

May 28, 2022

Dr. Adam Greenway
President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
2001 W. Seminary Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76115

Dear Dr. Greenway,

I am writing this letter to you regarding the matter of my employment at Southwestern Seminary. This final letter is in response to your April 22 letter stating the termination of my full-time position of Distinguished Professor, your intent I should enter a new role of retirement as a "Senior Professor," and your last email of May 24 requesting my decision on either moving to the position of Senior Professor or resigning my position of Distinguished Professor and concluding my service at the Seminary.

Once again, allow me to express my gratitude for the privilege of serving on the faculty under your administration during these past three plus years. Like you, I have a great love for Southwestern Seminary. I have spent a total of 30 years in her service—12 years on the Board of Trustees (3 years as an officer, including one year as Board chairman) and 18 years as a member of her faculty (12 years as Dean of the School of Theology; 4 years as the founding Dean of the School of Preaching)—hold the George W. Truett Chair of Ministry; Director of the Center for Biblical Preaching; and appointed to the rank of Distinguished Professor by the Board of Trustees in 2016 (currently one of only two such positions in the School of Theology). It has been a joy and honor to be a small part of the legacy that is Southwestern Seminary.

When I was granted sabbatical by the Board of Trustees in their April, 2021 meeting, I understood that I would be returning to my full-time role at the Seminary. At no point did I receive indication to the contrary from anyone until April 5, 2022, when I was informed by the Provost, Dr. Skaug, and the Dean of the School of Theology, Dr. Wills, of the decision to terminate my full-time employment as Distinguished Professor and move me to retirement status with the new title "Senior Faculty" effective August 1, 2022. He indicated the administration deemed this action in the best interests of the Seminary.

During the April 5th meeting, I asked Dr. Skaug what my options were if I declined to accept retirement status. He informed me that the Seminary and I would part ways July 31, 2022. Either way, my full-time status, along with full-time salary and benefits, would end at that time. This was the first time I was informed that my change in status was even being considered, let alone had been decided.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I requested of Dr. Skaug to appeal this decision to you and ask that I be given at least one more year of full-time faculty service to prepare for retirement financially, after which time we could have a conversation about retirement. I felt that request reasonable in light of the fact that I had not been informed of this possibility prior to accepting my sabbatical and the therefore unexpected disclosure of this decision. Your April 22 letter firmly answered that request in the negative. That letter is attached.

Subsequent emails between us have not proven successful in finding a pathway forward that is agreeable to both of us. Therefore, I am sending this letter to you and

copying the Board of Trustees to appeal to them to intervene in this matter. I beg your and the Board's indulgence for its length, but such is necessary to provide the context I feel necessary to resolve this matter in a meaningful, satisfactory, and equitable manner.

In response to your statement in our May 6 meeting that if I desired to propose a pathway forward that would help us to address the situation in a way that would be mutually beneficial, you would be open to considering it, on May 21 I proposed a four-point plan which included severance. A copy of that correspondence is also attached. You rejected any notion of a severance by email, a copy of which is attached as well.

Our final email exchange on May 24 ended with your insistence on an immediate response from me by May 31. You attempted to frame the issue as to whether I will accept your offer of retirement and enter the status of Senior Professor or resign. That demand is enclosed as well.

Let me be clear. I will do neither. I have no intention of resigning. I have been informed by you in writing on April 22 my position of Distinguished Professor will cease July 31. You have already taken action and put a date on it. This is an act of termination. Therefore, the option of resignation is inapplicable.

Moreover, you are attempting, contrary to Seminary policy, to unilaterally appoint me to Senior Faculty status. This action cannot be used as a cover for a termination, nor do I consent to your efforts to do so. Again, in the Faculty Manual, retirement falls under the heading of "Termination," and ipso facto means the end of full-time employment and incurs the loss of full-time salary and benefits. I cannot and will not accept a Senior Professorship forced upon me with its concomitant forced obligations. Seminary policy does not permit this action on your part.

Your disregard for Seminary policy and consistent dismissal of my efforts to resolve this matter equitably and fairly are why I am now asking the Board of Trustees to respond and intervene.

