

Samford University

Class of 2025

Senior Walk and Baccalaureate Service

Thursday, May 1, 2025

5:30 p.m.

Leslie Stephen Wright Fine Arts Center

This beloved tradition serves as the official opening ceremony for Samford University Commencement Weekend.

Candidates for bachelor's degrees gather at Brewer Plaza for the traditional processional down Centennial Walk to the Leslie Stephen Wright Fine Arts Center for a brief Baccalaureate Service with hymns, scripture reading, personal reflections, and the presentation of the official class gift to the university. The service concludes with class members ringing their official class bell.

For decades the Senior Walk preceded the baccalaureate service on the evening before commencement. The tradition was renewed in 2022. This ceremony bookends the academic year's traditional symbolic opening when freshmen gather in Sherman Circle and process up Centennial Walk to ring their class bell on the way to Sunday worship with the president. This is the symbolic beginning of their university experience at Samford.

The tradition of the Baccalaureate Service is believed to have originated at Oxford University in 1432 when each graduating student was required to deliver a sermon in Latin as part of the academic program. This ancient English practice continued in the oldest universities in America that were founded primarily to prepare students for Christian ministry. Samford University's Baccalaureate tradition, with an address by the institution's president, is traced to the earliest days of Howard College as a vital part of the annual Commencement observance.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Where and when do graduates line up?

Degree candidates, wearing caps and gowns, line up in Brewer Plaza beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Is this event open to families and other guests? Yes. Guests are encouraged to go directly to the Wright Center for seating. Tickets are not required. Doors open at 5 p.m.

Are guests able to see the senior walk? Yes. There is a live stream video of events from the University Quadrangle into the Wright Center. Some may choose to stand along Centennial Walk or along sidewalks at the top of Sherman Circle to watch.

What is the appropriate dress? Spring afternoons in Birmingham are often warm and humid. Comfortable clothing in keeping with a traditional academic ceremony is suitable.

Where should guests park? Guests are welcome to park in any open parking space on campus during commencement weekend while observing restrictions for handicapped people and required emergency vehicle access.

How long does the program last? The service is brief. The events will conclude before 6:30 p.m.