

Howard Payne dean's son inspires book about autism

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BROWNWOOD—Joel Tucker is neither a student nor employee at [Howard Payne University](#), but he's a familiar presence on campus.

Robert Tucker, dean of music and fine arts and extended education at Howard Payne University, recently published his first book, *Like a Crown: Adventures in Autism*.
(PHOTO/Howard Payne University)

He spends plenty of time there visiting his father, Robert Tucker, dean of music and fine arts and extended education at HPU. He also inspired his father's book, [*Like a Crown: Adventures in Autism*](#).

Tucker's book discusses the trials and joys of raising Joel, 22, autistic from birth. Tucker and his wife, Clairissa, have two other sons—Jacob, 25, and Jordan, 19.

"My other children excelled academically, but Joel is gifted in his own way," Tucker said in a recent TV interview about the book. "Raising him was a different set of challenges, so that changed our family dynamic quite a bit."

Tucker—a deacon at [First Baptist Church in Brownwood](#) who also serves as minister of music at [First Baptist Church in Brady](#)—began chronicling his experiences. That eventually led to 49 chapters of anecdotes, advice and conversations with his son. The book is intended for parents, educators, employers, community leaders and anyone else whose life might intersect with autism in some way.



Clairissa Tucker designed the book jacket, which features a photo of Joel when he was 14.

"*Like a Crown* is a delightful addition to Dr. Tucker's record of scholarly contributions," said Mark Tew, provost and vice president of academic affairs at Howard Payne.

"In addition to this important work on autism, Dr. Tucker is a published composer, a sought-after music adjudicator and a frequent author in music education journals. I am proud of and appreciate his leadership as an educator, scholar and citizen."

The Tuckers are available for workshops and presentations on Autism Spectrum Disorders. They hope their experiences will be beneficial to other families.

"We now recognize the blessing poured upon on us in the form of this incredible boy—Joel. We did not deserve him, but he is ours just the same. For that we are lucky and thankful," Tucker wrote.