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Dr. Gerald Keown Remembered by GWU Community for His Passion to Teach and Serve

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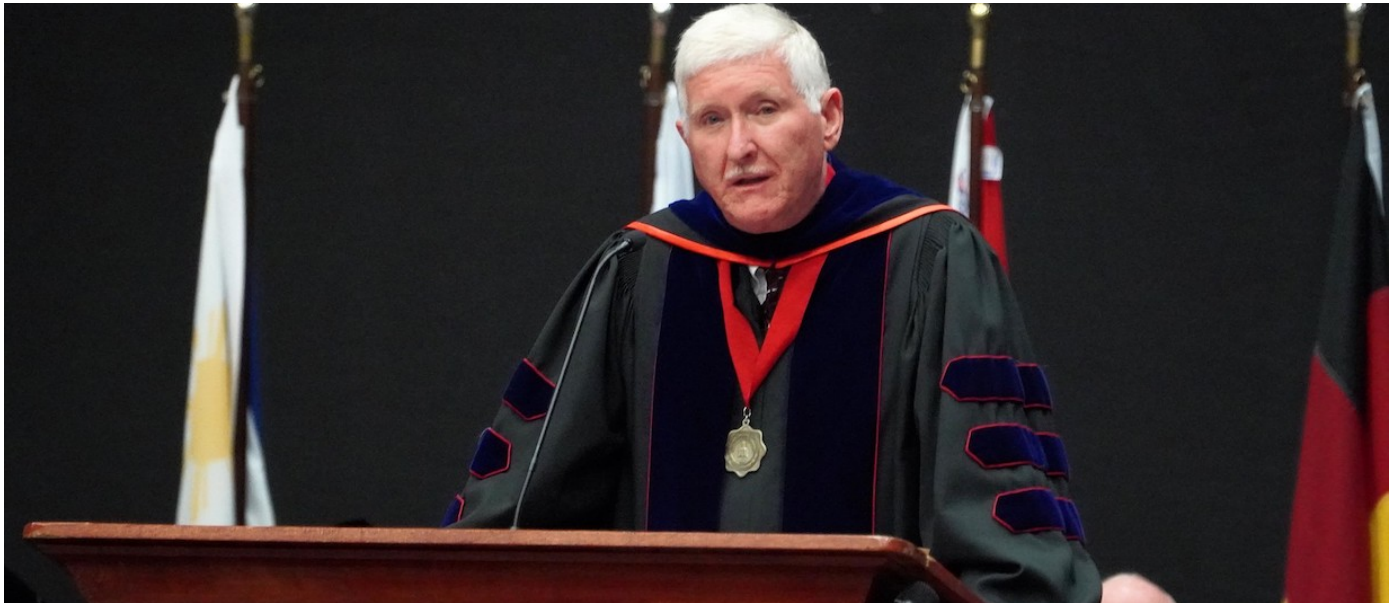
Office of University Communications, "Dr. Gerald Keown Remembered by GWU Community for His Passion to Teach and Serve" (2021). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2356.
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IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Gerald Keown Remembered by GWU Community for His Passion to Teach and Serve

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON DECEMBER 20, 2021



▲ Dr. Gerald Keown spoke at GWU Commencement in 2019.

Former Professor and Associate Dean of the School of Divinity Passed Away on Dec. 14

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Gardner-Webb University community is remembering the contributions and legacy of Dr. Gerald Keown, who passed away on Dec. 14. Keown was professor emeritus of Biblical Studies and the former associate dean of the Gardner-Webb University M. Christopher White School of Divinity. He began his tenure at GWU in 1996 as a professor of Old Testament Interpretation and served as associate dean from 2006 to 2019.

“Gerald Keown came to the School of Divinity when the school was still in its infancy,” remarked Dr. Robert Canoy, the school’s dean. “His coming, after 15 years as professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Ky.), rounded out the biblical faculty of Greek and New Testament held by Drs. Donald Cooke and Wayne Stacy. When he and I later become associate dean and dean, we worked closely together continuing to build on the academic, spiritual formation, and accrediting history of the school.”



▲ Dr. Gerald Keown, third from right, poses with the faculty and staff of the School of Divinity in 2010.

