

# A BRIEF HISTORY

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**Southeastern Baptist  
Theological Seminary**

**Wake Forest, N. C.**

*Founders Day*  
*February 16, 1961*

**Tenth Anniversary Year**

# A BRIEF HISTORY

This pamphlet is intended briefly to sketch some of the significant steps in the progress of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in the days of its founding and the first ten years of its ministry. In the gathering of this information, attention was given to the official records of the Seminary, reports of the faculty to the Board of Trustees, reports of the Seminary administration to the Southern Baptist Convention, the minutes of the faculty meetings, personal recollections of the administration, faculty, students and alumni, and statistical reports of the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. To interpret or to show interrelationships would be beyond the scope of this present form of the story. The above named are some of the materials from which a history could be written, but no claim is made for this as a history of the Seminary.

Since the life of an educational community is marked off into the succeeding academic years, and since this account will refrain from the generalizations which are dependent upon a larger perspective, a year by year arrangement will serve the present purpose, that of marking out the events and stages which seem to symbolize the growth of the school toward its fulfillment of the purpose of its founders.

The Southern Baptist Convention of 1947, meeting in St. Louis, established a committee of nine to study the whole question of theological education in the light of recent proposal for the formation of new seminaries. This committee made a preliminary report in 1948. In 1949 the committee brought a recommendation at the Convention to establish two new seminaries, one in the East and one in the west, as soon as it could be done without injury to the existing institutions. A new committee, appointed that year, brought to the 1950 Convention in Chicago the recommendation that the Convention accept Golden Gate Seminary in Berkeley, California as its western seminary, and that it purchase the old campus of Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, North Carolina and establish there its new eastern seminary, to be named "The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Incorporated." The Convention approved the proposal and elected Boards of Trustees for these two schools.

The Board of Trustees of Southeastern Seminary had its first meeting in Wake Forest on June 20, 1950. In a meeting in Atlanta on December 7, 1950, the Trustees approved the charter for the Seminary. In a meeting in Wake Forest on February 15, 1951, they elected Dr. S. L. Stealey, professor of Church History in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ken-

tucky, as the first president of Southeastern. The Trustees met again on May 16, 1951, at Edgewater Park, Mississippi, and they decided to open the Seminary in September, 1951. They chose J. Leo Green, J. B. Hipps, and W. C. Strickland to form the nucleus of the faculty with President Stealey.

### **The School Year 1951-1952**

To the Convention meeting in Miami in 1952, the Seminary gave a report of its first year of operation. Along with the faculty named above, Marc H. Lovelace, of the faculty of Wake Forest College, and Joseph R. Robinson, comptroller of the Seminary, taught part time. One hundred and two students enrolled during this first session, which was held in the one building which Wake Forest College had agreed to make available to this Seminary immediately. The College was engaged in building a new campus in Winston-Salem, and until its completion in 1956, the two schools, college and seminary, were to live together on the same campus in Wake Forest.

The Board of Trustees elected C. C. Warren as the first chairman. In 1952 he was succeeded by W. Perry Crouch, who served in this capacity until his retirement from the Board in 1960. From the first, the Board and the President were concerned with the task of securing a competent faculty. The faculty joined them in the effort to provide quality in instruction, a strong library, and a vital missionary concern, all focusing in a clear and winning Christian witness to the turbulent world into which the Seminary had been born.

### **The School Year 1952-1953**

Two hundred and forty-nine students enrolled in Southeastern during the second session, representing sixteen states and forty-nine colleges. More than two hundred other applicants had to be rejected because of the lack of space. Six new faculty members were added at the beginning of the year: E. A. McDowell, professor of New Testament; S. A. Newman, professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion; Olin T. Binkley, professor of Christian Ethics and Sociology; R. T. Daniel, professor of Old Testament; M. Ray McKay, professor of Preaching; and Marc H. Lovelace, associate professor of Archaeology. E. C. Osburn came during the year to serve as librarian. The library grew during this year to more than 6,500 volumes. Work in pastoral counseling in cooperation with Dr. William Steininger of the North Carolina State Hospital in Raleigh was begun the second semester. In February the school made application to join the American Schools of Oriental Research.

The Seminary's endowment, in the amount of \$1,390, was begun.

### **The School Year 1953-1954**

When the third year courses were added in the fall of 1953, the enrollment climbed again, a total of three hundred and sixty-five being enrolled during the year. Additions to the faculty were Ben C. Fisher, assistant professor of Christian Education and director of Public Relations; Pope A. Duncan, associate professor of Church History; John T. Wayland, professor of Christian Education; Richard K. Young, associate professor of Pastoral Care; and Garland A. Hendricks, associate professor of Church and Community Development, and director of Field Work. During this year the library holdings grew to more than 11,000 volumes.