Certain questions become immediately obvious. Why this action of termination and forced retirement, and why now? In attempting to discern an answer to these questions, two incidents, five months apart, may furnish a clue.

On November 5, 2021, at his invitation, I had a delightful lunch with the new Dean of the School of Theology, Greg Wills. Dr. Wills expressed he wanted me to know with all of the changes happening at the Seminary, I might find it a bit unsettling. He assured me of my place at Southwestern and stated "whether you choose to retire in ten years or one year, you are a valued member of this faculty. Personally, I hope it is the former and not the latter." I expressed my grateful appreciation to him for his kindness and that I was not looking to retire from Southwestern any time soon. He asked about the launch of my new non-profit ministry, PreachingCoach, and wished me well in that endeavor. Notably, this conversation took place during my sabbatical leave.

Exactly five months later, on April 5, 2022, in a meeting in the Provost's office along with Dean Wills, I was informed that I was being moved to retirement status. This was the first I had been told or heard of any discussion regarding a change in my employment status. The reason given by Provost Skaug was this decision was in the best interest of the Seminary. He further stated I was focusing on my new ministry, PreachingCoach. I responded that this ministry was begun last October with the prior knowledge and approval of then Provost David Dockery, is secondary to my work at Southwestern,

operated on my own free time as a non-profit endeavor, and was not in conflict with my duties at Southwestern.

At a point in the discussion where I indicated I am always an ambassador for Southwestern at any speaking commitments, Dr. Wills interjected two comments regarding my recent March engagement at FBC Indian Trail, NC. The first comment had to do with his negative opinion concerning the activities of the immediate past president of the Seminary who happened to be on this same program. His second comment was that he had listened to my sermon and I had said nothing about Southwestern but did speak about PreachingCoach. I presume this was intended to function as prima-facia evidence to support a reason for the decision to move me to retirement, an effort that is both factually, contextually, and practically incorrect.

The irony here is that Dr. Wills was unaware that I did work to recruit students for Southwestern while at that conference, including the young man who shuttled me to and from the hotel who is himself currently an MDiv student and whom I was encouraging to pursue another degree at Southwestern upon his graduation. Additionally, I spoke to other pastors who attended the conference about Southwestern, encouraging them to further their studies with us, as is my practice at all venues where I speak.

Moreover, the only reason I said anything about PreachingCoach from the pulpit was the pastor of the church, Dr. Mike Whiston, asked me specifically to say a word to the pastors and congregation about it. Finally, apparently missed by Dr. Wills, was Dr. Whiston's introduction of me before I preached. He spoke about a young church staff member who was preparing to choose where to attend seminary. Dr. Whiston called him into his office and said to Joshua, "I want to encourage you to go to Southwestern Seminary and study under Dr. David Allen." Two hundred plus pastors along with other people in the congregation that day heard those words of introduction before I stepped into the pulpit. You can't buy advertisement like that. Joshua is a student at Southwestern today.

I could multiply stories like this many times over.

In short, every time I step into a pulpit I serve as an ambassador first of Christ, and second of the Seminary. PreachingCoach has been ancillary at best to those priorities, despite your efforts to now assert otherwise.

Over the course of the next three weeks from the April 5 meeting and as word of my situation began to spread, I received numerous expressions of concern from around the Southern Baptist Convention coupled with strong disagreement with you for taking these steps. Likewise, you received many contacts from people expressing their dismay and displeasure at your actions. This precipitated your April 22 letter to me (see attached), which I read with nothing short of incredulity.

In that letter, you subtly impugned my integrity as to the source and content of some of the leaks; explained that my being offered the status of "Senior Professor" should be viewed as an honor; shackled me with unrealistic and unenforceable restrictions as a retired faculty member; then topped it off with the audacity to claim that if I did not fulfill two additional years of service *in retirement*, I would owe the Seminary one year salary and benefits to pay back my sabbatical. In fact, in your two-page letter, you mentioned this final point no less than six times.

