Hundreds gather at a candlelight vigil to honor the life of Thomas Meixner

University Communications
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Information about services and ways to support the Meixner family can be found below the story.

Hundreds of candles lit up the University Mall on Friday as family, friends, colleagues, students and community members shared tears, memories and hugs at a vigil honoring Thomas Meixner, head of the Department of Hydrology and Atmospheric Sciences.

Meixner, who earned his doctorate from the University in 1999 and returned to join the faculty in 2005, was killed in a campus shooting Wednesday afternoon.

(See photos from the vigil in this gallery on the University News website.)

University President Robert C. Robbins spoke first at Friday’s vigil, putting a focus on Meixner’s “selfless devotion” to those around him.

“As we move forward, we can look to the standard Tom set every day as an exemplary faculty member and leader, devoted father and husband, teacher and mentor to so many students who he supported and cared for. His impact will be felt for decades to come.”

Robbins spoke from the steps of Old Main, flanked by the Rev. Emmanuel Taylor, associate pastor at St. Thomas More Catholic Newman Center, and the Most Rev. Edward J. Weisenburger, bishop of Tucson.

Taylor said church communities are at their best when they serve as hubs of support and encouragement.

“We answer that call to make that time to share that support, to share that love in these difficult days,” Taylor said. “Grieving takes time, so we have to walk slowly, day by day. Tonight, we continue in that process, but not just tonight. Keep coming back day after day, walking with one another, offering that support.”

Taylor’s comments reflected the call by University leaders for members of the campus community to show compassion to themselves and each other as they continue to grieve and process the tragedy. Drop-in, on-site counseling from ComPsych, the University’s employee assistance counseling provider, will be available through Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. each day in Room 113 of the University Services Building on 888 N. Euclid Ave. Mental health support for students remains available through Counseling & Psych Services.

Among the hundreds in attendance – many wearing student-made buttons featuring Meixner’s name inside a heart – were members of Meixner’s family, joining the University community in the vigil. Colin Cotter, brother of Meixner’s widow, spoke on behalf of the family, sharing gratitude and appreciation for the outpouring of love from the campus community.

“Tom loved the U of A. He loved this community. He was passionate about his work. He was passionate about love for family, love for friends, love for education, love for his colleagues,” Cotter said. “He leaves a lasting impact of love on all of us.”

Cotter also brought some laughs to an otherwise somber crowd when talking about the casual conversations he would have with his brother-in-law.

“I’m sure he had to adjust his form of conversation when he was talking to me about football and all the fun things we would enjoy talking about because otherwise he would have been way over my head,” he said. “The man was just brilliant.”

Before the vigil ended with a moment of silence, Cotter again thanked the gathered members of the community for the show of love. He also offered one more important reminder.

“Please continue to share that love with each other,” Cotter said. “Give your loved ones extra hugs, extra kisses – make sure you tell them how much you love them.”

• A visitation will be held Thursday, Oct. 13, 5-6 p.m. at St. Cyril of Alexandria Roman Catholic Church, 4725 E. Pima St. The funeral will take place Friday, Oct. 14, at 10 a.m. at St. Cyril of Alexandria Roman Catholic Church, followed by burial at Holy Hope Cemetery, 3555 N. Oracle Road. View more information about the service.

• To honor the memory of Thomas Meixner, the University has established the Dr. Thomas Meixner Memorial Fund and has created a crowdfunding page where donors can also share words of condolence. This fund was established to honor his legacy, and the family will direct it to a University of Arizona cause meaningful to them.

• The extended family of Dr. Meixner has created a GoFundMe effort to support Tom’s wife, Kathleen, and their sons, Sean and Brendan. Funds will support immediate costs related to the funeral and will help create a foundation for moving forward with living and educational expenses.

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