

Letters: Southwestern Seminary finances, SBC and women pastors

June 13, 2023

RE: Seminary finances deteriorated over two decades

As the vice chair of the Seminary Study Committee for the Baptist General Convention of Texas whose report led to the defunding of the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, this report regarding the issues at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is no surprise to me. At the core of our findings was a lack of transparency and integrity in the seminaries.

As the fundamentalist takeover swept over the convention, three things consistently happened. First, enrollment in seminary graduate programs declined.

Second, the SBC breached a long-standing agreement that universities affiliated with state Baptist conventions would provide undergraduate ministry education, leaving the SBC seminaries to provide graduate degree programs. When that breach happened, the seminaries began to set up Bible colleges offering undergraduate degrees.

Finally, the undergraduate numbers were mixed with the traditional graduate enrollment to give the appearance and impression of continued stable enrollment. However, the enrollment figures were consistently unreliable, and gave a rosy picture the seminaries were doing fine amid the

turmoil. That simply was not true.

In most educational institutions, enrollment numbers are a vital component of health and fiscal stability.

Frankly, Southwestern Seminary trustees are being generous when they stop at a 20-year mark noting the deterioration of Southwestern finances. The financial issues began earlier as the seminaries absorbed the fallout of the takeover.

I would not be surprised if the current SBC seminaries' enrollment could be accommodated comfortably within the buildings and campus of Southwestern.

Michael R Chancellor

Taylor, Texas

The revelations in the *Baptist Standard's* story regarding Southwestern Seminary are shocking and require both action and answers.

How all those elected trustees could let this continue for 20 years indicates a lack of fiscal oversight and ethical discharge of their responsibilities to the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Obviously, the trust and faith placed in personalities had something to do with their failure to ask questions. Hopefully, better training of present and future trustees will mitigate a repeat of this debacle.

To see the seminary lose enrollment by such a large amount also should have been a warning signal something was wrong. Apparently, potential students heard rumors and decided the Lord wanted them at a different seminary for their ministerial training, especially considering other seminaries haven't been experiencing enrollment drops the magnitude of

Southwestern's.

Moving forward, let's continue to pray for Southwestern President Dr. David Dockery and his team as they right this legacy seminary and sail it into a brighter future.

*Rev. Bob Gillchrest
San Diego, Calif.*

RE: Editorial: What will the SBC do about churches with women pastors?

Editor Eric Black has put forth a question that deserves answering for Southern Baptist leadership, as well as the general population. The answer goes back to an age-old physics theorem that states, "Objects in motion will tend to stay in motion."

The same is true for organizational leaders. Poor leadership or management of a company too often will continue its same old practices.

Transformational leadership looks for a dynamic change in direction. Luke 9:50 tells us the disciples brought this same question to the Master Leader when they said, "Others are preaching 'Jesus' other than our group, Lord."

His answer still stands for the ages: "Do not stop them, for whoever is not against you is for you." Wisdom sounds simple.

Southern Baptist Convention leadership somewhere, somehow lost sight of God's big picture. Galatians 3:28 is still valid: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ."

I never could understand why men would treat their daughters differently than their male children. We all still are God's children. If the pulpit is preaching salvation and Christ is the only way, leave them alone.

J. Owens

Kensington, Ohio