It seems to have escaped your notice that the use of the word "service" in context in the Faculty Manual presumes one returns from a sabbatical to serve at the same status one entered the sabbatical—in my case, as a full-time faculty member. To terminate someone

from full-time faculty service and force them to retire—and retirement falls under the heading of “Termination” in the Faculty Manual—renders null and void all requirements to repay a sabbatical. This has been the precedence for interpretation of sabbatical service for at least the past 30 years. I have checked with a number of educators and administrators from three academic institutions and all have expressed surprise you would interpret the language of faculty “service” as you have.

To be clear, had I been informed prior to my sabbatical my full-time employment would be terminated and I would be unilaterally moved to retirement status upon completion and owe the Seminary two years of service to repay the sabbatical, without full-time salary, I would have never accepted the sabbatical leave. That interpretation of “seminary policy” was never considered, proposed, or discussed with me, the trustees who approved my sabbatical, or anyone in your administration. This makes sense, as no one would under such conditions ever request let alone accept a sabbatical.

In our May 6 meeting in your office, the purpose of which was to answer my questions related to this change in status being mandated by the administration, I asked if you considered this move to Senior Faculty status forced retirement and if not, why not. You stated you did not believe it could be considered as such. What you failed to do is explain the basis for your interpretation of your own actions. Again, this makes sense; there is no cognizable, defensible basis for your unilateral decision to force me to retire.

However, that is exactly what it is. Senior Professor is a retired position per the Faculty Manual. I was given no choice in the matter. No notice; no previous warning; no opportunity for discussion; no disclosure, no time to prepare financially or otherwise was offered to me. Such treatment is unkind to say the least, especially toward someone with 30 years of service under his belt. It is also unethical and improper on at least two counts. Forced retirement is not an option afforded you in the Bylaws and/or Faculty Manual of SWBTS, as any cursory reading demonstrates. Moreover, in Texas forced retirement is illegal.

Whether you recognize it or not, there is a logical fallacy and a subtle subterfuge embedded in your actions toward me and your explanation of them. Your April 22 letter states clearly your decision to end my full-time employment. You allege this is not a termination because you propose to unilaterally “give” me a Senior Professorship. But according to the Faculty Manual, a Senior Professorship is granted to a faculty member who *chooses* to retire so as to receive a Senior Professorship. Let me state again unequivocally, I did not resign my Distinguished Professorship, nor did I choose to retire to receive a Senior Professorship. Your action to cease my full-time employment, which is clear from your letter, is by definition, termination. There is simply no way around this logically, legally, or otherwise. Thus, while you continue to assert “Seminary policy” as a justification for your decision to force my retirement, it is that very policy that demonstrates your decision as outside the scope of the authority afforded your office in this instance.

For these reasons, I consider your actions toward me to be unethical, illegal, and frankly, unchristian.

Our subsequent conversations and communications have done nothing to change my conclusion. In fact, they have only heightened my convictions.

During the May 6 meeting, some comments made to me by you were especially insulting. I simply inquired, in light of my faithful service to SWBTS for 30 years, why you were attempting to unilaterally move me to retirement status against my will.

In response, to be told that “email correspondence exists” between the former president of Southwestern Seminary and myself as his Dean; that “email correspondence exists” from me or about me, during my tenure as a member of the Board of Trustees of SWBTS in Ken Hemphill’s presidency, and then to be told that you had “read every one” of them, in a word, left me flabbergasted. Such statements are inappropriate, an invasion of privacy, and unethical. The very fact that you brought up these emails which have no bearing on my present employment status is hugely problematic. Your comments were certainly intended to intimidate me by bluffing that some problematic or inappropriate document exists. The problem is, no such materials exist. To imply otherwise is defamatory, insulting, demeaning, and completely unbecoming.

For the record, to the best of my ability, and with full awareness of my responsibility to the people of the Southern Baptist Convention, I attempted to fulfill my trustee and faculty duties with the utmost integrity. Whatever disagreement you may have with my interpretation of events or actions taken prior to your tenure as president, I know of nothing in any of those documents that could be construed as illegal, unethical, or otherwise problematic as to warrant being a factor in your attempted explanation for my termination from full-time employment at SWBTS.

