



# NEW ORLEANS

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

January 10, 2018

## ANSWERING GOD'S CALL

Dear Executive Committee Member,

One hundred years ago the Southern Baptist Convention made one of the most radical decisions in its history. The 1917 SBC decided to start a seminary in the city of New Orleans. The decision to create a new school was unprecedented but not that radical. Putting this new school in the city of New Orleans, however, was radical then and remains radical today. New Orleans was not Baptist, not evangelical, and not Protestant. Even the culture and food of New Orleans was unlike the rest of the United States. New Orleans was so different from Southern Baptists and the rest of the country that many suggested this action would help the International Mission Board learn how to start a seminary in a foreign country.

Why did the SBC make this radical decision? For the sake of the Great Commission. The Mississippi River made New Orleans a city of great influence and significance, and all knew it was in desperate need of Christ. Students coming to this school would have an opportunity to learn and prepare for ministry, to do ministry in the city while learning, and to live in a completely unfamiliar environment that would prepare them to go any place on the earth to answer God's call. For one hundred years, the Seminary has been preparing students for ministry, starting churches and sharing the gospel in and around the city, and sending graduates all over the nation and world to bear witness to the Gospel. Today Baptists are the second largest church family in New Orleans, and NOBTS is in an active partnership with the city, state, and NAMB process of church planting. We now have 39 students starting the semester while engaged with some aspect of the SEND AMERICA program in New Orleans. Every year we host more than 3,000 volunteers who come to do mission work in the city, including youth groups, collegiate groups, senior adult groups, and families. Our students and faculty continue to knock on hundreds of doors across the city to tell people about Jesus, leading many to Christ. Through the years the seminary has become the anchor point for Baptist work in South Louisiana and a powerful illustration of a missional approach to theological education.

For two years, the Seminary engaged in the extremely intense process of the reaffirmation of our accreditation. Significant changes in the process made this more intense and demanding than in years past, but we were delighted to receive the reaffirmation from both of our major accreditors for another ten years. It was the strongest, most positive such report we have had during my time at the seminary. One of the benefits of the comprehensive review of all aspects of the seminary from both an internal perspective and the external perspective of accrediting representatives is the knowledge gained to compare where we were ten years ago with where we are now and where we plan to be in the future. Here are some of the major insights we gained through this process.

- 1) The role of non-residential theological education continues to become more important.
- 2) Financial pressure on students is growing and affecting their choices on which degrees they seek, the number of hours they take, the delivery systems they choose, and whether or not they complete programs they begin.
- 3) The typical student will earn credit hours in a variety of ways before they complete their studies.

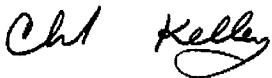
- 4) Non-traditional students are becoming more typical in our student body.
- 5) Essential operating costs are increasing as a percentage of our budget.

We are very pleased about the continued growth and impact of several of our programs. Our Center for the Textual Study of the New Testament played a pivotal role in the creation of an online tool giving Greek students anywhere in the world access to every ancient manuscript found for any passage in the New Testament. Our archaeological dig in Israel is regarded as one of the most significant in the land. Our apologetics program and events are attracting the participation of scholars and students from across the country. Our mentoring program is working the local church more deeply into the fabric of preparing the next generation of ministers. Our scholarship program for African-American students has distributed more than \$850,000 in the last five years. The Caskey Center for Church Excellence continues to expand its assistance and support for those serving the typical churches of the SBC. The new Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. includes a display about our groundbreaking program training inmates in maximum security prisons to be ministers. We are especially excited about the launch of the Adrian Rogers Center for Expository Preaching and the opportunity to equip both students and pastors in the field with the tools for excellent exposition.

Our greatest challenge continues to be financial. We are deeply and passionately committed to our missional setting of New Orleans, but it has always presented challenges to our operations throughout our 100 years of existence. Hurricane Katrina in particular profoundly and permanently changed our business model. For example, property insurance went from \$500,000 a year to \$2,000,000 a year and the shape of our student body went from a majority of on-campus students to a majority of non-residential students. We have been in a continuous process of adapting to these changes. Last year we had a very unusual operating deficit of just over \$1,500,000. Adjustments were made so that does not happen again.

When Southern Baptists voted to create a seminary in New Orleans, they knew it would take the whole SBC to participate in its ministry. One hundred years after that decision, that is exactly what has happened through the years. The Cooperative Program makes our work possible. The Southern Baptist Convention is by far the largest contributor in the history of our school. Thank you so much for your partnership in the Gospel and the preparation of ministers. In the report that follows you will see a more detailed account of what is happening at this School of Providence and Prayer.

Yours and His,



Chuck Kelley  
President  
NOBTS