

UMHB plans 78th annual Easter Pageant

April 7, 2017

BELTON —The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor will host its 78th Annual Easter Pageant April 12—a Central Texas tradition that draws thousands of visitors to campus each year.

Performances are scheduled at 12:30 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. in front of Luther Memorial on the UMHB campus. All performances are free and open to the public.

UMHB's Easter Pageant is student-led and features a cast of more than 300 students and 30 children and grandchildren of university students, faculty and staff.



The student-led University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Easter Pageant will be presented April 12 on the UMHB campus. (File Photo/UMHB)The pageant chronicles moments from Christ's Passion, including his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, his trial by Pontius Pilate, crucifixion, death and resurrection.

Each year, UMHB President Randy O'Rear selects a student to serve as the

pageant's director, overseeing the cast and production, as well as choosing students for the roles of Jesus and his mother, Mary, primarily on the basis of their strong Christian faith and character.

Maddie Rarick of Sugar Land is director of this year's pageant. Sophie Rivera of Round Rock portrays Mary, and Jacob Asmussen of Austin will fill the role of Jesus.

"I was surprised that he would choose me, and I had no idea of the journey that it would take me on throughout the next year," Asmussen said, describing preparation for the role as transformative.

"It's been life-changing. It has transformed my heart and my way of thinking, and it has really helped me develop a stronger relationship with God and his love."

As director of the pageant, Rarick was responsible for most of the production's casting decisions, but she encouraged Asmussen to select the students who would fill the roles of disciples. For Asmussen, the task offered an opportunity for ministry.

"I wanted a group of guys that could form a great bond, a brotherhood," Asmussen said. "But I also wanted guys who were at different stages in their relationship with Christ—guys who could benefit from the experience and be changed by it."

The young men have grown close over the course of the production, Asmussen said. In fact, the group plans to conduct a baptism ceremony in the near future for members who never have been baptized before or who were christened as infants.

"That's probably going to be one of the best days of my life," Asmussen said.

Pageant organizers caution the 5:30 p.m. show is usually the most popular, and visitors are encouraged to attend earlier performances if possible. Audiences also are encouraged to bring sunscreen, because umbrellas are prohibited.