

Convocation

Mission, Vision, Values, Leadership, and Learning Aims

THE MISSION OF CONVOCATION AT HCU

To welcome HCU students, faculty, and staff into the presence of God in community with one another for a weekly time of worship and preaching that is *biblically saturated, spiritually formative, and missionally engaged.*

To welcome HCU students, faculty, and staff...

Convocation is the gathering where we “*call together*” each member of our campus community to celebrate all the grace and truth that fills our central confession, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” in the spirit of love and welcome that flows from the gospel.

...into the presence of God in community with one another...

Beyond our own individual times of devotion and spiritual formation with the Lord, every disciple of Jesus needs times for intentionally meeting with other believers to meet together with the Lord. Convocation is our chance to seek the presence of the Lord in the presence and partnership of the people of God.

...for a weekly time of worship and preaching...

The heartbeat of our campus life is kept in rhythm through a weekly gathering in which we realign the focus of our attention, the object of our affections, and the values of our wills on the glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

...that is *biblically saturated*...

God’s Word creates life and radiates light. Convocation is not a time to listen to human ideas that clamor for our allegiance but is a time for us to tune our ears to hear God’s voice in God’s Word. So we want to saturate our hour together with Scripture in all that we sing, pray, read, and teach.

...*spiritually formative*...

When we see Jesus—truly see Jesus for all of who he is—then it transforms us to be like him (1Jo 3:2). At Convocation our hope is to behold God in his glory so that the most thrilling thing we can each imagine is to give our lives fully to him.

...and *missionally engaged*.

We want the time we spend together in Convocation to prepare us for discipleship beyond the four walls of Dunham Theater and the borders of campus. It should propel us into the life and ministry of a local church, to service in our neighborhoods and city, to work of excellence and integrity in our professional callings, and to participation in sharing the good news of Jesus’s kingdom around the world.

A VISION FOR CONVOCATION

An excellent Convocation program is worth our supplication, sweat, sacrifice, and service in order to:

- Magnify the glory of God displayed in our world and in the gospel of Jesus Christ—Convo will be *a place where we glorify God by finding our deepest satisfaction in enjoying him together.*
- Be a magnetic experience that draws the whole campus community together—Convo will be *compelling, not just compulsory.*
- Be a touchstone for a seriously Christian liberal-arts experience guided by the University's Ten Pillars—Convo will offer *a distillation of everything HCU is about.*
- Answer our most pressing questions and initiate new conversations—Convo will be *intellectually stimulating and sensitively responsive* to the theological and pastoral concerns of students.
- Ignite lifelong change through a shared encounter with God—Convo will be *a place for repentance, revival, and reconciliation.*
- Connect our students to campus ministry and the local church—Convo will *impel students into discipleship and service outside the walls of Dunham Theater and beyond the borders of campus.*
- Inspire our community to embrace the calling of God for mission and vocation—Convo will *drive students into kingdom mission so they are not drifting in cultural currents.*
- Connect with and reinforce Fall and Spring IGNITE spiritual emphasis weeks—Convo will be a gathering that *prepares us for and perseveres us in seasons of special work by God's Spirit.*

VALUES FOR CONVOCATION

To fulfill the mission and vision described above, we will work to see the following imperatives characterize our weekly Convocation gatherings:

- Worship in ways that:
 - honor how God has revealed his desire to be worshipped in the splendor of holiness,
 - prioritize the participation and edification of the congregation that has gathered,
 - amplify thoughtfully the annual theme, and
 - connect meaningfully with the teaching focus for the day
- Model the central spiritual disciplines of worship, prayer, and Scripture reading
- Incorporate a variety of cultural and denominational perspectives and leadership from across evangelical Christian traditions to steward faithfully the blessing of kingdom diversity God has given to our campus
- Develop liturgies to reinforce our central mission and reshape us as we repeatedly worship through them
- Commission messages centered on Christ, rooted in Scripture, keyed to our learning aims, and connected organically to the theme and the teaching series they will help expound
- Share testimonies of gospel transformation that will glorify God for his saving work and invite others to experience the same
- Platform the centrality of membership and ministry in a local church for every disciple of Jesus Christ

- Focus attention on God’s presence through “invisible excellence” that neither attracts the spotlight through showy performance nor distracts from worship through inadequate preparation, planning, or skill
- Propel participants into application and mission through offering intentional follow-up, practical resources, and guidance to next steps
- Involve students actively in Convocation planning and worship leadership

CONVOCATION PLANNING TEAM

To ensure fidelity to this vision and excellence in implementation, our Convocation Planning Team (CPT) will have strong staff and faculty leadership and planning; local church and campus ministry input; and active student engagement. The CPT is comprised of leadership from the Office of the Provost, our Spiritual Life Department, and our School of Christian Thought, as well as an annually rotating group of students, faculty, and staff representatives (particularly those who are highly involved in Convocation). This team will work together to prayerfully evaluate the current year and prepare for the next academic year according to the mission, vision, and values for Convocation.

