

Climate change at Southwestern Seminary?

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FORT WORTH—In [a recent interview](#), Adam Greenway said he hoped Texas Baptists would notice a change in “tone” and “tenor” at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In three days last week, Greenway offered a public—if somewhat cryptic—apology for a president’s firing 25 years ago, welcomed another former president to preach in chapel and endorsed a statement defending two women professors on the faculty.

In February, the seminary’s trustees elected Greenway as the school’s ninth president. He assumed office less than one year after the board [severed ties](#) with former President Paige Patterson, who was accused of mishandling reports of sexual abuse and using demeaning language toward women.

Inaugural apology

In his Oct. 21 [inaugural address](#), Greenway pointed to the deep historic connection between Southwestern Seminary and Texas Baptists.

“That means when Southwestern Seminary is at our best, the ties that bind are unbreakable. That means when Southwestern Seminary is not at our best, the wounds go far deeper,” he said, reiterating remarks he also made in [a recent interview](#).



In his inaugural address as president of Southwestern Seminary, Adam Greenway said, “For any way in which we have fallen short, I’m sorry, and I apologize.” (SWBTS Photo)

Greenway noted he was born the same year as the election of the seminary’s sixth president, Russell Dilday, whom he did not mention by name in that context.

He also did not specifically mention that a majority of trustees voted 26-7 in March 1994 to fire Dilday for criticizing a political movement that supporters called a “conservative resurgence” and critics called the “fundamentalist takeover” of the Southern Baptist Convention.

However, he seemed to allude to the rupture in the relationship between the seminary and Texas Baptists precipitated by the trustees’ actions.

“I cannot change the past,” Greenway said. “And I know at times our seminary in the past has not always been a place that has brought about

the kind of hope and healing and unity that ought to characterize the New Testament people of God.

“For any way in which we have fallen short, I’m sorry, and I apologize.”

Greenway pledged to lead Southwestern Seminary to “relationally be right, in right fellowship—right relationship with all who find alignment with what I call the ‘big-tent’ vision.”

“It is time, I believe, for the Southwestern family to come together,” he said.

Hemphill returns to pray, preach



Ken Hemphill, former president of Southwestern Seminary, preached a chapel sermon at the seminary the day after the inauguration of Adam Greenway. (SWBTS Photo)

Ken Hemphill, who succeeded Dilday as president of Southwestern Seminary, delivered the invocation prayer at Greenway’s inauguration and preached in a seminary chapel service the next day.

In introductory remarks at chapel, Greenway said Hemphill was elected as the seminary's president "amidst the backdrop of excruciating difficulty and division, which he had nothing to do with."

Greenway commended Hemphill for being "willing to take on a task that, candidly, was one that lesser men would not have taken on."

Resolution of support for two women faculty

Two days after Greenway's inauguration, the Southwestern Seminary faculty issued a unanimous resolution of support for two of their colleagues—Terri Stovall, dean of women and professor of women's ministry; and Katie McCoy, assistant professor of theology in women's studies at the seminary's Scarborough College—whose qualifications reportedly were called into question in an email distributed to trustees.

Malcolm Yarnell, research professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Seminary, introduced the resolution expressing the faculty's "great appreciation" for Stovall and McCoy "for their theological orthodoxy, their contribution to scholarship, their positive conduct during trying times, and their Christ-like leadership within the seminary community."

The faculty statement added, "We ask the president to use this resolution for public record as he deems fit."

Greenway promptly posted on [Twitter](#): "As president I want to publicly affirm" Stovall and McCoy "and denounce in the strongest terms any attacks on their qualifications for service here."

In a second tweet, Greenway added: "I want to publicly communicate in the strongest terms my total confidence in these two scholars." He noted

Southwestern Seminary “is committed to equipping and empowering God-called women for more faithful Kingdom service, including teaching and leading in the academy.”

Email focused on gift for endowed chair

[Baptist Press](#), news and information service of the SBC Executive Committee, reported the email prompting the public statements was provided to trustees at their Oct. 21-22 meeting, and it regarded the endowed Dorothy Kelley Patterson Chair of Women’s Studies.

Scott Colter, chief of staff for the former seminary president, allegedly sent the email to the no-longer-active seminary email account of Dorothy Patterson. It was intended to provide “reference points” for James Merritt of South Carolina, whose donation endowed the chair, to consider asking the seminary to return his gift.

Baptist Press reported the email stated Southwestern Seminary “now does not have a systematic theologian trained in [complementarianism](#) and feminism to occupy this chair or teach necessary courses. Dr. Katie McCoy has posted several things to social media that are concerning and show she is not ready to fulfill this chair adequately. Dr. Terri Stovall is not academically qualified to teach the associated courses in theology.”

The email also reportedly presented to Merritt several other “reasons to consider” a request for the seminary to return his gifts: the trustees’ termination of [Cindy Finch](#), a strong defender of Patterson who previously held the chair; the removal of a gravestone marking the burial site of the Pattersons’ dog; and the removal of [stained-glass windows](#) in MacGorman Chapel commemorating key figures in the self-described “conservative resurgence” in the SBC.