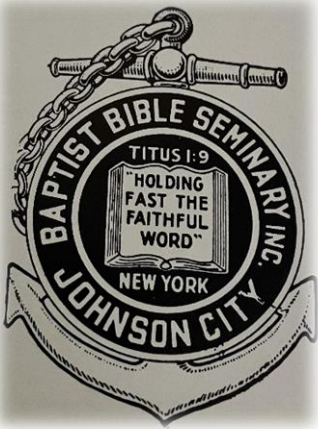


Drifting Past the Faithful Word



*The Demise of a Once
Great Ministry School*



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On July 1, 2024, after 92 years of preparing servant-leaders for Christ's church, Clarks Summit University (formerly known as Baptist Bible College & Seminary of Pennsylvania) [announced it is closing](#) [click on hyperlink to view report]. It will no longer be open to offer classes for the Fall, 2024 semester. This action followed an announcement from the school the previous month that it would "temporarily furlough" all faculty and staff, with the intent to end the furlough, return staff to their jobs and open the school in August. That did not happen. The reason given for the sudden closure of the school was "*recent financial challenges . . . with no viable solution to bridge a significant financial gap.*" This news came as a shock to many thousands of stakeholders: current faculty & staff; current students; future students and their parents, who were making preparations to enroll in the school for the Fall term; thousands of alumni faithfully serving the Lord across the country and around the world . . . For many of these stakeholders, this devastating news is a source of unbelievable heartbreak for a school that had a huge impact in our lives through dedicated faculty and administrators over the nine-decade season of its existence.

My initial response and concern was for those friends and colleagues who were immediately affected by this decision. Having worked as part of the administrative team at BBS for 20 years, I felt the pain of those friends that I worked shoulder-to-shoulder with in the great adventure of training students for ministry. I also grieved for the current students, and especially for the incoming freshman class for this Fall, who now must face the daunting process of trying to enroll in another college within a 6-week timeframe.

Personally, the closing of the school has been very difficult for me to process, as I am sure it has been for so many current students and alumni. I literally "sprouted" under the umbrella of BBC&S. I grew up in Binghamton, NY, and First Baptist Church of Johnson City, the home of BBS for 36 years, was my home church. I recall many BBS students paying attention to this little kid running around the church; I went to BBS basketball games in the old Johnson City High School gym, to see Wendell Kempton coach my favorite Defender players: Russ Howard, Mike Graham, Quint "Fig" Newton, Powers Peyton, Chris Patterson, Denny Hawley, and so many others. I watched with pride as my sister, a Defender cheerleader, encouraged the crowd to support our team. I remember as a child seeing Dr. Arthur Woolsey, President of BBS in the 60's, standing at the top of the stairs of the church entrance; I didn't exactly know who he was or what he did, but I knew he was someone important. Years later, I was able to reconnect with that humble, gracious man, as we served together at Spurgeon Baptist Bible College. When I graduated from high school in 1974, there was really no decision to make about where I would go to college; the choice had been sealed in my heart for a number of years: I was going to BBC. What an amazing and growing experience it was; I learned and was mentored by Godly people like Dr. Rembert Carter, Dr. Friedie Loescher, Mr. Jim Huckaby, "Coachie Mo" Ken Mosher, Dr. Don Ellsworth, Dr. Chuck Emert, and so many more. I loved dorm life in Ridley and Ketcham Hall; I was able to play soccer and baseball as a Defender; I participated in drama productions, served in student government roles, and loved being involved as a member of the *Chamber Singers*. I also had the privilege of travelling for 3 years to represent the school with [The Collegians Quartet](#) – 5 guys who remain to this day my best friends and ministry colleagues. And chapel: every time Dr. Ernest Pickering, our President, spoke in chapel, you knew that you would be fed the Word of God from this giant of a man and exceptional Bible expositor. After graduation, and serving in local church ministry, I returned as a student to Baptist Bible Seminary for more ministry training. Men like Dr. Howard Bixby, Dr. Bill Arp, Dr. John Lawlor, Dr. Richard Engle, and Dr. Bill Park continued to shape me and "stir up the gifts" for ministry in me. It didn't end there: I had the privilege of returning to campus in 1998, this time to join the BBS team as Assistant Seminary Dean and Registrar. What a joy it was to now work along side some of those same men who impacted me with their teaching ministry years before. I spent the next 20 years

serving in this school that I dearly love, relishing the joy God had given me to be part of a team that was training servant-leaders for Christ's church. I am sure that many of our alumni have similar stories of how God's grace allowed them the privilege of learning and being impacted by *The Ministry School*; which makes the closing of the school all the more difficult.

