



Perryville Second
Baptist Church

Knowing Christ and Making Him Known!

November 23, 2021

Daniel L. Akin, President
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
120 S. Wingate Street
Wake Forest, NC 27587

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: president@sebts.edu

Dear President Akin:

I write to you as a concerned Southern Baptist pastor regarding the theological position of one of SEBTS's visiting faculty members, Dr. James Merritt. He is, according to your website, Professor of Preaching and Christian Leadership. He also "has been deeply influential in Southern Baptist life," having served as the 51st President of the SBC, former SBC Executive Committee Chairman, and former President of the SBC Pastor's conference, as well as the 2021 chairman of the SBC Resolution's Committee at the Nashville meeting.

I am sure that there are reasonable rules in place that keep you from being able to discuss personnel matters with me too openly. However, [considering Dr. Merritt's recent endorsement of the preaching of his openly gay son](#), I have some serious questions for you as the President of SEBTS, an institution owned by and under the authority of the 47,000+ SBC Churches.

Is it your position that a person can be openly gay and a Christian? Is this the position of the seminary? Further, is it the position of SEBTS that openly gay men can be faithful preachers of the gospel? Do you believe that Southern Baptist Churches ought to listen to the preaching of gay men? If the preaching of openly gay men can be listened to, what other acts of rebellion ought to be tolerated in the pulpit? Should, for example, Southern Baptists listen to "faithful sermons" of those guilty of sexual abuse or covering up sexual abuse?

On November 17 of this year, you retweeted Pastor Steve Gaines on Twitter who said that all SBC Seminary Presidents affirm the BFM 2000. I am sure you are aware that the Baptist Faith and Message, Article XV, states: "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose...homosexuality". Do you believe, then, that endorsing the preaching of openly homosexual men would be in compliance with the Baptist Faith and Message?

In the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN, Dr. Merritt said the following: "So, fellow messengers, let's just put it on the table. It's time to find out who we are. And where we're headed." I actually agree with the sentiment of your faculty member, and it is in light of his words that I ask these above questions. I want to better understand who SEBTS thinks we are as Southern Baptists on this position and where it is you and this institution believe we are headed.

Since Dr. Merritt endorses the sermon of his gay son and is such an influential Southern Baptist and a member of your own faculty, I believe Southern Baptists are deserving of an answer to the questions I have posed to you above. These are tumultuous days in our beloved convention. It is my sincere prayer that you will respond. Should you wish to call, my cell phone number is listed in the email.

I understand that "open letters" are not necessarily always the best approach, but I do think certain situations warrant the writing of them. I believe you believe that too since you retweeted Dr. Adam Greenway's open letter to Dr. Michael Spradlin of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary a few days ago. I understand that Dr. Greenway did this without calling Dr. Spradlin first. I strongly believe that this situation with Dr. Merritt warrants the actions I have taken.

You may be upset with me, and while that is not my desire, it is something I am resolved to be okay with. Because my ultimate goal in this is not to be liked. Rather, I long for our beloved convention to submit wholly to the authority of the Bible and rest full in its sufficiency – no matter the cost.

Will you link arms with me and our little church in Perryville, AR, and the vast majority of Southern Baptist Churches in our convention who are in compliance with the BFM 2000 standing in opposition to homosexuality? Who believe the most loving thing we can do before God and man is not to encourage homosexual preaching, but instead to call homosexuals to repentance and faith in Christ? Christ is worthy of our full allegiance. I ask that you carefully consider the questions I have posed above and answer them in a timely fashion. Of course, I understand this week is busy. But, the 47,000+ churches of the Southern Baptist Convention deserve to know if it is the position of SEBTS to support the preaching of homosexuals or not.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. It is my prayer you will stand on the side of Christ our most gracious and worthy King.

For the Glory of the Lord,

Allen S. Nelson, IV
Pastor, Perryville Second Baptist Church