

# Baylor announces inaugural chair in study of Black worship

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WACO—Baylor University announced July 24 the appointment of Stephen Newby as the inaugural holder of the Lev H. Prichard III Chair in the Study of Black Worship [established in 2021](#). Newby will serve in the Baylor University School of Music.

Newby brings a background in music, scholarship and ministry to the new position, which provides interdisciplinary leadership, research and scholarship efforts associated with the growth of Baylor's [Black Gospel Music Preservation Program](#), housed within Baylor University Libraries.

"This is a dream job, and words cannot express my gratitude to the Prichard family for establishing this position," Newby said.

"Gospel music and Black worship is an integral part of the American fabric. The opportunity to serve and collaborate with others to preserve and share this music is amazing. I think this can provide a foundation to help us present the incredible treasure of this music that we have before us," he added.

A member of the Seattle Pacific University faculty since 2004, his most recent positions include professor of music, director of composition and director of the Center for Worship. While at Seattle Pacific, he earned a National Endowment for the Arts grant and has contributed numerous journal articles, chapters and published pieces to music scholarship.

Additionally, Newby has served on the faculties of the University of Michigan and Trevecca Nazarene University.

While serving as a full-time faculty member, Newby has built a parallel career as a renowned composer, fusing elements of Black gospel and jazz in churches, symphony halls, musical theatre stages and more.

A composer of classical, gospel, jazz and chamber music, Newby's versatility has taken his music to numerous stages and concert halls. His most recent commissions were performed by the Seattle Symphony and in Seattle's 5th Avenue Theater. He also has served as a worship leader with Maranatha Music and Promise Keepers, with multiple published recordings to his credit.

## **Scholarship, music and ministry**

Before joining the Seattle Pacific faculty, Newby served as a minister of music at Antioch Bible Church in Seattle, Wash. The ministry call has maintained a grip on his life in a variety of settings, including a recent appointment as minister of worship at Peachtree Church in Atlanta.

As a child of ministers—Newby's father was a Missionary Baptist preacher and his mother a minister of music—Newby says a career involving music and ministry was “in my genes. The education piece is attributed to curiosity.”

In addition to three degrees in music, Newby attained a Master of Arts degree in theology while on faculty at Seattle Pacific. That training led him to full-time jobs in higher education and ministry, while continuously composing and publishing pieces in a variety of genres—most notably the fusion of classical, gospel and jazz.

Newby's multifaceted musical background and renowned academics will further intertwine in the Prichard Chair role. He sees the Prichard Chair as allowing him “to lean into” his various interests while being able “to pass this on to the next generation.”

# Baylor ties

Before joining the Baylor faculty, Newby's association with the university goes back nearly 10 years to his initial visit to the [Pruit Memorial Symposium](#). In 2013, the symposium began a partnership with the Black Gospel Music Preservation Program to explore the cultural heritage of Black gospel music. Newby first attended the symposium in 2014.

As Newby brings leadership to the Black Gospel Music Preservation Program and Pruit Symposium through the Prichard Chair position, he assumes the mantle from a friend, collaborator and mentor—Bob Darden, master teacher and emeritus professor of journalism, public relations and new media, who retired in May. Darden founded the Black Gospel Music Preservation Program in 2005.

Newby is currently working with Darden on an upcoming biography of the late influential Christian music performer and writer Andraé Crouch titled *Soon & Very Soon: The Transformative Music and Ministry of Andraé Crouch, The Light Years*.

"Because of the Pruit Symposium, I've always had my eyes on Baylor," Newby said. "I've had a great appreciation for the collegiality and excellent scholarship produced at those gatherings. That was a wonderful draw for me.

"And when I look at all this—the program and archives, the symposium and the investment through the Prichard's generosity—where else in the United States is anything like this going on?"