

SBU CELEBRATES 143RD SCHOOL YEAR AT FORMAL CONVOCATION

BOLIVAR, Mo. — Two faculty members and a staff member were honored during Southwest Baptist University's annual convocation Wednesday, Aug. 19 – the opening of the 143rd session of the University. This year's event was held in front of a small gathering of students due to occupancy limits because of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Convocation marks the formal beginning of the academic year, a time when campus focuses on SBU's mission and traditions, and a time to reflect on where SBU has been as an institution and to celebrate its future.

"We have a whole group of new students beginning their SBU career here," SBU President Dr. Eric A. Turner said. "Our new students will bring an entirely new dynamic, energy and pool of God-given gifts that we will all enjoy."

"A worldwide pandemic has altered realities forcing us all to adjust our lenses and consider new safety and sanitation practices. Recent racial injustices have forced long overdue national conversation on racism and bigotry. We as a university will continue to move forward with love and open and honest conversations about racial injustice. We will accomplish this in part through Chapel conversations over the course of this semester."

"While we do not know what this year will bring, we know and celebrate the One who does. I can assure you, we will look to who we are, our traditions, and where we have been as together we embrace who the Lord is shaping us to be."

Convocation Address



The tradition of the Orien B. Hendrex Distinguished Teacher Award recipient delivering the convocation address continued with [Dr. Bill DuVall](#), the 2020 honoree. The award recipient is chosen by previous graduating classes and is presented annually to a faculty member "regarded by SBU graduates as a distinguished teacher."

DuVall joined the SBU faculty in 2015 as assistant professor of [psychology](#). He earned his bachelor of science degree in mathematics in 1995 from Frostburg (Md.) State University, and his master of arts in Christian Counseling from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2004. He later received his master of theology and doctor of philosophy in psychology and counseling from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 2014.

DuVall began as a teaching fellow at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 2005-07, while completing licensure as an LPC-intern from 2006-07 at both Northwood Church in Keller, Texas, and Promises Counseling Center in Burleson, Texas. DuVall also served as an LPC, operating Trinity Family Counseling Services in Oakland, Md., while he and his wife, Julie, served as NAMB missionaries in western Maryland.

DuVall is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors, the Society for Christian Psychology and the Christian Association for Psychological Studies.

DuVall and his wife, Julie, an instructor in SBU's [Clark University Success Center](#), live in Bolivar with their children, Elijah, who attends SBU, and Aidan and Abbey. They attend First Baptist Church of Bolivar, where Dr. DuVall serves with the student ministry and personnel committee, as well as having participated in several mission trips and

marriage retreats.

In his address, DuVall said he loves working with students, helping them become servant leaders in a global society through the classroom, and how guiding them individually is a blessing.

“And, I’m really happy to get back to both of those things face-to-face,” DuVall said.

Honored and humbled as the Hendrex Award recipient, DuVall reflected on what the award is about and what he brings to the table.

“Since the award is about teaching and personal connection, and since I come from a combined psychology and theology background, I thought it best to reflect on what Scripture might bring to bear on our current set of circumstances to help us move beyond surviving, to maybe even flourishing in our current time,” DuVall said.

DuVall, borrowing a phrase shared by Dr. Debbie Walker, coordinator of SBU’s Counseling Services – “tolerance for ambiguity” – altered it to “just roll with it,” in regards to working through the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“When we can learn to deal with life’s uncertainties as they come and just roll with it, we will be far better off than if we constantly worry about things that really we don’t have the power to change anyway,” DuVall said. “Rest assured, the easiest way to do that is to recognize that the God that we serve, who loves us, is bigger than all the stuff we’re worried about anyway; we can lean into him.

“I’m not trying to stand here and say if you just read your Bible more, it’s gonna be all better. I’m talking about leaning into a living relationship with Jesus Christ and being able to function in the way that He calls us to function.”

DuVall presented the lessons from Paul and Peter, and how, even with the best of intentions to share the Gospel, or having deeply held beliefs challenged, God had other plans for them and they were obedient – “just rolling with it.”

When Jesus was facing crucifixion, as man, he struggled with what he knew was ahead of him. With honesty and transparency, he expressed this to God, his father, through prayer. But, knowing what God had planned, Jesus prayed for God’s will to be done – putting others’ needs before his own, thus changing the course of human history.

“I think that’s what the world needs from us right now,” DuVall said. “I think they need to see a group of people who are affiliated with Jesus, actually acting like Jesus. A group of people who are willing to just roll with it and put others’ needs first, before our own wants and desires; to social distance when we don’t feel like social distancing anymore; to mask when we don’t want to wear a mask anymore – all of those things that others around us need to do that we don’t necessarily want to do.

“If we set that kind of example, that’s leading by serving. That is at the heart of what it means to be a Bearcat. And that, I believe, is where we are and where we need to be focused this academic year, as we set an example to others around us – learning to really just roll with it.”

Newcomer of the Year awards

The Newcomer of the Year awards began in 1995 to recognize one full-time faculty member and one non-teaching staff member who, in their first months of employment at Southwest Baptist University, demonstrate exceptional commitment to the University’s mission and make a positive impact as part of the SBU family. Faculty and staff members who have been employed full time for no more than 18 months prior to the selection process are eligible. Committees of peers select the winners.

Faculty Newcomer of the Year:



[Gichamba](#) serves as an assistant professor of [computing](#). Prior to coming to SBU during WinterFest 2019, he worked in various capacities at Africa Nazarene University, including dean, chair and lecturer in Nairobi, Kenya.

"He has poured himself into the lives of his students and has shown himself to be an excellent colleague who has great expectations of himself and his students," said Gichamba's dean, Dr. Troy Bethards. "He quickly has stepped up to serve his colleagues and is a vital part of the computing area within the Division of Computing and Mathematics.

"In addition, in his short time here, he has been instrumental in helping establish recruitment efforts with prospective students in Kenya."

Gichamba pursued his undergraduate degree in computer science from Africa Nazarene University, a master of science in information technology from Strathmore University and a doctorate in information systems from the University of Nairobi.

Gichamba and his wife, Carol, have three children: Aaron, Joshua and Esther.

Staff Newcomer of the Year:

Paige Williford currently serves as the media producer in the Office of Marketing and Communications. Williford began working at SBU in August 2019 after graduating in May 2019 with a bachelor of science degree in English Education.

While a student at SBU, Williford was a resident assistant in Leslie Hall, a Writing Center tutor and a Campus Host for the Office of Admissions. She also spent two summers working as a videographer counselor at Camp War Eagle in Rogers, Ark., and completed a summer internship at Door of Faith Orphanage in Baja, Mexico.

During her senior year at SBU, Williford worked for Marketing and Communications as the campus videographer and is now the full-time media producer. Her creativity and love for SBU have been evident in her work this past year, especially with extra demands placed on communication efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Williford and her husband, Josiah, who recently married on Aug. 8, live in Bolivar. Josiah is a senior Christian Ministry major at SBU with a minor in intercultural studies.



PHOTO 1: Dr. Bill DuVall, associate professor of psychology and 2020 Orien B. Hendrex Distinguished Teacher Award recipient.

PHOTO 2: Dr. Amos Gichamba — SBU provost Dr. Lee Skinkle (right) and SBU president Dr. Eric A. Turner present Dr. Amos Gichamba,

assistant professor of computing, with the Faculty Newcomer of the Year Award.

PHOTO 3: Paige Williford — SBU provost Dr. Lee Skinkle (right) and SBU president Dr. Eric A. Turner present Paige Williford, media producer for the Office of Marketing and Communications, with the Staff Newcomer of the Year Award.

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