

Queen's attorney petitions for release of materials

July 23, 2024

NEW YORK (BP)—The government press release charging Matt Queen with falsifying records “contained factual allegations that are inaccurate, misrepresented some facts, and cast Mr. Queen in a more negative light,” the pastor and former seminary leader’s attorney said in a letter filed July 22 with the U.S. Southern District Court.

The May 21 press release [announcing the charge](#) “went beyond the allegations in the information,” said Sam Schmidt, attorney for Queen, the former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary evangelism professor and interim provost.

Material received from the government during discovery since then falls under “[Brady](#) material,” or evidence a prosecutor has that is favorable to the accused. A prosecutor is required to disclose such material.

“Counsel should be permitted to correct the inaccurate and misleading public statements made by the government supported by documents,” the letter said.

“As a result of the information and press release, Mr. Queen has been suspended from his position as the Lead Pastor of Friendly Avenue Baptist Church, which he has held since March 1, 2024. His reputation has been damaged, he was required to withdraw at least one contribution to a forthcoming publication, and he has had previously arranged speaking engagements canceled, affecting potential honoraria.”

Queen has [pled not guilty](#) to the charges.

His counsel said it only seeks “to provide a limited number of documents” to Friendly Avenue’s committee investigating the allegations to determine if Queen can be reinstated as pastor prior to trial. The documented information also would be made available to the press, albeit not to “endanger any person or witness, nor [to impede] any possible investigation.”

Explanation of the meeting

At issue are Queen’s recollections of a meeting about a reported case of abuse involving a seminary student. On Jan. 24, 2023, Southwestern became aware of the police investigation and released a statement.

Schmidt’s letter goes into greater detail on a meeting two days later following chapel services that included Queen, “Employee 1” and “Employee 2” after Employee 1 was contacted by the alleged victim.

“With Employee 2, Mr. Queen met with Employee 1 near the front of the chapel, immediately after the completion of chapel, with people walking by them during the conversation,” the letter said.

“As instructed by the president, Mr. Queen told Employee 1 that if the matter the alleged victim wanted to talk about concerned the alleged sexual abuse, she should tell victim to speak to the Burleson Police Department. If it related to some other unrelated matter concerning the seminary, then Employee 1 should speak to her. If it was about a personal matter, then it was at Employee 1’s discretion whether to speak to her or not.

“After Mr. Queen provided the advice, Employee 1 and Employee 2 discussed the document that Employee 1 had left for Employee 2 the day before. Mr. Queen was present, though his attention was directed to emails in his mobile telephone because the conversation did not involve him.

“In subsequent conversations with many others, including in his interviews with the government, Mr. Queen repeatedly explained that he never heard Employee 2 tell Employee 1 to destroy the document.”

Document in question

The [document in question](#) outlined the allegation of abuse. The two employees cited were [later identified](#) as Terri Stovall, current dean of women (Employee 1), and Heath Woolman (Employee 2), who served as chief of staff before accepting the lead pastor position at Fruit Cove Baptist Church in St. Johns, Fla.

In interviews with federal investigators, Queen said he did not interpret the conversation as having directed the destruction of the document. His attorney’s letter goes on, however, to say when Stovall—still identified as “Employee 1” in the recently-filed letter—told Queen she had kept contemporaneous notes, Queen falsely responded he had as well.

Later, Queen learned he would have to produce the nonexistent notes to investigators for his upcoming interview. The government’s [statement](#) claims, three days after the interview, Queen said he found a notebook in his office of notes from the January meeting and provided that to investigators. Queen would admit in a follow-up meeting he had not written the notes in January but following his initial interview with investigators.

Queen’s frame of mind

His attorney’s letter opens a window into Queen’s frame of mind at that time.

“Having been upset when questioned harshly by the government on May

23, being fearful, being told by one of the seminary's attorneys to pray and meditate to remember, and believing that the government was correct—as a very religious person he did pray and meditate the night of May 24,” it read.

“Mr. Queen woke up from a dream believing that he remembered more of the conversation, as previously suggested by the government, including Employee 2's use of the term ‘this needs to go away.’

“On May 25, 2023, Mr. Queen told of his new recollections to the attorney retained by the seminary to represent potential witnesses employed by the seminary, and he was told that this would be reported to the government.

“After being told that the government would want to talk to him again, Mr. Queen shortly thereafter wrote the notes, which accurately reflect his recollections prior to the night of May 24, in his notebook and provided it to both the attorney and Employee 3. On June 1, 2023, the attorney informed the government about Mr. Queen's new recollections, and we believe he provided them with the notes as well.”

Schmidt's letter claims some of the information so far withheld includes Brady material, supports Queen's defense and/or demonstrates the indictment contained “incorrect or misleading statements.”