

Seminary moving forward with plans to evict association

News

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FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has indicated in a second letter that it intends to pursue its claim to office space currently used by Tarrant Baptist Association, apparently because the association retains as a member a church that was kicked out of the Southern Baptist Convention for its acceptance of gays.

Al Meredith, moderator of Tarrant Baptist Association, [told](#) the *Baptist Standard* that he received a letter Jan. 18 indicating seminary officials still want the association out of the office building it has long occupied on the edge of the seminary campus in Fort Worth, Texas.

The seminary previously sent a registered letter Dec. 12 giving the association six months to vacate the offices under terms of a 1997 affiliation agreement requiring the two organizations be in "theological harmony." Meredith said in a letter to associational leaders that the seminary's December letter said the association has one or more member churches that do not act in accordance with an article in the [Baptist Faith and Message](#) that declares homosexuality immoral.

Tarrant Baptist Association [member](#) congregations include [Broadway Baptist Church](#) in Fort Worth. The Southern Baptist Convention [expelled](#) the congregation in 2009 after an investigation into a dispute within the church over whether to include portraits of same-sex couples in a church directory failed to convince Baptist leaders that Broadway met a membership guideline excluding churches that "act to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior."

Broadway [chose](#)

not to send messengers that year to the Baptist General Convention of Texas in order to avoid a similar confrontation. Last September the church [voted](#) to discontinue its relationship with the BGCT, saying the church wants to carry on its ministries without being distracted by questions about its position on homosexuality.

Broadway Pastor Brent Beasley [told](#) the *Dallas Morning News* "it would be safe to assume" the reference in the seminary's letter was to his church.

In addition to the homosexuality concern, Meredith said the original seminary letter said the association hasn't been helpful enough in helping students and faculty seeking preaching jobs in Tarrant Association churches, and that Southwestern needs the space for offices or a welcome center.

Meredith says he does not believe the seminary has legal authority to end the affiliation agreement unilaterally, and after an initial meeting with seminary officials he hoped the situation could be resolved without severing the long-term partnership agreement.

After receiving the second letter, however, Meredith said association leaders would discuss a response at a regularly scheduled meeting Jan. 24 of the association's executive board.