

UGA Annual Year-End Memorial Service

7 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, 2009 • The Chapel

Good evening, and thank you for coming here to remember those whom we lost this year.

This is a large and complex place. On any given day, 50,000 people or more move through this campus, going to class, working in labs, delivering supplies, competing in intramural sports, eating, talking, studying, sleeping. We are a city unto ourselves within the borders of campus.

But despite the size and complexity of this place, we are a true community, made up of individuals who know each other, who care about each other, who love each other. Like neighborhoods within cities, we know each other as classmates, as co-workers, as colleagues and as friends.

The foundation of the UGA community is the relationship within each other. And every year, some of those relationships are lost through death. So tonight we come together as a community in mourning, remembering the ones we have lost but also reaching out to each other, comforting each other as members of this community, as neighbors, as friends.

But we also come tonight in the wake of the tragedy of this weekend, which touched this community, both UGA and Athens, in multiple ways.

We come with our emotions especially raw, with our burdens unduly heavy and our grief particularly sharp. This community – our community – has been struck hard, and we struggle with what we know and what we do not know.

One needs not be a student, employee, or alumnus in order to be considered part of our family; our connections are like the threads of a spider's web – intertwined and interwoven.

Thus we mourn the loss of Marie Bruce, Tom Tanner and Ben Teague, snatched away from us in a way that brings us pain, confusion, and anxiety. And we can only hope to honor them with the memories of their contributions to our community.

There is a passage from Scripture -- Ecclesiastes 3:4 -- which says there is "A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;"

Right now we are hurting, and so we *weep* and we *mourn*. But in time, I know we will all find time to laugh again. We will find the strength to dance again. We will find reason to rejoice again, and we

will celebrate the lives that we live *and* the lives that we lost.

So as it has been in the past, may this annual memorial service be a time of healing in addition to being a time of grieving.

Yes, we are sad because of the losses we have suffered, but the community strengthens us, the community reminds us that we still have our lives to lead, the community tells us that the best way honor the departed is to live our lives well.

I will now 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.

Paula Frances Gay, Campus Minister with the Greek InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, will offer our opening prayer.

Reading the names will be Katie Barlow, president of the Student Government Association; Bruce Hollitt, chair of the executive committee of University Council; and Stuart Ivy, 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.

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. Barlow, the Rev. Andrew E. Cooke of the Presbyterian Student Center will deliver our 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.

That will conclude the ceremony, and 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.

I will now ask Ms. Gay to lead us in our opening prayer.