

Around the State: ETBU students analyze worship songs

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Students in East Texas Baptist University's worship music course recently completed a comprehensive research project examining the content of the most-sung worship songs in churches across the country. By analyzing the Christian Copyright Licensing International Top 100 songs for fall 2024, students explored what theological themes are shaping congregational worship today. The students used a qualitative content analysis method and grouped their research into five areas: figurative and romantic language, vertical versus horizontal worship, Trinitarian references, themes of social justice and lament, and gospel content. They found only a small number of songs used overtly romantic or sentimental language. A balanced mix of vertical (sung directly to God) and horizontal (sung about God) songs also was found. However, the research revealed a noticeable lack of Trinitarian language and a surprising absence of lament or themes of social justice—both of which are prevalent in Scripture. Perhaps most significantly, nearly half of the songs contained no explicit reference to the gospel story of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The full student research article is available upon request. For more information about the Worship Studies program visit www.etbu.edu/worshipstudies.



The HPU Concert Choir presented “A Service of Evensong” on May 6, at St. John’s Anglican Church in Brownwood. (HPU Photo)

The HPU Concert Choir presented “A Service of Evensong” on May 6, at St. John’s Anglican Church in Brownwood. The service of Evensong can be directly related to the canonical hours of prayer established many centuries ago by those in the monastic tradition. More directly, however, this service is attributed to Anglican reformer Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, during the reign of Henry VIII. This reflective hour of worship is mostly sung and includes the majority of the liturgy that was established by Cranmer. The service of Evensong was first published in the English Book of Common Prayer in 1549. The service was officiated by the deacons and laity of St. John’s Church, under the leadership of Father **Michael Mobley**. The choir is under the direction of **Christopher Rosborough**, HPU’s associate professor of music, department chair and director of choral activities, and accompanied by **Diane Deatherage**, adjunct faculty for the School of Education and Fine Arts.



Pictured left to right: HCU President Robert B. Sloan, Miss HCU award recipient Yennisse Sevilla and Mr. HCU award recipient Eleazar Rivas. (HCU Photo / Mike Tims)

At Houston Christian University's 2025 Honors Convocation on April 30, students and faculty were honored and celebrated for academic, spiritual and professional excellence. The President's Award was given to **Brooke Bigford, Ashley Borges, Eunice Martinez, Jacqueline Nguyen, Yennisse Sevilla, Jason Colon, Eric Luckett, Richard Marquez, Eleazar Rivas** and **Mason Robertson**. To be considered for this award, a student must have earned a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA, have made significant contributions to HCU, show promise of representing the university well in the community after graduation, and demonstrate a passion for academic, spiritual and professional excellence. This year's 2025 Mr. and Miss HCU winners were **Eleazar Rivas** and **Yennisse Sevilla**. These honors are awarded by the whole HCU campus community to two seniors who epitomize the ideal HCU student in character, service, spiritual life, leadership and scholarship.



The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor honored students Mallory Overton, Cade Elkins and Selah Cordova with the Gary and Diane Heavin Servant Leadership Award during the final chapel service of the semester. (UMHB Photo)

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor honored students **Selah Cordova**, **Cade Elkins** and **Mallory Overton** with the Gary and Diane Heavin Servant Leadership Award during the final chapel service of the semester. The award recognizes devotion to ministry and community service during the students' four years of study at UMHB. The award is named for Mr. and Mrs. **Gary Heavin** of Waco, who established an endowment to fund this recognition annually. Cordova is a senior Christian Studies major from San Antonio, who attends Grace Bible Church in Killeen. Elkins is a senior social work major from Belton. He attends Grace Church Salado. Overton is a senior health science major from Houston, who attends Vista Community Church. UMHB will honor its 169th graduating class during a commencement ceremony at 7:30 p.m. on May 10 in Crusader Stadium on the UMHB campus. An estimated 537 students will be awarded degrees in the spring 2025 ceremony. A live stream of the ceremony will be available at umhb.edu/commencement.



HCU nursing student Madeline Gaiser takes part in the campus blood drive. (Photo courtesy of Diane Tezeno)

[Houston Christian University](#), in collaboration with [KPRC 2 Community](#), hosted a successful blood drive April 29. The annual blood drive, held on HCU's campus, resulted in the collection of 30 units of blood—enough to potentially save up to 90 lives, according to the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center. **Michael Iliopoulos**, marketing manager for the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center, applauded the initiative and emphasized the importance of mobile blood drives in sustaining the regional supply. “We need a thousand blood donations every day, so we can't rely solely on fixed donation sites,” Iliopoulos said. “University drives are especially important because young donors are eager to get involved and give back to their communities.” For more information on how to host a blood drive or to find a donation site near you, visit www.giveblood.org.