Furthermore, in response to my claim of faithful service and support of your tenure as president, you expressed that you had been “longsuffering” with me these past 3+ years. I found that statement to be insulting and simply beyond the pale. Upon my further inquiry, you declined to enter into specifics. Again, this is unsurprising as I have endeavored to unceasingly comport myself to the highest expectations of my office as a professor, pastor, and Christian. Apart from your unhappiness with my appearance on the program at the Bible Conference at North Carolina’s Indian Trail First Baptist Church in March of this year, I quite simply have no idea what you are referencing, and making these types of assertions is nothing short of character defamation.

You said you have no problem with me personally or theologically, a statement that seems incongruent with your attitude and words. You stated “many people” had urged you to fire me long before now, and/or questioned you as to why you had not fired me, but you again declined to give specifics as to what in my department had caused them, or you, such difficulty. This, of course, begs the question of who those “many people” are, what the basis of their urging may have been, and why you would have withstood those requests. Did you receive any of these concerns from members of the Board of Trustees or others within our Seminary family? If so, why did you not address these with me previously? I have received numerous expressions of appreciation for my service by our Trustees over the years, including some within the last three years, not to mention students and former students, pastors, and others.

Dr. Greenway, when I asked why in the world you would want to “honor” me with Senior Faculty status in light of your many concerns, you responded, “Romans 12, the text that was just read in our graduation ceremony.” Given the content of Romans 12, it is obvious you consider your actions as an exercise in Christian love toward someone whom you feel is undeserving of such based on your interpretation of their actions.

Perhaps you will understand why I found it incredible and inexcusable for you to say that my query of why I’m being forced to retire demonstrated one of two things: “a desire to get me [Dr. Greenway] to say something that could be used by those who wish to hurt this Seminary, or an incredible lack of self-awareness on your [David Allen] part.” You

stated you wanted to “lovingly caution” me as to what I might say to you in response, given the things you had said to me to that point. That statement alone was a blatantly unprofessional and baseless threat that was inappropriate.

In short, in our May 6 meeting, I asked for a reason why you were taking this action to terminate my full-time faculty position as Distinguished Professor and force retirement. You gave me none. Instead, you donned your counselor’s cap and suggested I needed to “self-evaluate.”

From both your tone and words, the inference I took away from the meeting that day was, as far as you were concerned, a 30-year trail of debris followed in the wake of my Southwestern service, and given what you think about my department present and past, I should be grateful I’m able to walk this earth as a free man, much less be offered the “honor” of being moved to Senior Faculty status. This adds insult to injury and is, frankly, offensive to me. “You are here because I want you here” rings hollow and is simply too much to swallow. I want to be clear: there is no basis for the negative and defamatory things you said, implied, or suggested and I reject and am offended by them.

Since the time has come for candor, I shall raise one more point of concern which perhaps will shed some light on why I have such a bad taste in my mouth at this point. On March 6, 2020, when in our meeting in the Provost’s office, you informed me that you were granting my sabbatical request, and would be recommending my sabbatical to the Board of Trustees. Notably, you did not say anything about a change in my status upon my return. In that meeting you also informed me of your decision to close the School of Preaching. You said the decision was not punitive, did not reflect negatively on my performance, and was a matter of a difference in organizational philosophy from the previous administration.

Additionally, you stated that although I would no longer serve as Dean, you would not be reducing my salary. You stated I would retain my current salary, “in appreciation for my service past and present to the Seminary.” I thanked you for your kindness in this. Imagine my utter astonishment when, three weeks to the day later, March 27 at 4:45 pm, I was informed by the Provost by phone that my salary was being cut after all, effective immediately—a total cut of 25% (23% salary and the loss of 2% annuity income). I was told the decision was final. When I requested that the Seminary wait until the new academic year began on August 1 for the salary cut to go into effect, I was told “no,” but that the effective date would be May 8. I considered then, and I consider now, such action a breach of promise and a lack of integrity. It is especially grievous to me that after 18 years of service to the seminary, my current salary is significantly below my starting salary 18 years earlier.