Although I grieve with my fellow alumni over the demise of the school, I also have *serious questions about how and why this happened*. No doubt, these are difficult days for Bible colleges and Christian universities. There are a number of *external factors* – situations that are beyond the control of a school -- that have contributed to the closing of a number of schools over the past decade. Some of these *external factors* include the sky-rocketing costs of higher education; decreases in enrollment due to a depleted student pool of high school graduates; the waning of interest in students to pursue full-time ministry, as well as the decline in churches to promote the idea of Bible college training to their teens; a lack of denominational or constituency based financial support; government & accreditation agendas and control; and of course, the continual effects of recovery from the recent Covid epidemic. All of these factors, in combination, bring difficult challenges for the survival of smaller Christian colleges and universities, most of which accept no federal funding; they rely on student tuition and fees, federal and state government student loan and grant programs, and some gifts and donations to fund their entire operation.

Having recognized these *external factors* as contributing to the closing of CSU, I am also aware that there are some serious *internal factors* that led to its untimely demise. *Internal factors* are those situations, in the life of a school, that *can be changed*; they must be recognized and acted upon. They are factors that can be improved upon in addressing the constant needs of leadership, administration, governance, mission, strategic planning, sustainability, and fundraising. If all Bible colleges and Christian universities face the same *external factors* that are beyond the school's control and threaten each school's survival, one must ask this important question, *Why do some schools survive and thrive, while others meet their demise and close?* That is a key question to examine in this story of the closing of CSU. It seems that CSU was wrestling with *3 crucial internal factors* over the past 8 years that eventually led to its demise:

1. ***Mission Drift.*** *The school had lost its purpose and changed its reason for existence.*
2. ***No comprehensive fundraising strategy.*** *Nothing was being done to ensure long-term viability.*
3. ***Incompetence in Leadership.*** *Poor decisions and lack of action in crucial areas for survival.*

My purpose in writing this article is two-fold: 1. I believe that all BBC&S / CSU stakeholders should have a complete picture of how and why the school closed -- to know the truth and the reasons that led to closure, and that it was not, as has been stated publicly, "a last-minute problem that caught us by surprise"; also, knowing the full picture should lead to some forms of accountability for those who were responsible for crucial mistakes that led to closure. 2. Publicly stating these reasons may help other Bible college presidents, administrators, and trustees to not repeat the same mistakes at their schools; as we see how CSU did not stay focused on original mission, transparent leadership, and sound fund-raising strategies, this may serve as a case study of what not to do. Though it is not my purpose to attack individuals and assign single-handed blame for the school's closing; I do believe that *these 3 factors played a major role in the administration failing to "right the ship" – they were not "minding the store" for a long period of time in these crucial areas*. It now seems impossible to revive our once great ministry school. This *did not need to happen*; furthermore, the administration was not forthcoming by sharing in a timely way the serious conditions that led to premature closure. When integrity and truth are not evidenced in sharing information, it results in a great disservice and

disrespect of stakeholders who were negatively impacted in a major way. It is quite clear that over the past 8 years, the school has steadily been on a slippery slope away from its original mission and instead has tried to embrace a *new identity as a Christian liberal arts university*; moving away from training full-time ministry leaders for the church, and replacing it with “career ready” small “m” graduates to serve in any field of their choosing. Instead of *Holding Fast the Faithful Word*, as was true of its first 8 decades of existence, the school has descended into the pattern of *Drifting Past the Faithful Word*; *it has departed from its identity as “The Ministry School”*. Before we look more closely at the **3 internal factors** that contributed to the school’s closing, a brief review of the history of BBC&S will set the context to remind us of the original purpose and mission of the school, which were, for all practical purposes, abandoned in the last few years.

