

LEWRIGHT, JONES RECEIVE LIFE BEAUTIFUL AWARDS AT SBU COMMENCEMENT

Southwest Baptist University confers 530 degrees during three ceremonies

BOLIVAR, Mo. – Southwest Baptist University conferred 320 undergraduate and 210 graduate degrees during three online ceremonies held Saturday, May 16.

"Today, we gather together from all around the world to honor the hard work and tenacity of our graduates," said Dr. Eric A. Turner, president of SBU. "Our graduates are extraordinary people. Graduates, you have worked diligently to achieve this significant milestone. We are so proud of you."

"At SBU, we aim to provide students with an education that equips them to be salt and light, prepared with a depth of academic and professional content for their respective calling and careers, and empowered to fulfill the imperative of the Great Commission with passion and compassion. Commencement is a beginning for you caring Bearcats."



Life Beautiful Awards

The 2020 recipients of the Life Beautiful Award are Sarah Lewright of Stockton and Sam Jones of Bolivar.

Lewright graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor of social work degree with a minor in intercultural studies. She is a member of the Phi Alpha Honor Society and was named as a 2020 outstanding social work student. Sarah has participated in five global projects with SBU's Center for Global Connections, including to Baja, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Senegal and Cuba. She has volunteered as a leader for church camps, has led worship, served as an AWANA leader and a committee member of Mid-Lakes Baptist Association, and has volunteered with Exodus Ministry.

"Sarah is one of the best graduates I've had the privilege to teach," Dr. Lee Skinkle, provost of SBU, read from a nomination letter. "She stands out in her love for Christ and her service for others. She is a natural leader. She is

Christ-focused and puts others' needs before her own. She has excellent social work skills and is able to connect easily with others. She seems to have a natural love for people and helping others."

She is married to Hayden Lewright and is the daughter of Ken and Stacey Spurgeon of Stockton.

Jones graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in mathematics and computer science. He has served as a resident assistant at Gott Hall, participated and led a "Freedom in Christ" men's discipleship small group and volunteered with Polk County K-Life's student ministry, where he led a middle school small group. He will be employed at Duck Creek after graduation.

"Even with his challenging workload, he's found opportunities to be a servant leader on campus as an RA and a mentor for many male students on campus with his leadership of his Freedom in Christ study through his local church and in the community life through K-Life student ministries," Jones' faculty said about him.



Jones is the son of Drs. Tom and Sarah Jones of Bolivar.

The Life Beautiful Award was established in 1937 by Rosalee Mills Appleby, a career missionary to Brazil. This award is given annually to an outstanding man and woman in the Southwest Baptist University spring graduating class. These individuals have demonstrated by their scholarship and character that they are living a "life beautiful." The faculty selects the recipients, whose identities remain confidential until commencement.



Orien B. Hendrex Distinguished Teacher Award

Dr. Bill DuVall, professor of psychology on the Bolivar campus, received the Orien B. Hendrex Distinguished Teacher Award.

DuVall has been a full-time faculty member at SBU and a part of the Bearcat Family since the fall of 2015. He is married to Julie, a University Success Center faculty member. They have three children, Elijah, Aidan and Abbey.

The award is presented annually to a faculty member who has been judged by the previous three years' graduating classes to be outstanding in both teaching ability and personal guidance. The SBU Board of Trustees designated this award in memory of Hendrex, a former academic dean.

Commencement Congratulations from SBU Alumni

This year, in lieu of a normal commencement address, a group of SBU Alumni, representing all four campuses and a large variety of programs, was assembled to deliver words of encouragement and congratulations, via a video presentation, to the Class of 2020.

- "SBU has truly equipped you with knowledge and skills that set you apart from others. Please allow those to shine in all that you do. Take with you your incredible memories of your time here and lifelong friendships." – Dr. Amy Spears, Class of 2000
- "Bearcats, in the words of one of my favorite authors, Morgan Harper Nichols, 'Keep on being you. Keep on doing those beautiful, impactful, honest things you do. Out here in this world, we need more people like you.'" – Emily Raines, Class of 2018, '19
- "God's word for us is, 'Fear not, for I am with you.' Take this unfortunate, weird, tragic, crazy ending and allow God's truth to make for you a beautiful, glorious, awesome beginning." – Bill vanHoornbeek, Class of 1995
- "May the Lord protect and guide you. May His face radiate with joy because of you. May He be gracious to you and show you His favor, and give you His peace," Dr. Pat Baker, Class of 1951

Many more SBU Alumni offered their words of wisdom and well wishes to the graduates.

"Graduates, we are grateful for the time we get to spend with you while you are with us at SBU," Turner said. "But, we look forward to the days when we hear back from you on the flavor you gave the world by fulfilling your commission; how you enlightened the world."

The ceremonies are available for viewing for at least one year after May 16, 2020. Visit www.SBUniv.edu/academics/commencement/ for links to view the ceremonies.

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