

Former LifeWay CEO Thom Rainer reaches settlement with publishing house

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [November 4, 2020](#) issue



(Photo by Bill Bangham, courtesy of Baptist Press)

LifeWay Christian Resources, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, announced on October 6 that it had reached an “amicable” out-of-court agreement with former president and CEO Thom Rainer.

The agreement required Rainer, who had signed a book deal with a competing Christian publisher, to refrain from publishing his book until November 2021, when his noncompete clause with LifeWay expires.

“Our prayer has always been that this could be resolved between LifeWay and Dr. Rainer amicably,” Todd Fannin, chairman of LifeWay’s board of trustees, said in a statement. “We’re thankful Dr. Rainer agreed to honor his word and commitment to LifeWay.”

On September 28, a lawyer for LifeWay filed a suit in chancery court in Williamson County, Tennessee, alleging that Rainer violated his noncompete clause. (He continued to serve as chief advisory officer at LifeWay until October 30, with a salary and a company car—a policy extended to many Southern Baptist executives when they retire.)

Rainer, a best-selling author with a company called Church Answers, inked a deal with Tyndale, a publisher of Christian books and Bibles, in April. His first book with Tyndale was scheduled to be published in June.

Under the terms of the agreement, Rainer also had to “cease using any and all tags such as @Tyndale, #Tyndale @NLT, #NLT or any other reference to any competitor of Plaintiff, Tyndale,” on social media. (NLT is the New Living Translation, a Tyndale Bible.)

LifeWay has faced steep financial challenges over the past year. In April, it began cutting roughly 10 percent of its \$281.3 million operating budget through staff reductions, a hiring freeze, and salary cuts. Rainer himself began returning his paychecks to LifeWay.

The lawsuit against Rainer was likely the fallout of that financial crunch. It alleges that in renegeing on his noncompete contract, Rainer caused LifeWay “irreparable harm” and that damages “are not an adequate remedy.” —Religion News Service