You have said on more than one occasion, “I don’t trust anyone I don’t hire.” If I may gloss your statement, perhaps you can understand why I might say with a tinge of cynicism in light of how I have been treated, “I don’t trust anyone who didn’t hire me.”

Dr. Greenway, I have supported your presidency; prayed for you regularly; invited you to preach at First Baptist Church, Sunnyvale, where I served as Interim Pastor; invited you to contribute a chapter in a book I was editing; recruited for the Seminary; raised money for the Seminary, including a February, 2020, commitment from a California foundation for \$90,000 for scholarships for Korean preaching students and support for the Seminary’s Center for Preaching; taught my classes well; served as a supervisor for at least a dozen DMIN and PhD students (see attached unsolicited letter I received just last week from Shawn Nichols, one of my PhD students and a pastor in Oklahoma); received an

“excellent” rating in all five areas of annual Faculty Evaluation from the Dean of the School of Theology during the past two academic years prior to my current sabbatical year; received private and public praise from you for long-term service to this Seminary at the time you informed me you were closing the School of Preaching in the spring of 2020; at your request, assisted you to persuade Joyce Rogers not to remove the Adrian Rogers Library from the Seminary over her concerns about your leadership direction; received your approval for my sabbatical leave and your recommendation for my sabbatical to the Board of Trustees on the grounds that I had three book contracts to fulfill and that I had rendered good service to the Seminary; at the request of Provost Dockery and with your approval, began service on the editorial board of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*; served, at your request, for the past three Southern Baptist Conventions at the Seminary booth to greet guests and recruit for the Seminary; have financially supported the Seminary as a member of the President’s Club; recruited several students to come to SWBTS over the past 3+ years, including two students whose first 9 hours of tuition I paid *out of my pocket* to encourage them to make the commitment to come to SWBTS, one of whom just graduated this Spring; and have paid medical bills and provided other financial support to some of our Asian, African, and Indian students.

Yet, with all this, *not one time* verbally or in writing did you express any discontent or concern about my service. Longsuffering? I am astounded.

In addition, I also serve in other strategic roles that enhance the Seminary’s image, foster the Seminary’s mission, and lay groundwork for future potential benefit to the Seminary. I am the co-chair of the Christian Standard Bible Translation Team, along with Tom Schreiner, under the auspices of LifeWay; on the Board of Directors for the Criswell Foundation, a multi-million dollar entity; on the Advisory Board for the annual preaching conference at Brown Missionary Baptist Church in Southaven, MS, one of the largest African American churches in the nation, and have been a regular speaker at that conference; represented Southwestern at numerous conferences and churches by speaking and preaching annually; and have published just shy of 4000 pages of academic writing in a dozen books and numerous journal articles, including two books published this year.

My love for, support of, and benefit to the Seminary cannot be gainsaid, and it is an insult beyond measure to be informed that my full-time service to the Seminary is being terminated and I am being forcibly retired, and you have tolerated me with such “longsuffering.” I have never sought accolade or celebration for my contributions, but instead have humbly sought to advance the mission of the Seminary as an extension of our mission for Christ. No one has, until you, suggested or implied otherwise.

Your April 22 letter outlined your plans to terminate my full-time employment at the completion of my sabbatical, inform me of your intention to do so less than four months before the new academic year when the loss of my full-time income would go into effect, inform me that I am being transitioned to a new position under the exalted title of Senior Faculty status, which is nothing more than a pseudonym for retirement; attempt to extract two years of service to SWBTS, stating “Your teaching load expectations and concomitant remuneration for the required two years post-sabbatical is entirely a matter of determination for the academic administration,” and this *as a retired faculty member*, and at a fraction of my full-time salary; require me to seek your approval for any outside income opportunities I may pursue, *even though retired*; and threaten me with dismissal if I do not comply when you stated:

You also remain obligated to fulfill all expectations of a faculty member, including the need of presidential approval for the providing of any recurring and/or ongoing personal services—such as coaching, as well as to support and relate constructively to the Seminary, its policies, its administration, and all of its constituencies. Should for any reason you determine not to fulfill these two years of post-sabbatical service (by act of resignation) or should for any reason the academic administration determine that you are in breach of your duties as a faculty member (by act of dismissal), you will owe back to the Seminary the amount equal to your full salary and benefits received during your sabbatical year.