HISTORY

Baptist Bible Seminary opened in 1932 with 35 students. The original founders of the school were Dr. Richard J. Murphy, Pastor of First Baptist Church, Johnson City, NY, and Dr. Arthur Wright, Pastor of First Christian Church, Binghamton, NY. Pastor Murphy served as the school’s first President, and Pastor Wright served as the Vice-President. The original 4 faculty members were Emery Bancroft (*Dean*), Elizabeth Fletcher, Mabel Thompson, and Hazel Vibbard. A historical event that coordinates with the founding of the school and would greatly impact its constituency and purpose was the founding of the *General Association of Regular Baptist Churches*, also in 1932. First Baptist Church was a key partner in forming the GARBC. BBS would establish a long-standing relationship with this group through its mutual doctrinal position, and would be one of the “approved schools” of the GARBC for almost 70 years. The benefits of strong support from GARBC churches, including financial support and student enrollment, was a key factor in the growth of the school.

The school used the facilities of First Baptist Church for 36 years, 1932-1968. Additional buildings in the surrounding area of downtown Johnson City were purchased for use by the Seminary: the Johnson home served as the administration building; Thomson Hall was a multipurpose building with a cafeteria and dorm space; Springstead Hall also served as a dormitory; and other homes / apartment buildings were added for additional dormitory space. Most classrooms, library, and some offices were located in the First Baptist Church. During the very first year of operation, the school adopted its motto, “ *Holding Fast the Faithful Word*” from Titus 1:9. It should be noted that from the very outset, ***the mission of the school was committed to be a place of ministry training for Baptist churches***; “ *The small beginning was the outgrowth of many months of prayer and planning by a group of concerned pastors and laymen who longed to see a school distinctly Baptist in character, committed to a doctrinal position both fundamental and pre-millennial; established and maintained on a plan that will command the respect of men and obtain the blessing of God*”. [Arthur Bowser, pg. 17] The school was often referred to in its publications as the “ ***Annapolis [Naval Academy] of Baptist Orthodoxy***”. This description was pictured in the school seal, which showed an open Bible quoting Titus 1:9 encased in an anchor; this typology was clear in identifying the Biblical and doctrinal commitment of the school to be unwavering; it was followed in later years as a tagline for the school, *Anchored in the Word*. Even the school newspaper would come to be known as *The Anchor*. This is crucial information as it relates to the initial mission of the school; that it would be ***Baptist in doctrine and church polity***, and would be a place of training ***full-time ministry leaders for Baptist churches: pastors, missionaries, Christian educators***. For most of its history, the school remained true to this mission, until the last 8 years when it began to broaden academic programs and shift its emphasis beyond the scope of full-time ministry leaders for churches.

During the Johnson City years, the school was led by the following men who served as President: Dr. Richard J. Murphy, 1932-33; Dr. Harold Commons, 1934-36; Dr. Earle Griffith, 1936-46; Dr. Paul Jackson, 1946-1960; Dr. G. Arthur Woolsey, 1960-1970. Because of multiple years of enrollment growth under the leadership of these men, the school began to outgrow its Johnson City facilities, and began to look for a new home. Under the direction of Dr. Woolsey and Director of Development Wendell Kempton, the school purchased and relocated to a beautiful campus in Clarks Summit, PA during the Summer of 1968.

BBS flourished in its new location. The beautiful campus, purchased from the Catholic Maryknoll fathers, was previously used as a school to train Catholic priests; now it would be the home for training ministry leaders for Baptist churches and mission works throughout the world. The new campus already had many functional buildings: Jackson Hall (*named in honor of the 4th President*) became the center of campus activity; it contained most of the classrooms, the Richard J. Murphy Memorial Library, administrative and faculty offices, a 4th floor room used for chapel, and a lower-level cafeteria. Buckingham Hall became the home for the music department, as well as additionally used for dormitory space and maintenance. The campus also included a large white house, an octagonal barn that was converted into space for student activities, and a large outdoor pool. As soon as the campus was purchased, construction began on 5 original dormitories to provide on-campus housing for men and women; in later years more dormitories would be constructed to meet the housing needs of a growing student body.