At the end of the year, the Seminary held its first graduation exercise, awarding the Bachelor of Divinity degree to sixty-three men. President Stealey and Dr. J. W. Storer, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, were the speakers in this first graduation program. The Alumni Association was organized, and the first annual meeting set for the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami.

### **The School Year 1954-55**

The fourth year of the Seminary's life began with an enrollment of three hundred and seventy-six students, including thirteen who entered the graduate program leading to the Th.M. degree, offered this year for the first time. New students coming in for the second semester raised the enrollment to three hundred and ninety-five.

The faculty was augmented with the coming of Denton R. Coker to be assistant professor of Religious Education; L. J. Morriss and Paul S. Robinson also taught part time. In December the Seminary took its first step toward accreditation by becoming an associate member of the American Association of Theological Schools.

The library increased in size to more than 14,000 catalogued volumes during the year. A significant addition to the library was made by the gift of the Cornelius Schaible collection. Other friends also made gifts of valuable books and collections to give added strength to the library. The bequest of Miss Ruby Reid of property in the town of Wake Forest was the first such bequest to the Seminary. This gift formed the nucleus of a fund which was to provide ultimately for the construction of the Child Care Center which bears Miss Reid's name today.

As in the earlier years, the Seminary's academic experience was enhanced by the contact with visiting speakers, among whom in this year were Frank M.

Cross, Jr., and H. H. Rowley. At the end of the year ninety-eight students received their degrees.

### **The School Year 1955-1956**

The Seminary began its fifth year without the services of Joseph R. Robinson, who had died during the previous summer. Gordon M. Funk came to the Seminary as Business Manager and Fred Sandusky became Registrar. J. Carroll Trotter came to the faculty as assistant professor of Preaching; James E. Tull became special instructor in Theology, and B. Elmo Scoggin was visiting professor of Missions. The library continued to grow, reporting 20,000 volumes before the end of the year. Student enrollment came to four hundred and fifty-nine.

Marc H. Lovelace was the first member of the faculty to receive a leave of absence. He was awarded a fellowship by the American Schools of Oriental Research, and spent the school year in the school in Jerusalem. R. Melvin Henderson served as instructor in Archaeology during Professor Lovelace's absence.

Significant support for the Seminary's effort to aid worthy students in need was given by the establishment of the J. F. Tompkins Missionary Aid Fund, and by the Bethea Student Aid Fund.

### **The School Year 1956-57**

In the early summer of 1956, Wake Forest College moved to its new college in Winston-Salem, leaving the Seminary in full occupancy of its Wake Forest home. The Board of Trustees had been engaged in plans for the renovation and the remodeling of the campus and its buildings, and during the summer, crews were at work everywhere, readying the buildings for use in the fall. A new cafeteria was constructed and was in use in November. Two dormitories were converted to apartment buildings, the chemistry building was turned into a bookstore and student center, and the administration building was remodeled to provide office space. Furnishings were bought and placed in classrooms, dormitories, and apartment buildings, and offices. The library, now containing more than 24,000 volumes, continued to occupy its cramped quarters in the Music and Religion Building while the work of demolishing the condemned part of the old library building and of replacing it with a new three-story structure was under way. During the year, work was begun on the chapel interior, which had been left by the college as an unfinished auditorium.

The full possession of the facilities made possible the admission of students in greater numbers. Since the beginning, the Seminary had been unable to accept all the qualified applicants, due to the limited space in the one building. Now, with this restriction off, the enroll-

ment rose, for the 1956-57 school year, to six hundred eighty-one. One hundred and twelve students were graduated.

E. Luther Copeland came to be associate professor of Missions, Thomas A. Bland became assistant professor of Christian Sociology and Ethics; B. Elmo Scoggin, associate professor of Old Testament; and John E. Steely, assistant professor of Historical Theology. Miss Thelma Arnote was special instructor in Religious Education and Ben S. Johnson, special instructor in Music. William L. Palmer was instructor in Greek, and J. Henry Coffey instructor in Religious Education. Plans were made for the first summer of the Seminary, a four week session which was offered in the summer of 1957. One hundred and twenty students enrolled in this summer session. During the same time, the Seminary sponsored its first summer conference. Special lecturers during the year included John A. Mackay and Winthrop S. Hudson.

### **The School Year 1957-1958**

The seventh session of the Seminary was marked again by growth in many areas, a mark of each successive year up to this point. The teaching staff was increased. Miss Arnote, who had taught part time the preceding year, became associate professor of Religious Education and director of the Child Care Center. R. C. Briggs came as professor of New Testament, H. H. Oliver as special instructor in New Testament, and John W. Eddins, Jr. as instructor in Theology. Student enrollment increased to seven hundred and seventeen; one hundred and thirty were graduated in the January and May commencement exercises. The library reported a total of 28,800 catalogued volumes.

