

# Hardin-Simmons marks 125th anniversary

February 23, 2016

ABILENE—Hardin-Simmons University honored its past and looked toward its next 125 years at a convocation Feb. 18, an event that coincided with the date in 1891 when the university's charter was adopted under its original name, Abilene Baptist College.



Hardin-Simmons University President Lanny Hall is joined by former presidents Jesse Fletcher and Craig Turner. (HSU Photo) Hardin-Simmons' three living presidents—current President Lanny Hall, 12th President Jesse Fletcher and 14th President W. Craig Turner—participated.

University namesake James B. Simmons, a New York City pastor, contributed to the founding Texas Baptist school, noted Travis Frampton, associate provost and professor of biblical studies at HSU.

Simmons invested in the school because he believed the spirit of Christianity and the goal of higher education both served common ends and “the two together could do so in the most excellent way, right here in Abilene, Texas,” Frampton said. “Hardin-Simmons University, may God grant us a strong heart, a clear mind, and a voice of conviction for the next 125 years as we fulfill our mission.”



Jay Moore speaks to the convocation marking the 125th anniversary of Hardin-Simmons University. (HSU Photo) Jay Moore, a local high school social studies teacher and HSU alumnus, told the anniversary convocation crowd, “Today we all enjoy the beauty from some very long ago decisions.”

Simmons’ “life-breathing, school-saving” monetary gift prompted the trustees to rename the school, Moore added. He conjectured how Simmons must have discussed the “tiny dream” of a school in Abilene that was not even opened yet.

“They decided to excavate and help grow an institution that has echoed to the point that we still recall them even today,” he said. Simmons also arranged for his and his wife’s remains to be laid to rest at the heart of the school.

Lucile Sandefer, wife of a former president who devoted herself to beautifying the campus, supported planting pecan trees by the founders’

graves there, Moore reported.

The commitment of all of the families who invested in the university profoundly affected all who followed at HSU, he said.

“Today, we mark 125 years of legal incorporation and the chartering of an idea and the idea founded a course, which, of course, has helped to define each one of us,” he added.

The celebration also featured a video montage titled, “Reflections on our First 125 Years.” The full video is available for viewing on the Hardin-Simmons [Facebook page](#).

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