When Dr. Woolsey stepped away from his role as President in 1970, the school appointed Dr. Ernest Pickering as its 6th president. The Pickering years were a golden era of exponential growth in student enrollment, academic programs, and campus development. Because of requirements by the Pennsylvania Department of education, the name of the school was changed from *Baptist Bible Seminary* to *Baptist Bible College*. Dr. Pickering started the *School of Theology*, which would eventually become *Baptist Bible Seminary*. He also was instrumental in raising funds and constructing the much-needed *Student Center*, which opened in August, 1974. This multi-purpose building included a full-size gymnasium for the growing intercollegiate athletics program; a combination cafeteria-auditorium, named the “cafetorium” which was also used for daily chapel; 2 student lounges and a snack shop, plus athletic department offices. ***Dr. Pickering’s strong leadership continued to establish BBC, according to its original mission, as a solid ministry training school that could be trusted by its constituent churches.*** His preaching and leadership affirmed the school’s fidelity to its Baptist heritage as well as its unwavering positions on fundamentalism, premillennialism, and dispensationalism. He left BBC in 1978 to return to pastoral ministry.

In 1979, Dr. Mark Jackson, son of previous President, Dr. Paul Jackson, became the school’s 7th President. A graduate of BBS in the Johnson City era, Dr. Jackson had a long history of fruitful pastoral ministry, and served on the Board of Trustees for many years. He was well-loved by both the faculty and students. It was at the beginning of his tenure that the school suffered one of its first enrollment declines. A shift in demographics at the end of the “Baby Boomer” generation indicated there was a significant reduction in the available student pool for the 1979-80 school year; this trend continued for a few more years, and affected many small, private colleges across the spectrum of higher education. Through careful financial restructuring, including some staff and budget cuts, the school was able to weather the storm, remain strong, and ensure its future sustainability, ***while staying true to its original mission of preparing full-time ministry leaders for the church.***

In 1986, Dr. Milo Thompson became the school’s 8th President. He served for 14 years, one of the longest tenures as President, from 1986 to 2000. Prior to his appointment as President, he had a long-standing

relationship with the school, having served as a trustee for 12 years, including some time as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He also had a long history of fruitful pastoral ministry, and previously served as the *State Representative for the Empire State (NY) Fellowship of Regular Baptist Churches*. Dr. Thompson's administration was marked by another period of substantial growth and advancement for the school in the areas of academic programs, enrollment growth, building projects, and financial development. Under his leadership, along with newly appointed Vice President for Academics, Dr. Howard Bixby, the Seminary program was both revised and revived with a greater purpose. In addition to the existing Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degree programs, 3 new degree programs were added: Master of Ministry, Doctor of Ministry, and Doctor of Philosophy. Seminary enrollment soared to a high of 350 students during this period. To accommodate the need of this growing student body, the new *Stowell Seminary Building* was constructed and opened for classes in January, 1991. Combined enrollment of the college, graduate school, and seminary climbed to over 1,000 students. The future viability of the school was greatly enhanced by the founding of the *BBC Foundation*. The purpose of the foundation, led by Tom Trussler and Jim Showers, was to build a comprehensive fundraising / development arm for the school through donor contacts, trust funds, financial advising services, and making new friends for the school. The foundation was very successful in building a strong cliental for the school and broadening its stakeholder base. Dr. Thompson's era of strong leadership of the school, **resulting in many more faithful alumni entering the harvest field of full-time service, was captured in a tag line that fully supported the school's original mission: Preparing Passionate Leaders for Global Impact.**

Dr. Jim Jeffery served as the 9th President of BBC&S, from 2001 to 2014. He followed a similar track record of his predecessors, having served for many years in fruitful pastoral ministry. He also served as a trustee for a number of years, including some time as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Jim & his wife, Bert, were greatly loved by faculty, staff, and students. His winsome personality, warmth of character in caring for the needs of students and staff, and even his robust laughter endeared him to the BBC&S family. Jim was known not only as a strong leader, but was an exceptional expositor of the Word; his weekly chapel ministry made a huge impact on the college & seminary family. **He continued to be a strong proponent of the original mission of the school, by preparing students for full-time ministry: Excellence in Biblical Higher Education for Effectiveness in Global Christian Leadership.** He left BBC&S in 2014 to return to pastoral ministry.

In addition to this historical summary, Dr. David Turner, former Bible & Theology professor at BBC, cites a very helpful **brief timeline of significant events** in the history of the school in his blog article, [Clarks Summit University is Closing the Doors](#). [click on hyperlink to view article]

Why is it important to look at this historical review of the school? What context does it serve in relating to the present situation of the school's closure? Is it just for the purpose of taking a nostalgic trip down memory lane, causing us only to remember the good times and events related to our individual eras of involvement with the school? Do we look back only so that we can hold on to "good ol' BBC", without seeing the common threads that connect us to the present? As we have looked at this brief review from the school's beginning in 1932 until 2015, one constant stands out: **Each era had a strong leader, as President, who accepted his role as the primary gatekeeper of the original mission of BBC&S: preparing full-time ministry leaders for the church must never change.** But oh, the winds of change were coming soon to completely erode those foundations . . .

