

Scholarship fund honoring former HPU prof Shields reaches milepost

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BROWNWOOD—Former students of longtime professor James Shields raised more than \$100,000 for a ministerial student scholarship fund at [Howard Payne University](#), established in honor of him and his wife, Corinne.

Shields taught Bible and religion at Howard Payne 18 years after serving three years as Baptist Student Union director at the Brownwood school. He also taught 15 years in the [Logsdon School of Theology](#) at Hardin-Simmons University.

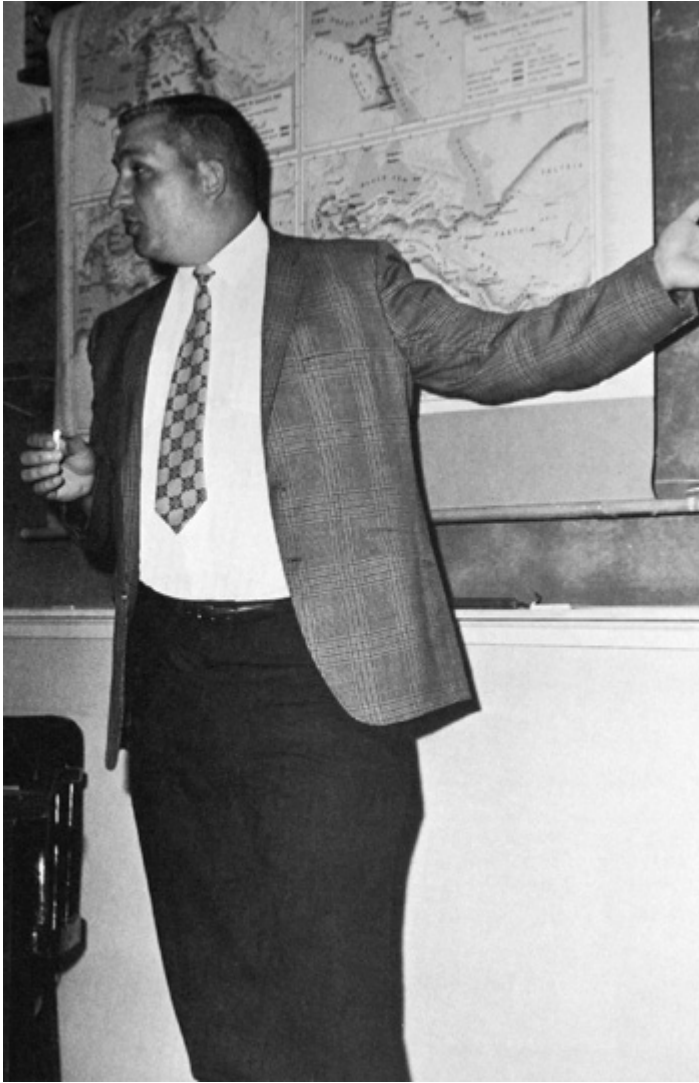


James Shields leads prayer at a Kiwanis Club function in 2013. (Abilene Kiwanis Photo)“Dr. Shields was our teacher. And occasionally, he taught us in the classroom,” said Donnie Auvenshine, dean of the School of Christian Studies at HPU and a 1975 graduate of the university. “He taught us as much in conversations in the hallway, or in his office, or in his home. He was a great classroom teacher, but his teaching was not limited to the classroom. He mentored generations of us.”

When search committees from Texas Baptist churches approached Shields seeking ministerial candidates, or when Baptist school administrators asked him for suggestions for faculty positions, he frequently recommended former students, Auvenshine noted, counting himself among those who benefited from Shields’ recommendations.

By Shields’ reckoning, he taught about 300 students a year, sometimes for two or more semesters. And many who entered the ministry continued to

stay in close contact with him, seeking his counsel and relying on his mentorship.



James Shields teaching at Howard Payne University in 1971. (HPU Lasso Yearbook Photo)“I kept in touch with as many as wanted to keep in touch with me,” Shields said. “Some would call regularly, and I would lead January Bible studies or preach revivals for them.”

Recognizing the impact Shields had on their lives and ministries, former students established the scholarship fund when he retired in 1999. Although they consulted with HPU administrators, who endorsed the initiative, former students took the lead in raising the funds.

“I was a little skeptical,” Shields confessed. “It took two-and-a-half or three years to raise \$10,000 and award the first \$500 scholarship.”

After 15 years, the fund stood at close to \$40,000, having produced 18 scholarships. But some former students wanted to do more—particularly when Shields’ prostate cancer spread into his bones.

“The cancer cells that have been asleep are awake again,” he told former student Bobby Broyles, pastor of [First Baptist Church in Ballinger](#). About that same time, Corinne Shields began chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer.

Broyles and others secured Shields’ permission to make another appeal for the scholarship fund, urging former students to show their love for James and Corinne Shields by building a substantial scholarship fund in their honor during their lifetimes.

Broyles, Auvenshine and others mailed an initial letter last November, urging former students to give another \$40,000 to the fund. As a result, one individual donated \$40,000.



James Shields (1976 HPU Lasso Yearbook Photo)A second letter in January noted that gift and challenged other former students to match that amount.

As of June 15, 62 donors contributed 284 gifts to the fund, totaling

\$105,130. A few days later, another check arrived for \$3,495.24.

“It’s very gratifying,” Shields said. “Of course, I don’t know who gives what amount, but Howard Payne sends me a card to let me know who has given a donation. There have been maybe two or three (former students) I hadn’t kept up with.”

Shields invested his life in his students, motivating them to grow, learn and reach their full potential, said Tom Ruane, longtime Texas Baptist denominational worker and interim pastor of [Crossroads Cowboy Church in Madisonville](#).

Shields raised the standard for ministerial students, helping them recognize if they were representing God, they needed to more than just “get by” with passing grades, Ruane said.

“If you were out playing intramurals every night and making C’s, Shields would help you see there was something wrong with that,” he said. “He set the pace in terms of academics.”

A fund to help Howard Payne students preparing for ministry serves as a fitting tribute to Shields and his legacy, Auvenshine observed.

“It’s giving other students the same opportunities we had,” he said. “As a professor, it allows me to try to do for others what he did for me.”

Donations to the scholarship fund should be mailed to Howard Payne University, c/o Randy Yeakley, P.O. Box 2369, Brownwood, TX 76804. Make checks payable to “Shields Scholarship Fund.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: James Shields has been preaching in Baptist churches 66 years and has served 63 interim pastorates, including several churches multiple times over the course of several decades. James and Corrine Shields will have been married 62 years in August.

