

Seminary of the Southwest
restructuring news release
11.17.2009

Seminary of the Southwest restructures in order to secure, strengthen future

Budget-efficiency measures include staffing changes, administrative cost cuts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2009

CONTACT: Nancy Springer-Baldwin
512.472.4133, x 328 | nspringer-baldwin@ssw.edu

AUSTIN, Texas – Seminary of the Southwest has announced a series of restructuring moves the institution will make immediately – including staffing changes and other cost-saving measures – in order to secure its strong and successful future as a residential seminary with a full faculty.

In addition to funding from tuition, fees, and major and annual fund giving, Seminary of the Southwest depends upon income from endowments, trusts and special-purpose funds to support its work. The seminary's Board of Trustees, faced with the reality of diminishing endowment income due to the severe economic downturn, has been carefully considering for some time the institution's options for reducing its operating budget.

“This seminary is as strong as ever in many ways,” said the Rt. Rev. Dena Harrison, chair of the Board of Trustees and bishop suffragan in the Diocese of Texas. “Our entering class for this fall grew more than 100 percent over last year, and our annual fund for 2008-09 broke our record for the total raised within a year, thanks to our devoted and generous alumni and friends. We have extraordinary faculty – outstanding in their fields, and committed to shaping faithful, imaginative and skilled Christian leaders. But we're part of the U.S. economy, too, and like so many American families it's essential that we take steps today in order to ensure a successful future for the seminary.”

Unfortunately, the seminary's budgetary constraints forced its leadership into the thorniest of dilemmas and decisions. In a special meeting on November 13th, the board determined that in addition to administrative cost cuts, 12 seminary staff positions must be eliminated and one expected faculty retirement will not be replaced.

“We are committed to aligning our personnel resources with the seminary's core educational mission,” stressed Bishop Harrison. “And we will continue to build on the strength of our program, admissions and advancement for the future. But right now, our choices are limited – and hard.”

“Nothing about this situation is simple or easy,” agreed the Very Rev. Douglas Travis, seminary dean and president. “But none of it is as difficult as saying good-bye to dear colleagues and friends. I

deeply regret the personal impact this necessary restructuring will have on the lives of 12 members of our community. Each has contributed to the health and well-being of this seminary, and we are ever-grateful for their service and loyalty.”

The final date of employment for most of the eliminated positions will be no later than December 8th.

Looking forward, looking up

Seminary of the Southwest has undertaken a major gifts campaign intended to raise almost \$14 million to go toward faculty chairs and scholarship funding. The seminary expects to realize full payment of pledges secured in the campaign within five years; the campaign will add \$645,000 a year to the institution’s operating revenue.

“Today, we may be feeling the discomfort of a pressured economy,” said Dean Travis. “But the steps we’re taking will ultimately lead the seminary to a stronger, more secure tomorrow.”

About Seminary of the Southwest

The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest was founded in 1952 in Austin, Texas, by then-Bishop John Hines of the Diocese of Texas. Today, Seminary of the Southwest is one of eleven accredited seminaries of the Episcopal Church, and works to be a community for formation and leadership within the Church, supported by a strength of program, endowment and environment that ensures excellence in theological and pastoral education.

The seminary offers the Master of Divinity program for ordained ministry, with an Hispanic Church Studies concentration available, as well as four other master’s degrees designed for working people with a call to minister – via stewardship, volunteerism, counseling or chaplaincy. Additionally, the seminary offers two diploma tracks and a certificate program for youth ministry and Christian education, as well as noncredit online courses. Currently, the seminary’s student body is comprised of 111 men and women from across the country and around the world, as far as Africa and Pakistan.

For more information about Seminary of the Southwest, please visit www.ssw.edu.

###