this Dimensions program will be a wonderful opportunity for us to address that question, and to showcase one of our Christian professors who has been heavily involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue for nearly two decades," Jessup said.

To Berry, mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims may unlock the potential for civic or humanitarian cooperation. But mutual understanding, he says, does not mean ignoring key differences; rather, it means acknowledging those differences honestly.

"I hope this program will help students come closer to seeing Muslims through Muslim eyes, to understanding them as Muslims understand themselves. I don't think that's ever entirely possible, but I think there could be movement toward that end," Berry said.

Berry has written two books on Islam, and formerly directed the Institute for Missions and Evangelism at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. In that role, he conversed with Muslims and organized conferences on Islam in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Hong Kong.

Gardner-Webb University celebrates its Christian, Baptist-related identity, even while it respects the dignity and value of every person, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious commitment, national origin, or disability. We are unashamedly Christian, and as part of

our commitment to serve God and humanity in the love of Christ, we support interfaith initiatives that seek to promote grace, peace, and mutual understanding while addressing the needs of the community.