The letter smacks of the proverbial bully pulpit. Such a posture is at face value unkind, unconscionable, and unchristian. I hardly think you are the longsuffering party here.

Essentially, what you have done is fire me, proposed to turn around and re-hire me under a new title and in a role of retirement, yet obligate me to faculty service as if I were full-time, and all for the pay an adjunct faculty member receives for teaching on a contract basis. That you consider such an arrangement respectful, equitable, or even Christian, is beyond me.

For these reasons, I must decline your offer to move to Senior Faculty status at Southwestern. I cannot accept a retirement position because I have not chosen to retire. Likewise, I will not resign and do not believe that your actions are in the best interests of the Seminary, the SBC, or the Gospel.

Therefore, by your unilateral action expressly stated in your April 22 letter that my full-time employment at Southwestern is terminated July 31, 2022, it is my understanding and my intention that July 31, 2022, concludes my faculty service at the Seminary.

Severed full-time employment by the Administration of the Seminary renders null and void obligations normally expected to be met by faculty while in full-time employment, including post-sabbatical requirements. Therefore, I cannot legally or otherwise be held under any burden or constraint to fulfill the requirements outlined in your letter of April 22. Should I choose not to accept the offer of Senior faculty status, you indicated in your May 24 email I “will be deemed to have resigned from the seminary.” You informed me, “You may petition for a forgiveness of the two years post-sabbatical obligation and a release from employment, under which the full year’s salary and benefits may be deemed to be a ‘severance.’” Since I reject your premise that there is an obligation to be “forgiven,” I cannot petition for forgiveness. Nor can I petition to be released from employment when your action has already mandated my release from full-time employment.

Furthermore, the Faculty Manual states in the Preface that “Nothing in this manual or in any of the Seminary’s personnel policies or procedures is to be construed or interpreted as a contract. . . .” Such language works both ways.

Should you choose to pursue this matter further and attempt to enforce the terms and obligations of your April 22 letter, I will appeal to the Board of Trustees, and beyond that, if necessary, seek other means available for remedy.

Should you relent regarding your decision to terminate my full-time employment, and/or should the Board of Trustees prevail upon you to rescind your decision and recommend me to continue to teach as a full-time faculty member, such a course of action is no longer an option I deem acceptable. Given your posture reflected in your April 22nd

letter and May 6 meeting, and that of your administrators Drs. Skaug and Wills, under such employment conditions the slightest perceived infraction could result in disciplinary action or dismissal. Working conditions at Southwestern are no longer conducive for an ongoing healthy employment relationship. In short, you have poisoned the well.

Therefore, given these circumstances, once again I appeal to you, and now to the Board of Trustees, that I be granted one year's salary as severance. Due to the hardship placed on me, financial and otherwise, by the lack of notice of your intentions, to vacate my office; pack, move, and store my library; acquire health insurance coverage; seek employment elsewhere; and given my 30 years of service to Southwestern, courtesy would seem to warrant such an act of goodwill. Romans 12:9-21 would seem to warrant such as well.

It grieves me beyond words to be at this point in my relationship with Southwestern Seminary and her administration. I shall always cherish the countless special friendships and relationships forged over the years. Including my three years as a student from 1978-1981, I have spent half of my life in service to the King at Southwestern.

In closing, there are yet two things on which you and I can agree: Southwestern Seminary is a wonderful place, and if the Lord tarries His coming, she will be around long after we both have made our heavenly journey.

As befitting brothers in Christ, know you shall have my ongoing prayers for your personal well-being, for your leadership of our great Seminary, and for Southwestern and her future.

Sincerely,

David L. Allen
Distinguished Professor of Preaching
George W. Truett Chair of Pastoral Ministry
Director, Southwestern Center for Text-Driven Preaching
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

cc. Board of Trustees, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Benjamin M. Skaug, Provost and Vice President for Academic Administration
Gregory A. Wills, Dean of the School of Theology