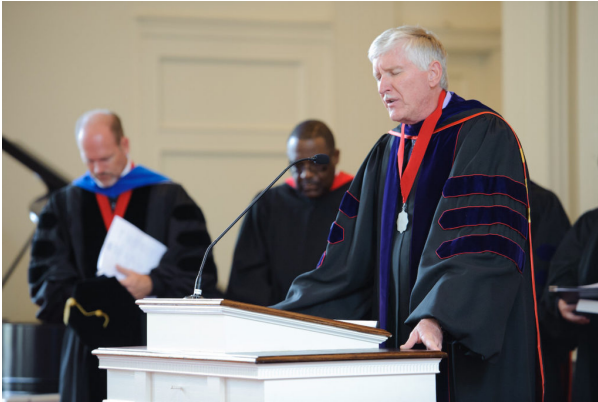
Dr. Ben Leslie, GWU provost and executive vice president noted that Keown was both an internationally recognized Old Testament scholar and an actively engaged churchman. He had spent time teaching in Moscow Seminary of Evangelical Christians and the Singapore Baptist Seminary. Keown co-authored a volume of Word Biblical Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52, and has been published in several books and journals. He was named the Bob D. Shepherd Chair in Biblical Studies in 2010. He gladly served as an interim pastor for churches across Kentucky and the Carolinas. Keown had embraced many opportunities during retirement. He and his wife, Sharon, were very involved in their church, Fernwood Baptist, located in their home of Spartanburg, S.C. Keown taught an adult Sunday School class, served as a deacon, and sang in the choir.

“The entire Gardner-Webb community is deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Gerald Keown,” Leslie observed. “It’s hard to imagine a better model than Dr. Keown of what it means to be a theological educator. Dr. Keown taught and mentored students in our School of Divinity for more than two decades, preparing them for positions of congregational leadership throughout our region. Students admired Dr. Keown not only for his keen insights as a biblical scholar, but also for the good humor and compassion that characterized all of his engagement with our students. He will be greatly missed.”

Keown earned his Master of Divinity at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained as a minister by St. Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, in August 1975 and earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Old Testament Studies in 1979. After graduating, Keown worked three years as “The Chair of the Bible” at the University of Missouri, Columbia. In 1982, Southern Seminary contacted Keown concerning an Old Testament faculty position. He taught at Southern Seminary for 14 years and was associate dean for the last five before accepting the position at Gardner-Webb.

Canoy further described Keown as a first rate Hebrew scholar whose infectious laughter and storytelling were welcomed by all. It was that ability to relate the scriptures that endeared Keown to the “lunch crowd,” said Dr. Tom Jones, professor of biology. “Lunch is always one of my favorite times at GWU because it brings folks from all disciplines together to share food, great conversation that often bridges multiple disciplines, and the opportunity to expand our knowledge, and just to have a good

time. Gerald's 'Oh-Ho' would often ring out and bring a smile to all of our faces. We often ended up with having theological conversations with Gerald serving as our chief counselor. When it came to the theological questions, he was the one to whom we turned."



▲ Dr. Gerald Keown leads in prayer at an event in 2012.

Jones will also miss Keown at their annual golf outings. "Gerald was always our anchor player," he described. "In our foursome, he would always wait to go last to see if anyone else had a decent lie from the tee. If there was one, he would let loose. Man—could he strike the ball. He hit his three wood farther than most of us could hit our drivers. One of my favorites was at the faculty retreat when we were playing at Black Mountain Golf Course. One of the par-4 holes has a cart path running the entire right side. At least one of us had a pretty good shot with the ball in the center of the fairway. Gerald decided he would really let loose and go for it. His ball sliced a bit right, hit the hill above the cart path and rolled ALL THE WAY back to the tee box."

Keown and his wife, Sharon, would have celebrated their 49th anniversary on Dec. 29. "He and Sharon were staunch supporters of Gardner-Webb University," Canoy added. "Their love for the church matched their love for theological education. Gerald's powerful tenor voice could be heard regularly in chapel, on Holy Land trips, and at his beloved Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg, S.C."

Canoy continued, "On a personal note, Dr. Keown was my German professor in my first year of study as a Ph.D. candidate. Little did either of us know that we would later serve together at Gardner-Webb and become dialog partners often debating biblical, theological, political, and social topics. When I received news about his diagnosis, treatments, and passing, all I could do was weep and pray for Sharon, Stephanie, Allison, and his adorable grandson, Bobby."

A Celebration of Life Service for Keown will be held on Saturday, Dec. 18, at 1 p.m. at Fernwood Baptist Church, 200 Fernwood Drive, Spartanburg, S.C. The family will receive friends following the service.

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14

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