The CPT will give particular focus to developing the theme chosen for each year into a worship and teaching plan that will fulfill its learning aims and spiritual formation goals. Convocation teaching and speakers will be guided by an annual theme and a multi-year cycle of learning aims that provide biblical and practical exposition of the core convictions articulated in the University’s Foundational Documents (especially “Scripture and a Christian Worldview” and “The Ten Pillars Core Convictions”). Both internal and external speakers are chosen based on their personal expertise, experience, and ability to speak faithfully and compellingly to the student body and all those who gather. Convocation also provides an important forum to honor other national and University occasions and affords the opportunity to bring a number of recognized voices to speak to our campus community.

The CPT will also work together to consider and carryout strategies for promoting the vision for Convocation and encouraging greater participation across campus and greater partnership with local churches in the Houston area.

CONVOCATION AND OUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Our students, faculty, and staff are spiritually, culturally, and denominationally diverse. Some students follow Jesus devotedly, and some doubt he existed. Some students read their Bible regularly, and some don’t own a Bible. Some students are involved in a local church, and some go to the mosque. Convocation leaders and speakers should not assume that everyone has confessed faith in Jesus Christ or that the whole audience knows the Scriptures well but should approach the gathering as an opportunity to open up the Bible in contextualized ways for a room that represents the range of Houston’s spiritual spectrum. **Convocation will aim to bring each student, faculty, or staff member—wherever they stand in spiritual maturity—into a personal, transformative encounter with Jesus in his Word and through his people.**

CONVOCATION FOUR-YEAR TEACHING VISION— *Gospel, Scripture, Wisdom, Vocation, Mission*

- 1) **Gospel: *The Good News of the Lord Jesus Bringing God’s Kingdom***
 - a) We will regularly make a **clear gospel presentation**: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15).
 - b) We will help students understand **the image of God** in us: the mandate to represent God through gentle and generative lordship over creation (Gen 1:27).
 - c) We will help students to understand the liberating power of the gospel in all of life by showing how a **Christian’s identity is securely defined by their union with Christ** and their participation in his very life within them.
 - d) Through praise and proclamation, we will show that **worship is the ‘end’ of human life**: We are made to glorify God and enjoy him forever—and can find no lasting satisfaction in any other pursuit.

- 2) **Scripture: *The Big Story of God’s Redemptive Work in the World***
 - a) We will continually show that the **story of Scripture is united by and centered on Jesus Christ**: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).
 - b) We will help students to **make sense of suffering through the witness of the biblical story and prepare them to respond in ways that welcome God’s redemptive purposes**.
 - c) We will help students to see and embrace **the lordship and exclusivity of Christ**.

- 3) **Wisdom: *Christian Worldview and Skill for Life***
 - a) We will answer **pressing apologetic questions**.
 - b) We will provide **wisdom for the wide spectrum of human relationships**.
 - c) We will cast a **positive vision for the Bible’s teaching on sexuality and marriage as well as purposeful singleness**.
 - d) We will **address ambient anxiety and provide practices to cultivate peace**: “Do not worry” (Matt 6:25).

- 4) **Vocation: *Understanding How God Graciously Works Through Our Work***
 - a) We will explain **the meaning and mission of a seriously Christian university**.
 - b) We will demonstrate **the necessity of the liberal arts** for Christian formation, personal flourishing, and a just society.
 - c) We will help students to **understand and discern their vocational calling** as a principal means to love their neighbor and glorify God.
 - d) We will exemplify how a **biblical worldview gives meaning and purpose to our academic disciplines and spheres of work** through an unapologetic integration of faith and learning.

- 5) **Mission: *Welcoming the Kingdom of God in Houston and Around the Globe***
 - a) We will help students understand and practice **the basics of the spiritual disciplines**: worship, prayer, and Scripture engagement.

- b) We will reinforce **the irreplaceable importance of the local church in the life of every disciple of Jesus.**
- c) We will illuminate and incarnate the **mystery of unity in Christ.**
- d) We will teach the imperative of **evangelism, disciple-making, and global mission.**