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November 21, 2011

BOILING SPRINGS, NC – To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1960s freedom marches, the Gardner-Webb Theatre is proud to present David Westheimer's award-winning play, "My Sweet Charlie," for its winter production. Performances will be held in the Millennium Playhouse, located in the Communication Studies Hall, November 29 – December 3 at 7:30 p.m.

"My Sweet Charlie" is directed by James W. Thomas, interim dean of the School of Performing and Visual Arts at Gardner-Webb. Gardner-Webb's Dr. Joseph Webb, professor of communication studies and a participant in the freedom marches, will also make a short presentation before each show about the play's historical context. Webb and other members of the community will lead an audience discussion after each show on the Civil Rights Movement's impact on American culture.

Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for senior adults and students of other schools, \$2 for children, and free with a Gardner-Webb ID. To order tickets, call 704-406-4656.

Set in the South during the tumultuous Civil Rights Movement in 1961, "My Sweet Charlie" stages the emotional and sometimes volatile relationship between a run-away, unwed pregnant white teenage girl and a sophisticated African American New York lawyer, who has come south to participate in the freedom marches.

The lawyer, Charlie Roberts, has been falsely accused of murder, while Marlene Chambers has been shunned by her father and boyfriend due to her scandalous pregnancy. Both on the run, Roberts' and Chambers' paths collide at a vacant cottage on the Gulf Coast, forcing them to confront their prejudices and work together to survive.

"I wanted in some way to commemorate this anniversary," said Thomas. "My Sweet Charlie gives us the chance to ask an important question – how are we different now, 50 years later? This play is powerful and touching. Theatre is an important social tool. It should serve the community by stimulating the mind and stirring conversation. 'My Sweet Charlie' does just that."

Due to its setting and premise, "My Sweet Charlie" contains some racially charged language and thematic material that may not be suitable for children. To preserve the show's original integrity and to promote honest, productive conversation in the after-show discussion, the Gardner-Webb Theatre has carefully chosen not to censor that material. Parental discretion is advised.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction with compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.