

Hardage: ‘Best days’ of cooperation with seminary are ahead

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FORT WORTH—During a [Sept. 23 chapel service](#) at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director David Hardage expressed his belief “the best days of cooperative ministry” between the convention and the seminary “are still ahead.”

Greenway hails ‘special relationship’ with BGCT

Prior to Hardage’s chapel sermon, in which he encouraged students to consider how to be believers and ministers who balance “living in this world, but not becoming one of it,” Southwestern Seminary President Adam Greenway noted the historical and “special relationship” between the state convention and the seminary.

Greenway pointed out the seminary was founded in 1908 as part of Baylor University, a school affiliated with the BGCT, until ownership was transferred to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925.

Southwestern Seminary’s founding president, B.H. Carroll, also had previously led the effort to bring five separate state conventions in Texas together in 1886, giving birth to the BGCT, he added.

The “special relationship” continues today, with 70 percent of the BGCT seminary-trained pastors having been educated at Southwestern Seminary, Greenway continued.

Greenway also reflected on the opportunity for a renewed and strengthened cooperation between the seminary and the state convention.

“Now, speaking candidly, we have not always been as close in our relationship with the BGCT as we should, but I’m thankful in my two and a half years as president of Southwestern Seminary that every time I’ve been around David Hardage, he has said Texas Baptists extend the right hand of fellowship and partnership to Southwestern Seminary,” Greenway said.

“I want to publicly say to you, Dr. Hardage, Southwestern Seminary, its president extends our right hand of fellowship in partnership to you and to Texas Baptists.”

Prior to his message, Hardage, a Southwestern Seminary alumnus, offered remarks in response to Greenway’s remarks.

“On behalf of Texas Baptists, thank you for today,” an emotional Hardage said. “I’m convinced, I believe, and I pray that the best days of cooperative ministry between the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary are yet to come.”

Choose between worldly comfort and serving God

Hardage then preached from John 17:15-16, noting the prayer in that passage is one for Jesus’ disciples “to find that place and know how to live rightly in this world, but not become too much a part of it.”

Answering the question of why this would be the prayer of Jesus, Hardage said, “I propose to you that it is because Jesus knew this would be not the greatest challenge they would ever face, but this will be the greatest temptation they would ever face.”

The temptations to seek favor and comfort from the world are understandable, Hardage acknowledged. But Christians ultimately must choose between worldly comfort and serving God, he insisted.

However, Hardage continued, in this pursuit to not be “of the world,” believers must be cautious to not “develop an attitude that is so arrogant, and language and deeds that are so abrasive that they drive away the very people they’re trying to draw in.”

“We do not want to be one of the world,” Hardage said. “And yet, as sometimes we try to speak the truth, we do so and it is void of grace and love, and all of a sudden what we’re trying to say is not being heard because how we say it is overwhelming what we’re trying to say, and all of a sudden the message fades, and the people who need to hear it miss it.”

“And so, I just wonder,” Hardage continued. “Is this not why Jesus prayed that we would find that right place?”

Hardage then offered students a final exhortation, reflecting on the hymn, “Wherever He Leads, I’ll Go,” written by B.B. McKinney, who served on Southwestern Seminary faculty in the early 20th century.

“Students, as I have thought about this and prayed for you, it is burned on my heart, wherever God takes you, go there,” Hardage says. “Wherever God leads you, go there. But when you get there, pay attention to those New Testament directives. ... Be alert, stand firm, be on your guard, and find that place that is safe, protected, find that place that has you living and effectively serving in this world, but yet you have not become one of it.”