



OFFICE *of the* PRESIDENT

March 18, 2019

Dear Friends of the Seminary,

Over the last few weeks, many of you have shared concerns about recent rumors and falsehoods regarding the seminary and the Presbyterian Church of America, our denomination. Thank you for contacting me and for your continued support during this trying season.

My purpose in writing today is to assure you that Covenant Seminary is strong and unwavering in its fidelity to Scripture and to the orthodox Christian theological view of human sexuality. Any suggestion to the contrary is patently false and slanderous.

Nevertheless, a handful of individuals are posting on personal blogs and social media accusations that Covenant Seminary is abandoning its theological roots and drifting into liberalism. The authors of these articles have chosen to sinfully slander the reputation and ongoing work of godly men and women. Many of these claims are being made by individuals outside the denomination who cannot be held accountable for their slander. Despite being widely circulated, their claims are completely untrue.

Let me clearly state that Covenant Seminary has not shifted, slid, changed, or acquiesced to any cultural factors. We have not altered our view on sexuality. Our belief and teaching remains that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman, and that all sexual behavior outside of marriage is a sin. I have made our faithfulness to biblical orthodoxy on these matters very clear at the last two general assemblies and in written materials. These can be viewed at both the denomination's website and the seminary's website.

We do not know the motives of those who are actively misrepresenting our beliefs. They have not talked with us nor corrected their misinformation, though it would be easy and appropriate for them to do so. Their misbehavior is damaging the body of Christ at a critical time in our culture.

The topic of biblical sexuality is more relevant today than perhaps any time before. This is a moment requiring sound teaching from ministry leaders. They in turn require sound instruction during their years of preparation. Covenant Seminary offers these leaders orthodox biblical instruction fully upholding God's unchanging Word in the face of a culture shifting away from redemptive truth.

Another falsehood being spread by some is that that Covenant Seminary desires to leave the denomination. This is not the case. Covenant Seminary has no desire to leave the denomination.

We are honored to be the denominational seminary and continue to steward this unique role. We did not initiate nor have anything to do with 'Overture Two.' Though it will be before the general assembly this year we do not support it. It was created apart from the seminary by some wishing to separate the seminary from the PCA.

COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

12330 CONWAY ROAD, ST. LOUIS, MO 63141 • WWW.COVENANTSEMINARY.EDU • 314.434.4044

Covenant Seminary continues to be the only seminary under the authority and accountability of the PCA. This is an intentional and careful provision to safeguard our church for this generation and the next.

What does this accountability look like? Covenant Seminary is not an independent organization able to do whatever it likes. By design, the seminary has multiple checks and balances for our leadership, faculty, and board. The board of trustees approves the faculty, president, and strategic plan. It is composed of ruling and teaching elders from across the denomination, each nominated by their presbytery and approved by general assembly. As Presbyterians, we believe this accountability is of great importance as we endeavor to hold fast to the truth while engaging a world in need of the gospel.

Furthermore, our faculty are held to rigorous theological standards that are reviewed and affirmed annually. Every year, each member of the faculty reaffirms their adherence to the Westminster standards, the reformed faith, the inerrancy of scripture and the teaching that biblical marriage is being between one man and one woman.

So, in short, none of our theological doctrine has changed and we have no desire to leave the PCA. Any statement to the contrary is simply untrue. Though we do not know the motives of those who spread falsehoods about the seminary, nor can we control their behavior, we can make sure our partners in ministry like you are apprised of the truth.

I remain deeply grateful for your partnership in this work and ministry! Please pray for the Lord's continued provision and grace as we weather these attacks and that the distractions will not keep us from the task of training up faithful leaders for the church. The gospel is, after all, our hope for the future!

In His service,



Dr. Mark Dalbey
President
Covenant Theological Seminary

P.S. In the coming weeks, we will be sending additional resources to you to provide continued clarity amidst the noise and confusion. The first two such resources have been included for you today. Enclosed with this letter is an article from two of our faculty, Dr. Jay Sklar and Dr. Robert Yarbrough. These men are noted scholars. I have asked them to reflect on why the church needs strong seminaries and what is required for a seminary to be strong. Their convictions and words provide a clear view of what Covenant Seminary is committed to and how we continue to train pastors and leaders for the church today. The second resource is a list of responses summarizing and addressing areas of concern that have been raised over the last few weeks.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT COVENANT SEMINARY

Biblical Sexuality/Revoice

Covenant Seminary:

- stands firmly on the biblical teaching on marriage and sexuality.
- believes marriage is between one man and one woman.
- believes all sexual intimacy is to be expressed only within such a marriage.
- faculty do not teach that a person should identify as a “Gay Christian”.
- faculty firmly believe and teach that our primary identity as Christians is that of being in Christ. All Christians, regardless of their sin patterns or unwanted desires, should see themselves as being first and foremost united to Jesus and following him.
- does not endorse, promote, or have a role in the Revoice conference.
- did not host or organize last year’s Revoice conference.
- does not agree with all of the views that were shared or taught at the Revoice conference.
- faculty do not teach or advocate for queer theology.
- faculty believe that same sex desire is a result of the fall and, like other sinful desires that result from the fall (envy, heterosexual lust, greed, etc.), should be mortified and in no way dignified.
- Dr. Sklar, who drew criticism for speaking last year, has written and taught broadly on the verses in Leviticus that prohibit homosexual activity. He teaches very clearly that these verses continue to be relevant today in their prohibition of homosexual sin.
- While Dr. Sklar spoke at last year’s conference, given the increased lack of clarity surrounding this conference and topic, Covenant Seminary has instructed professors not to speak at Revoice this year.

Reclaim MLK Event

- In January 2019, South City Church had agreed to allow the Faith for Justice group to hold its annual MLK conference in its building.
- The session, after reviewing the conference schedule and speakers, discovered areas of concern and chose to ask the conference leadership to move the event to a different location (the statement can be found on the church’s website).
- Covenant Seminary was not involved in the planning, decisions, or choice of speakers surrounding this event.
- In past years, the City Ministry Initiative (CMI) at Covenant Seminary co-sponsored this MLK event, however, we withdrew our co-sponsorship this year upon discovering that one of the persons presenting was a supporter of transgenderism.
- Covenant Seminary faculty did not speak at this event.
- Rev. Dr. Mike Higgins, who has a dual role as the senior pastor of South City Church and as Dean of Students at Covenant Seminary, was on the board of Faith for Justice but has since stepped down from that board. He was not involved in the specific planning of this event, he did not speak at the event, and he did not know in advance that the particular speaker of concern was scheduled to speak at the event. While Mike believes we are called to love and care for transgendered people, he does not believe transgenderism is compatible with biblical teaching.

Transgenderism

Covenant Seminary:

- faculty believe the bible is clear that God created humanity male and female.
- faculty do not believe that male and female are social constructs.
- faculty do not believe that a transgender lifestyle is within biblical parameters.

Covenant Seminary Faculty

- are annually reviewed on their theological beliefs and level of scholarship.
- are committed to the inerrancy of scripture and careful handling of the word today. This involves both a deep love for the word and a deep love for people as we communicate God's word to both unbelievers and believers.
- reaffirm every year their adherence to the Westminster standards, the reformed faith, the inerrancy of scripture, and biblical marriage as being between one man and one woman. They do so happily and joyfully as an expression of their belief in the truth of God's unchanging word and their understanding of the reformed faith as an expression of what God's word teaches.
- are committed to training the next generation of pastors, counselors and ministry leaders for the biblical gospel to go forward for generations to come.