



Freshmen Renita Barnes and Monicia Littlejohn (at right) hold their "I Can" cans during the Fall Convocation. The cans, which will hold a written list of students' goals, were the brainchild of Chancellor Jimmy Jenkins. Other freshmen pictured are, from left, Jamie Watson, Keavin Freeman, Chuck Morris, and Jermaine Carter.

Freshmen receive "light of knowledge" during Fall Candlelighting ceremony

"In this hour of darkness, the world has no other guide to give you other than this light."

With these words, Student Government Council President Tarik Scott captured the essence of the Fall Convocation and Candlelighting Ceremony held Sept. 25 in Moore Hall.

The purpose of the ceremony is to induct the freshmen class into the University family. According to tradition, freshmen are welcomed as youth in a world of darkness who receive the light of knowledge, symbolized by one lighted candle held by an upperclassman. The class of 1998 received the light of knowledge from Scott.

"Into your hands each generation thrusts the dead ashes of its failure," the students were told. "But youth gives the world its dreams. You are the living flames to purge and brighten humanity."

Earlier in the programs the freshmen were officially welcomed into the University family by Dr. Helen Caldwell, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

"Here at Elizabeth City State University you will find a functioning family and culture to lead you into the world,"

"Into your hands each generation thrusts the dead ashes of its failure ..."

said Caldwell. "You will learn to think critically and act responsibly in a diverse society." In a surprise twist to the traditionally solemn ceremony, the freshmen also received small cans from Elizabeth City State University Chancellor Dr. Jimmy Jenkins, who told the students they were to deposit in their cans a written list of the goals they hope to achieve. Jenkins said the cans would be collected at the end of the academic year and opened in another ceremony.

"The cans will be opened later to see how many goals have been achieved," Jenkins added.

According to the written script for the ceremony, which dates back 60 years at Elizabeth City State University, freshmen are told that hope, along with awareness, beauty, truth, faith and love comprise light—and that the youth of the world are bearers of the light.

Freshmen participants in the service included Angela Lewis, of Manteo; My-Chelle Shaw and Melissa Young, of Elizabeth City; Francis Sakala, of Lusaka, Zambia; Tamara Hedgebeth, of Elizabeth City, and Floyd Fayton, of Virginia Beach, Va.

Lynetta Jordan, Miss ECSU, spoke on the purpose of candlelighting. "You are the salt of the earth," said Jordan. "If the salt loses its flavor, who will salt the earth?" Chancellor Jenkins introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Samuel Proctor, Professor of Divinity at Duke University. Jenkins praised Proctor as a speaker "who makes you understand this life isn't just about self and the gratification of acquiring material things, but about a higher spiritual calling."

Jenkins also delivered his traditional charge to the freshman class. "You can be whatever and whoever you want to be," he said. The University Choir, conducted

by Billy C. Hines, performed "Set Me a Seal," and "Every Time I Feel The Spirit."

The candlelighting service was first created by Eva J. Lewis, an English instructor, during the John Bias Administration, according to *A History of Elizabeth State University: a Story of Survival* by Evelyn Johnson. The service was first used as a vesper program and was usually sponsored by the Nautilus Club of which Ms. Lewis was a sponsor.

Edna Harris Mitchell, chairperson of the Department of English, created the first written version of the ritual, according to Johnson's book. The written ritual was later revised by Bernard Peterson, director of drama to be more in keeping with issues modern young people struggle with.

Peterson added into the service the idea of youth's quest for the light of knowledge while they are disillusioned by ignorance, poverty, crime and war. And he concluded that hope, beauty, truth, awareness, faith and love are represented by the lighted candle, which, when passed to the new generation of college students, is able to ultimately reach around the world.