In the spring the work was completed on the library building, and the library was moved into the new comfortable and attractive quarters. Later the remodeling of the chapel was finished, in time for the commencement exercises in May to be held there.

This year saw the completion of the School's application for accreditation by the American Association of Theological Schools. Following the visit of an inspecting team, this accreditation was granted in the meeting of the Association in June, 1958.

The increasing size and complexity of the Seminary's work demanded some further division of the labor which had fallen on the President, and the Board of Trustees established the office of Dean of the Faculty, to which post Professor Olin T. Binkley was named. Dean Binkley began his work in this office at the end of the spring semester.

The Seminary enjoyed lectures during this year by Kenneth Scott Latourette, Brooks Hays, G. Henton

Davies, and H. Richard Niebuhr. In March, 1958, Southeastern's first Student Missions Conference was held on the campus.

### **The School Year 1958-1959**

Up to the previous school year, the Seminary's building energies had been directed largely toward the renovation and remodeling of existing structures. Except for the new cafeteria and the new section of the library, no new buildings had been constructed. Now, beginning in the summer of 1958, it was possible to begin work on some new buildings. Following a general plan which called for fifty duplex apartment buildings for students, the first units were begun, and before the opening of the fall semester in 1959, twenty-five of these, providing for fifty student families, had been completed. Work was begun at the same time on the Ruby Reid Child Care Center, made possible by the bequest of Miss Reid and gifts from the Baptist Sunday School Board and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Student enrollment in the fall semester came to seven hundred and thirteen, and for the year the total was seven hundred and fifty-two students. The library now held 32,800 volumes, and reported a noticeable increase in the use of its facilities since moving into new surroundings.

The convocation lectures were delivered in September by Professor A. C. Reid of Wake Forest College. Norman H. Snaith also delivered lectures during the school year. John W. Eddins, Jr., was made assistant professor of Theology. In April, 1959, the Seminary was host to the American Society of Church History in its spring meeting.

The seminary suffered a grievous loss in the death of Professor Robert T. Daniel.

Significant in the school-community relationship was the gift of Groves Stadium, a part of the property purchased by the Seminary from Wake Forest College, to the Wake County Board of Education for the use of the Wake Forest High School.

### **The School Year 1959-1960**

At the beginning of the fall semester of 1959, J. B. Weatherspoon joined the faculty as visiting professor of Preaching, and Miss Emily K. Lansdell came as professor of Missions. George H. Shriver was instructor in Church History, and John Durham was instructor in Old Testament. The enrollment in the fall semester was seven hundred and thirty-four, with a total of seven hundred and seventy-nine for the winter session. J. D. Sistrunk became associate librarian, and the library holdings during the year increased to 38,000 volumes.

On October 1, a service of dedication was held for

the new pipe organ in the chapel, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Williams. Mr. Williams had served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Southeastern for several years.

Special lectures during the year included George A. Buttrick, James I. McCord, and Eduard Schweizer. In December, the Seminary was host to the annual meeting of the North Carolina Teachers of Religion.

### **The School Year 1960-1961**

Southeastern Seminary began her tenth year in September, 1960. Plans for this significant anniversary year included a number of lectures and addresses by distinguished visitors, a special effort to endow the library through a number of memorial shelves, and increased support for the student aid funds. Samuel H. Miller of Harvard Divinity School delivered the Convocation lectures in September, 1960. The seminary was offered the privilege of hearing the first series of lectures on the Carver-Barnes Memorial Foundation, named in honor of W. O. Carver and W. W. Barnes, to be delivered in April by Theron D. Price. Other speakers announced for the year included Clarence Cranford, Albert C. Outler, Baker James Cauthen, Courts Redford, Ernest Ligon, and Walter Pope Binns.

Seven hundred students enrolled in the seminary for the first semester, and new students in the second semester brought the winter session total to seven hundred and thirty-six. At the first of February, the library reported a total of 44,393 bound volumes catalogued, in addition to 1,139 catalogued pamphlets, and a considerable amount of microfilmed material along with films, recordings, and other audio-visual aids. Max Gray Rogers came to join the teaching force of the seminary as instructor in Old Testament.

The seminary added to its physical facilities with the purchase of Miss Jo Williams' Guest House on Durham Road, just across the street from the campus, to be used as a dormitory for women and a seminary guest house. Another significant event was the payment, on January 1, of the final installment of the \$1,600,000 pledged to Wake Forest College for the campus.

The events and stages of growth thus briefly described here portray in undramatic form what has been, for the participants, an exciting and dramatic experience. In the context of such circumstances Southeastern's students, administration and faculty have shared a significant first decade of the life of a theological seminary.

And life on the campus could not have been so rewarding, nor could so many have participated in it had it not been for the wise direction of our Board of Trustees, the increasingly active support of our alumni and the very generous gifts of a great many donors to our student aid and library funds especially.