



DUKE UNIVERSITY CHAPEL

*Keeping the heart of the University  
listening to the heart of God*

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THE REVD DR SAMUEL WELLS  
DEAN OF DUKE UNIVERSITY CHAPEL

## STATEMENT ON THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

May 2, 2011

Ten years ago a force that distorted religion, had no respect for justice, and had no regard for human life, killed 3,000 people in one day and seared the soul of America.

Yesterday American forces killed the man widely regarded as chiefly responsible for perpetrating those terrible crimes.

This is not a day for celebration.

A celebration would be due if the perpetrators of those crimes had expressed remorse, regret, and repentance. They have not. A celebration would be due if there had been a conversion of Bin Laden or his followers to a truer practice of Islam. There has been none. A celebration would be due if the overwhelming response from Christians in America had been one that embodied the commandments to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors. There has been no such overwhelming response. A celebration would be due if there had been a proper process of justice, involving arrest, gathering of evidence, trial, defense, and prosecution. There has been no such process. A celebration would be due if the 3,000 that died on 9/11 and their memory had been honored by no endless cycle of further killing. Quite the contrary: nearly 6,000 U.S. troops have died in the “War on Terror” since 2001, and countless thousands of Iraqis and Afghans have meanwhile lost their lives in a decade of slaughter.

Having Bin Laden still at large after 10 years was an embarrassment to America, and it’s not surprising the American administration would stop at nothing to destroy him. But this is not a day for celebration. If we assume that killing a suspect without trial, without persuading him of the justice of our cause, and without bringing him to a true expression of his own tradition – let alone our own – is a victory, then it is a sign of how far we have allowed this war to distort the values of our civilization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Wells". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Sam Wells