

**University of Georgia
Memorial Service 2007
6 p.m. Thursday, April 19, 2007
The Chapel**

as presided over by President Michael F. Adams

Many times now we have gathered in common grief and individual sadness on these Chapel Steps, finding what comfort we can from each other, giving what comfort we can to each other.

It is on this day that this large and complex university, this thriving community of some 40,000 people becomes a small and intimate village, for each of us has lost an important part of what made UGA our university. Friends are gone; roommates are gone; teachers are gone; colleagues are gone.

We also share today the pain of our colleagues at Virginia Tech, who on Monday endured the unspeakable horror of the deaths of 33 of their friends, classmates and teachers. Jamie Bishop, a teacher of German and a UGA alumnus with two degrees from here, was among those killed in the attack.

Jamie has been quoted as saying that he spent his free time “heroically pursuing creativity;” in addition to his teaching and research into the everyday language of German-speaking people, he maintained a website of photographs, collages and digital artwork; he designed book covers; and was interested in new technologies that could be used in the classroom.

In short, he was the kind of UGA person we all aspire to be.

The tragedy at Virginia Tech is beyond comprehension. University and college campuses should be places where lives begin, where futures are shaped, where great plans are made. When lives end there, when futures are snuffed out, when great plans go unfinished, our souls cry out in anguish and we struggle to understand.

But understanding will not come; that is not our lot. So what do we do with our grief? We comfort each other. We console each other. We reach out to each other. There is a Honduran proverb which says that “Grief shared is half grief.” Share your grief; take half of someone else’s.

We can also find inspiration in the stories of everyday heroes which are emerging from the events in Blacksburg. Faculty members who blocked doors while their students escaped from windows. Students who did the same. Students who administered first aid to their wounded classmates.

Queen Elizabeth has said that “Grief is the price we pay for love.” The great Southern novelist William Faulkner said, “Given a choice between grief and nothing, I’d choose grief.” They both make the point that grief, while painful, is also a reminder that we are alive. And the best tribute to those we have lost is to live lives that honor their memory.

So I would urge you not to forget your loss, but to find some way to comfort yourselves in service projects in honor of your friends, your teachers or your colleagues. And remember our colleagues, our friends, our family at Virginia Tech.

It is appropriate for us at this particular ceremony, where we have gathered to share our collective grief for the lives lost in our own community, to demonstrate our respect for the Virginia Tech community.

I will now ask you to join me in a moment of reflection and respect, as the Chapel bell tolls one time for each life lost at Virginia Tech on Monday.

{PAUSE AS CHAPEL BELL TOLLS FOR VT}

At this time, I'd like to introduce the members of the Campus Ministry Association who will play roles in tonight's memorial service, as well as those who will be reading the names. Sohayl Moshtael of the Athens Baha'i Community will offer our opening prayer.

Reading the names will be Katy Bowers, president of the Student Government Association; Susan Mattern, chair of the executive committee of University Council; and Shannon Scott, chair of the Staff Council.

At this time, members of the Arch Society will prepare for the traditional candle lighting and passing of the flame. As each name of those we are remembering here tonight is read aloud, the Arch Society members will light candles from the flame of the person next to them, and the Chapel bell will ring one tone.



It is a simple, elemental act, but powerful – shining a light into the darkness, sharing that light with another. The first candle will be lit from the flame of a Master Candle, and the flame will spread through the dusk as the individual candles are lit. We must never forget those who have left us, and we will count on the strength of our memories to help us memorialize those we honor this evening.

This sequence continues until the last name is called, the last candle lit, and the bell has rung one time for each name. Then, after a final word from Ms. Bowers, Mr. Moshtael will offer a closing prayer.

After the closing prayer, the Southern Wind Woodwind Quartet will perform a piece we traditionally hear at this service entitled, “Going Home”. As the music plays, the Arch Society members will light the candles of those in the audience, sharing with you the flame they hold in the names of those from this University community we have lost.

As this ceremony concludes you are each welcome to remain as long as you care to visit and reflect. I thank you for being here today at this special ceremony.

– Michael F. Adams, President
The University of Georgia