DBU cheer team members (from left to right) Reagan Drown, Ellie Gillespie, Kate Hopper, and Makaylynn Santellan were baptized in the Atlantic Ocean at NCAA College Nationals in Daytona Beach, Fla. (DBU Photo)

This year at NCAA College Nationals in Daytona Beach, Fla., four members of the Dallas Baptist University cheer team experienced a moment even bigger than competition—they were baptized in the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by their teammates, coaches and family. **Ellie Gillespie, Reagan Drown, Kate Hopper** and **Makaylynn Santellan** each shared their testimonies before stepping into the waters of baptism. The team chose Daytona Beach for this special moment because it marks the biggest event of their season, and because so many family members had traveled from across the country to be part of Nationals. Just before sunrise on Saturday morning, the team, families and coaches gathered on the beach.

Each girl stood before the group one by one, sharing her story of how Christ had worked in her life, and chose a coach or family member to baptize them in the ocean waves. The morning was filled with hugs, tears and joyful celebrations. The weekend also brought championship victories for the DBU Cheer team. The Patriots were crowned National Champions in both the All-Girl Intermediate Division II and the Game Day Division II competitions, marking the program's eighth national title.



HPU students (from left to right) Patricia Garibaybartolo, Brylee Awbrey, Evangeline Skolaut and Luke Moss are pictured with Gary Gramling, dean of the School of Christian Studies, director of the Christian studies graduate programs and professor of Christian studies. (HPU Photo)

Howard Payne University recently recognized four students at its annual Servant Leadership Awards Chapel for their servant leadership on campus and in the community. Those honored were **Brylee Awbrey** of Midland, **Patricia Garibaybartolo** of Nolanville, **Luke Moss** of Brownwood and **Evangeline Skolaut** of New Braunfels. Moss and Skolaut were each awarded the Howard Payne University Servant Leadership Award. Awbrey and Garibaybartolo were each presented the Dr. Nat Tracy Servant

Leadership Award. Award recipients are selected from nominations made by HPU personnel and students. Established in 2007 by HPU through the generosity of the Moore Foundation and the Barney II Foundation, the HPU Servant Leadership Award recognizes exemplary junior-level students in the areas of leadership and service. The Dr. Nat Tracy Servant Leadership Award, designated for senior-level students, was established in 1998 to honor the life of the late Nat Tracy, a faculty member in HPU's School of Christian Studies from 1950 to 1975.

Hardin-Simmons University received a \$15,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Abilene to support the Dream-Makers Professional Development workshop for Abilene Independent School District teachers. The workshop, scheduled for June 9-12, on the HSU campus, is designed to provide professional development opportunities for early career AISD teachers who wish to enhance their knowledge of meeting diverse learners' needs. "The Dream-Makers Professional Development program grew from a need we identified within the Abilene ISD community to support teachers, particularly those who are new to the profession," said **Renee Collins**, associate dean of the Irvin School of Education at HSU. She said through conversations with staff and community members, "it became clear that there was a significant need to help our new teachers develop the skills necessary to meet the needs of all learners." The four-day workshop will focus on curriculum, instruction and special education.



Wayland President Donna Hedgepath (center) presented the Citizenship award to this year's recipients—Rosa Ramirez and Joshua Tucker. (Wayland Photo)

Wayland Baptist University celebrated students' academic achievements at an awards chapel service held April 30. The ceremony recognized students from various academic schools and programs, with special emphasis on the Citizenship Awards and Freshman of the Year Awards. The Citizenship Award, the university's highest honor, is based on Christian citizenship, academic excellence, diversity of interest, loyalty to American ideals, personal integrity and personal exemplification of the Wayland spirit. This award is presented to one graduating male and female. Wayland President **Donna Hedgepath** presented the award to this year's recipients—**Rosa Ramirez** and **Joshua Tucker**. **Jeffrey Vera**, director of alumni relations and career services, presented the Rory Allgood Thomas Impact Scholarship to the Outstanding Freshman Girl, **Emily Ackerman**, and the Outstanding Freshman Boy, **Jarrett Lynch**. **Cindy McClenagan**, vice president of academic affairs, recognized students who were honored with awards in their respective academic schools.

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor announced registration is now open for summer 2025 at the UMHB Arts Academy for participants of all ages and skill levels in music, theatre, visual arts and dance. Classes include instrumental and vocal lessons, visual art workshops, musical theatre, dance and early childhood groups. With expert instructors, supportive programs and a welcoming environment, the Arts Academy is a place to build confidence and learn new skills. Enrollment is limited, and classes fill up quickly. Explore class offerings and register today at [Registration - Arts Academy](#) or call 254-295-4686 for more information.

Mansfield Mayor Michael Evans was reelected to a third term Saturday, according to unofficial results. Evans, a past president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Mansfield, first was elected mayor of Mansfield in 2020. In a Facebook post Evans expressed appreciation for prayers, support and the people's votes to re-elect him. Evans has served Mansfield in different capacities for 36 years. He was a Mansfield school board member from 2007 to 2017 and a Tarrant County College trustee from 2017 to 2021, the [*Fort Worth Star Telegram*](#) on Newsbreak reported.