

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BST Announces Presidential Transition

After Two Transformative Terms, President to Step Down

Berkeley, CA — Berkeley School of Theology (BST) today announced that its president will step down effective August 28, 2026, concluding two full terms of transformative leadership.

During the president's tenure, BST more than quadrupled enrollment and raised more funds than in the prior thirty years combined. The institution achieved re-accreditation at the full ten-year term, reformed its curriculum, overhauled its digital infrastructure, and launched its first-ever Spanish-language pathway from the BA-Equivalency through the D.Min. BST also inaugurated the Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Restorative Justice; launched the Arc Initiative for Asian American theological leadership; honored the Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. with an endowed chair in public theology; and implemented cultural intelligence training across the institution. Today, BST stands among the ten most interculturally diverse seminaries in the nation.

"Every leader has a kairos — a God-appointed time — and mine at BST has been fulfilled. It is time to pass the mantle, trusting that what comes next will be greater still. I leave with a full heart and an open hand, praying that BST's best and most fruitful days are yet to come."

— Rev. Dr. James E. Brenneman, President, Berkeley School of Theology

The president reflected on 155 years of institutional history marked by resilience: six rebirths, mergers, and renames; the long shadow of COVID-19; inflation exceeding thirty percent over the past decade; and the closure of seminaries across the country. BST has not been immune to these struggles and still faces a daunting future. Through it all, BST has endured, renewed itself and will persevere under new leadership.

The president cited Frederick Douglass's conviction that "if there is no struggle, there is no progress," and the biblical image of Jacob wrestling through the night, as enduring metaphors for BST's character: tenacious, willing to be wounded in the striving, and stubbornly expectant of blessing.

"For more than a century, BST has shaped leaders who have bettered the church and communities around the world. We are deeply grateful to our president for his leadership and deep commitment to this institution and to those it serves. His impact will endure as BST continues 'Creating Leaders for Communities of Christian Faith, Hope and Justice.'"

— Rev. Katie Choy-Wong, Chair, BST Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will soon appoint an interim leader. Further details regarding the transition timeline and search process will be shared with the community in the coming weeks.

About Berkeley School of Theology

Founded in 1871 by American Baptist Home Missions Societies, Berkeley School of Theology is an interdenominational graduate school of theology committed to forming leaders for the church and the world. Ranked among the ten most interculturally diverse seminaries in the nation, BST offers graduate theological education rooted in the conviction that *ImagoDEI* — the image of God reflected in every person — is not a box to check, but a reality to be deeply lived. It is a founding member school of the Graduate Theological Union.

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