

# SBU PRESENTS LAWSON WITH HONORARY DOCTORATE ON FOUNDERS' DAY

BOLIVAR, Mo. — Mark W. Lawson of St. Louis received an honorary doctorate from Southwest Baptist University during the annual Founders' Day chapel service held Monday, March 2, in Pike Auditorium on the Bolivar campus.

"It is always our goal to honor the University by recognizing outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to society and to the Kingdom's work," SBU President Dr. Eric A. Turner said. "The SBU story is the composite of thousands of individual lives that have influenced the University at a University influencing lives. Today, we honor one such individual."



## Mark W. Lawson

Mark W. Lawson grew up in Aurora, Mo., and went on to earn his bachelor of music in education degree from SBU in 1979. He received a master of sacred music degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1981.

Lawson served as minister of music at Edmondson Road Baptist Church and Kirkwood Baptist Church in St. Louis before becoming owner and president of MorningStar Music Publishers in St. Louis in

1997. In 2015, he became owner and president of ECS Publishing Group in St. Louis.

Lawson said he was humbled and honored to receive the honorary doctorate, and shared about opportunities he never experienced until he came to SBU.

"When I look back on my years here at SBU, I cannot help but think about how incredibly fortunate I was to have chosen this path," Lawson said. "SBU, in many ways, was the basecamp for the beginning of a very long journey for me."

"I grew up in rural Missouri, and until I came to SBU, I never heard a symphony orchestra, and yet, had the opportunity to sing with one my first semester. I had not had the opportunity to see a play, and yet, I would take advantage of going to many of the arts things that were available at SBU at the time."

Lawson also recalled the examples set by the faith-based faculty at SBU, and the opportunity to grow with fellow students who went on to be teachers, conductors, ministers of music and lifelong friends.

At ECS, Lawson is responsible for the publication development, strategic focus and management of E.C. Schirmer Music Co., Galaxy Music Corp., MorningStar Music Publishers and ARSIS Audio. ECS controls the rights to more than 20,000 copyrights and publishes music and books for schools, churches, professional ensembles and opera companies.



Lawson has developed publishing strategies for the Washington National Cathedral, the National Collegiate Choral Organization, the Presbyterian Association of Church Musicians, Baylor University, the National Lutheran Choir and Duke University Choir. ECS also has been a consultant on two U.S. Papal visits. Lawson has served as a council member for the National Pastoral Musicians, on the advisory board for Baylor University School of Sacred Music and currently serves on the executive board

of Chorus America.

“Our music company is very fortunate to own several important musical works from American history,” Lawson said. “One of those works is a collaboration between Randall Thompson and Robert Frost. Many times during the year, I get to hear choirs sing the wonderful poem, ‘The Road Not Taken.’ In that poem, the lines that always strike me are the ones in which Frost says, ‘Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference.’ So, when I look back and see my high school friends going off to schools that sometimes were closer, sometimes were larger, I thank God that I chose that path that He had for me.”

Lawson and his wife Ginny are active members of Kirkwood Baptist Church in St. Louis, where they sing in the choir, work in the children’s choir program and direct the handbell program. They enjoy spending time with their grandchild and the families of their five adult children, as well as traveling, reading, running, biking, watching the St. Louis Cardinals, visiting art museums and attending concerts.

### **About Founders’ Day**

SBU was founded 142 years ago this coming fall semester, in 1878, when James Rogers Maupin and Abner Smith Ingman established Southwest Baptist College in Lebanon, Mo. A year later, the college moved to Bolivar. Founders’ Day is a time set aside to reflect on the university’s history and heritage.

“From its founding to today, the historical documents and artifacts confirmed that SBU is distinctively Baptist in its heritage, devoted to the mission of leading and growing students’ faith in Christ, passionate about teaching from a distinctively Christian worldview and bent on educating students with academic rigor,” said Dr. Ed Walton, dean of SBU’s University Libraries and university archivist.

“Anyone who takes a look at its history will find some consistent themes emerge. SBU exists because of God’s handiwork. SBU has faced many opportunities to fail, but God is always faithful to bring the right people and support to enable it to persist. God calls people and He brings them to SBU and gives them a purple transfusion – they become lifelong Bearcats.”

Walton reflected on some of the pivotal points in SBU's history and how they illustrate God's provision since SBU's founding, from going bankrupt to recovering from a devastating fire in the early 1900s to one of its "silent heroes" in Frank Stuffelbam.

"You ask, 'what is the future of SBU,'" Walton said. "You only have to look at its history and you'll get the answer. It is a rich tapestry of God's provision and handiwork. If you find yourself here today, it is because of God's handiwork, both in establishing SWBC and preserving SBU today."

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PHOTO 1: (Left to right) SBU President Dr. Eric A. Turner, Mark W. Lawson, recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Music Ministry and SBU Provost Dr. Lee Skinkle, during the annual Founders' Day chapel March 2 at SBU.

PHOTO 2: (Left to right) SBU President Dr. Eric A. Turner, Mark W. Lawson, recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Music Ministry, Ginny Lawson and SBU Provost Dr. Lee Skinkle, during the annual Founders' Day chapel March 2 at SBU.

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