

**MEMORIAL DAY PRAYER SERVICE**

# Gardner-Webb Recognizes Those Who Paid the Ultimate Price During Memorial Day Service

BY GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY ON MAY 26, 2023



## *Prayer Gathering and Observance Event Featured Dr. Eric Davis as Speaker*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Faculty, staff and community members gathered on May 25<sup>th</sup> at Gardner-Webb University to honor the brave men and women who gave their lives in defense the United States while serving in the armed forces. “Memorial Day is our solemn responsibility to carry out our lives in ways that would have made those who lost theirs proud,” proclaimed Gardner-Webb University President William Downs.

Gardner-Webb’s Memorial Day remembrance service provided opportunities to consider the fallen, acknowledge their contributions, and to emphasize why this day is so vitally important for the nation.



GWU alumnus, Dr. Eric Davis, employee support manager and lead chaplain for Cleveland County Government, offered remarks and a devotional reflection. “In an attempt to honor the lives of those who died in battle, Decoration Day was observed on May 30, 1868 to commemorate the sacrifices of Civil War soldiers, by proclamation of Gen. John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization of former Union sailors and soldiers,” noted Davis. “The name, ‘Decoration Day,’ came from the early tradition of decorating graves with flowers, wreaths and flags. Today, Memorial Day is a day for remembrance of those who have died in service to our country.”

Vice President for Christian Life and Service and University Chaplain Dr. Josh Parrott led in a welcome and invocation. Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Music Dr. Aaron Rice presided over the singing of the national anthem, and Vice President for Advancement Nate Evans offered a responsive reading. Assistant Dean of Students Brian Arnold officiated over a moment of silence and directed the tolling of the bell, 21 times. This is the highest military honor for those who died defending freedom and democracy.

“From the inception of our country there have been many who have offered the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms... All of these men and women made sacrifices because they believed in our rights as citizens of these United States to honor God and worship freely,” added Davis.

The program’s close featured Associate Vice President of Marketing Wilson Brooks playing Taps, and Associate Minister to the University for Student Ministries Neal Payne providing the benediction.



The Office of Alumni Relations also displayed a “Missing Man Table” in the Tucker Student Center reserved for the missing comrades in arms, the fallen soldiers. The table featured numerous items including a bible, red ribbon, a single red rose, an inverted glass, a pinch of salt, a lemon slice, and a lone candle. Each item represents the emotions and feelings reserved for those who did not come home. The ceremonial table symbolizes that these courageous men and women are with us in spirit.

The Memorial Day observance and prayer gathering is an annual tradition at Gardner-Webb and was established three years ago by President Downs.

“Today, our own daily stresses and struggles seem small...so very small...in comparison to those endured by the men and women that we have gathered to honor...those from our own community who answered the call to defend freedom,” noted Downs. “Those from our own community who overcame fear to face down evil, those from our own community who boarded ships or planes and raced toward conflict...rather than shrinking from it.”

*Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina’s recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to nine colleges and schools, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*