

Truett Seminary explores merger with Leland Center

February 23, 2016

WACO—Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary in Waco and the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Arlington, Va., have initiated steps toward a merger.

Mark Olson, president of the Leland Center, sent a letter about a possible merger to Leland students Feb. 22. He reported Truett officials contacted Leland's leaders last fall to discuss a potential partnership.

"The discussions which have followed between our trustees and the Baylor/Truett leaders have gone well, and now the two schools are considering a possible merger," Olson wrote.

Todd Still, dean of Truett Seminary, requested the prayers of Texas Baptists, Virginia Baptists "and interested others" as conversations continue regarding the potential merger.

"As we progress through this period of due diligence, we are seeking to discern and to decide if we can be stronger and better together," Still said.

"Personally, I am hopeful that this 'marriage' in theological education in the service of Christ and the church will come to pass. It would be good, I believe, both for (Baptist) theological education and for the extension of God's kingdom in this world through winsome gospel ministry and mission."

Still presented the merger concept to the academic committee of Baylor University's board of regents at their February meeting. On Feb. 15, Still and Olson met with Dan Aleshire, executive director of the Association of

Theological Schools, the accrediting agency for both schools.

“That meeting went well, and Dr. Aleshire outlined the next steps each school would have to take to complete a merger,” Olson wrote, noting a merger would require approval by trustees of the Leland Center and Baylor’s regents. “The entire process will probably take about 18 months.”

In his letter to students, Olson pointed to the compatibility of the two schools.

“Both Leland and Truett are evangelical schools, taking a high view of the authority of Scripture, and both affirm women in ministry,” he wrote. “Baylor wants to become more of a national university and believes that developing a satellite campus in the D.C. area would help achieve that goal.”

Truett Seminary was chartered in 1991 and began offering classes in 1994, originally meeting at First Baptist Church in Waco. Construction of the seminary’s permanent home on the Baylor campus started in 2001, and classes on the campus began in January 2002. Truett Seminary is affiliated with and supported by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and it is an institutional partner of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Baptist leaders from the Washington, D.C., area founded the John Leland Center in 1998. Both the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the District of Columbia Baptist Convention partner with the school. The center’s first president, Randel Everett, later was executive director of the BGCT.

Editor’s Note: The article was edited after it originally was posted to correct the location of the Leland Center—Arlington, Va., rather than Alexandria, Va.