

HU celebrates Founder for setting and executing the standard of excellence on Founding Day.

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HAMPTON, Va. -- On an outdoor stage, a half of a dozen doves sat in a closed wooden crate on Easter Sunday. The doves were not visible, but the audience knew they were somewhere near. First, two doves flew out of the crate, then the rest flew out in different directions, white against the blue sky. The audience watched until they disappeared, and soon after gave a standing ovation. This ceremony was fitting for the occasion of Easter Sunday.



Hampton University President Dr. William Harvey made a memorable tribute to Hampton University's founder General Samuel Chapman Armstrong on Founding Day. The Easter Sunday service commemorated Armstrong for setting the standard of excellence 150 years ago by opening the doors of Hampton Normal & Agricultural Institute on April 1, 1868, which stands today as Hampton University.

This celebration took place at Hampton University's historic Ogden Hall and concluded with a dove release ceremony which was a symbol of adoration for Dr. William R. Harvey's 40 years of leadership and the celebration of 150 years of Hampton University's existence.

"Without the resurrection of Jesus celebrated each Easter Sunday, Hampton University would not be what it is today. Armstrong needed the strength he drew from Jesus' resurrection to persevere and follow his vision to found the school. Dr. Harvey would not have survived the challenges he faced as president for 40 years and overcome the obstacles in his and the university's way without the power of the resurrection," said Dr. Michael Battle during his speech.

Dr. Harvey invited Dr. Battle to be the ceremony's distinguished guest speaker. Dr. Battle is the provost and executive vice president of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. He served as Hampton University's former chaplain for 20 years. Dr. Battle made a tribute to General Armstrong in his sermon that tied together the three events that happened on this important day.

Dr. Harvey expressed the gratitude he has for Gen. Armstrong for giving African Americans an opportunity to get an education. His vision was to train selected African American youth to go out and teach and lead their people by being an example to the African American community. Armstrong wanted to build skilled and educated individuals, but he also made it clear that he wanted to build character.

"There were two things he wanted people associated with his institution to possess which are strong academics and good character. Of the two, General Armstrong thought character was more important. These things were not only important in 1868, but in 2018 they may be even more important.

I want Hampton University faculty staff, students and alumni to emulate General Armstrong's wishes and demonstrate honesty, integrity, responsible behavior and trust in their personal and professional lives," Dr. Harvey said.

Students enjoyed the program because they got a better understanding of the founder and why Hampton University stresses the two principles of strong academics and good character.

"I enjoyed learning about General Armstrong on a personal level," said Hampton University student Megan Napier. "Now, I have a great understanding of why this university stresses the importance of providing great academics and building students' characters."

Student leaders expressed gratitude towards President William R. Harvey for continuing founder General Samuel Armstrong's legacy.

"President Harvey has done a wonderful job of carrying the torch and continuing to exemplify the standard of excellence that General Armstrong set on April 1st, 1868," said Student Government Association President Martha Baye. "Jared Bourke, Student Government Association vice president, and I wanted to release doves on behalf of SGA to represent 40 years of outstanding service and the commitment to always give back and return home."