



An Expression of Our Grief, Our Appreciation, and Our Resolve
From the Faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary & Boyce College

April 29, 2020

The faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Boyce College hereby make a unified statement about the recent hardships our community has faced as a result of this global pandemic. The purpose of this statement is to express three main things in response to these hardships: our grief that beloved colleagues were affected, our appreciation both for their contribution to Southern and for the difficulty our leaders have faced, and our resolve to labor on in faithfulness to God's Word.

We want this statement to encourage those colleagues, as well as our students, alumni, and churches, who are also enduring these unsettling times.

We grieve the unexpected hardships this pandemic has brought on people across the world, and to our beloved colleagues in particular.

No one yet knows the full effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our world. What we do know is distressing – countless people under threat to health and to livelihood, with no certain end in sight. This virus is a real threat to people made in God's image, a painful reminder that this world groans under the bondage of sin's corruption, waiting to be set free (Rom 8:20-23). Presently, in our nation, we have lost over 50,000 people, and another 26 million and counting Americans have lost their jobs. We lament the loss of life, the loss of resources, and the loss of security for so many. We know that many difficult decisions lie ahead for employers, healthcare experts, and governing authorities. We pray that the Lord would show mercy to the people of this hurting world – both by sparing their physical lives and by granting them spiritual life through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These losses have hit home as well – in a particularly painful way for some of our treasured colleagues who recently lost their positions. Insofar as our words can, we want to comfort them with the affirmation that can only come from those who worked alongside them.

We appreciate the significant contributions these colleagues have made to the academic and spiritual life of Southern. We also appreciate the unexpected difficulty our leadership has had to face.

Only the Lord knows the full extent of our faculty colleagues' contributions in forming scholars, pastors, ministers, missionaries, and counselors. We wish to express publicly our respect for them. Our confidence in these colleagues is twofold. We are confident that they are stewards of the gospel who will be found faithful (1 Cor 4:1-5). And we are confident, as we know they are, that they will find God faithful to sustain them all their days, even the difficult ones (1 Cor 1:4-9). We will labor in prayer for their provision, direction, and joy.

We also wish to express our love and sympathy for the many staff members who also lost their positions. These men and women are gifts from the Lord to our community, and we are confident they will be gifts wherever God will take them.

As a faculty, we are also aware that our administration has been faced with heart-wrenching decisions in recent days. We understand that these decisions were occasioned by unwanted, unforeseen economic consequences brought on by the pandemic. Both the administration and the trustees of the seminary are people of Christian integrity, and as a faculty we are confident that their recent decisions came from that integrity. We are praying that God would give them wisdom in these trying times.

We remain resolved in these unexpected hardships to carry out the mission entrusted to us as faculty members.

Under the lordship of Jesus Christ, the mission of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is to be totally committed to the Bible as the Word of God, to the Great Commission as our mandate, and to be a servant of the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by training, educating, and preparing ministers of the gospel for more faithful service. Our commitment as a faculty to the Scriptures as the inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God, to the Abstract of Principles, and to the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) has not changed.

We remain committed to teaching as a means of forming disciples of Jesus Christ through increasing knowledge of his Word in service to his church (Eph 4:11-16). His Word is our confidence, our authority, and our delight.

We are determined to pass this delight on to our students, no matter the challenges that come. If those challenges are doctrinal, we will respond by contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). If those challenges are cultural, we will entrust ourselves to our faithful and sovereign Creator, Redeemer, and Lord while doing good (1 Peter 4:19). If those challenges are logistical, we will labor all the more to serve the people God has entrusted to us (1 Thess 2:9-12). This is our resolve.

And so we labor in that resolve, thankful that above all things our God reigns. And all those who belong to him through faith in Jesus Christ are safe in his care.

Approved by the Faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary & Boyce College
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