DRIFTING

In 2015, a new President along with a new front-line administration was installed. Those winds of change began to take an immediate effect on the school, as changes and decisions were being made to intentionally distance the school from its original mission of being a ***school to prepare full-time ministry leaders for the church***, and replace it with a new model of a Christian liberal arts school with a much broader curriculum and degrees that were outside the scope of the original mission. An interesting side note: this new President was the first in the history of the school who did not come from a background of serving in pastoral roles; although he was an alumnus of the college and the seminary, his service background was in higher education and missions, having previously served on the faculty of the college and in foreign missions. In contrast to his predecessors, he did not have a background in a pastoral overseer-administrator role, and did not possess the essential qualifications and experience that translate well into leading a Bible college & Seminary. Some really good faculty often excel and have gifts and strengths in their areas of teaching, but they do not necessarily have the qualifications and strengths that would equip them to be qualified administrators in a CEO role. They come ill prepared in the areas of institutional governance, finance, team building, and delegation. Perhaps in line with the original mission of a ***ministry school***, it would have been a wiser choice to select a new leader with a similar profile and competencies in pastoral leadership. The balance of a seasoned pastor that understands and values the calling and mentoring of full-time ministry leaders; one who possesses strong organizational and institutional leadership skills; and one who places a high priority on keeping that mission: this profile for the office of President has served the school well throughout its rich history. With these changes now in place, the table was set for a downward spiral toward ***mission drift; indeed, the school was about to embark on a path that would change its purpose and its reason for existence***. Here are examples that demonstrate this change:

Drifting . . . Governance changes in the Board of Trustees

The school, throughout its history, maintained a good balance of pastors and Christian laymen and women who were appointed to serve as trustees, the gatekeepers of the school's mission. An unwritten rule existed to maintain a 66% - 33% split on the board of pastors and qualified laymen. The underlying thought here is that pastors, many of them alumni, would serve in a way that would keep the school connected to its constituent churches, plus they would be qualified to safeguard the ministry preparation mission of the school; while qualified laymen and women would offer additional expertise in areas of human resources, finance, external factors, etc. that would also serve the school well. This balance began to erode immediately under the new administration. An intentional effort was made to recruit more educators and business leaders to serve as trustees, while reducing the number of pastors that would serve. This is not a criticism of newly appointed trustees; having personally worked with most of the current trustees, I concur that they are Godly and qualified men and women that love the school and have many times sacrificed their time and efforts to serve well. However, the intentionality of the administration to change the makeup of the trustees was to plant "fertile soil" to allow for subtle yet substantial changes to the mission of the school. The new administration even circumvented the authority of the trustees at times to enact these changes. A case in point: one of the first changes made was to move Baptist Bible Seminary from its stated mission to train ***qualified, ordainable men for pastoral and other leadership roles for the church***; the new administration would now change its mission by opening seminary enrollment to women. The issue here is not that women were excluded from graduate level training; actually, there were many graduate level programs available to both men and women through the *Graduate School*. But the real issue is that this substantive change in the mission of the seminary

did not follow the proper governance protocols for the trustees to approve it. The new makeup of the trustee board was no longer capable of standing against the decisions by the new President toward ***mission drift of the school***.

Drifting . . . The Name Change

Soon after the new President took office, he began the process of changing the name of the school. Later in 2015, the school officially changed its name to ***Summit University***. Due to shoddy research before the name was changed, it was soon discovered that Summit University was the name of a cult organization in Montana, and they owned a legal trademark on that name. They threatened to file a law suit against the school, citing trademark infringement law. At the recommendation of legal counsel, the school decided it was in the best interest of the school to avoid any legal entanglement, so in 2016, they changed the name of the school again to ***Clarks Summit University***. Changing the name of the school was a ***huge mistake for a number of reasons***:

1. It was the first step in opening the door toward ***mission drift*** of the school.
2. The name change was perceived by many stakeholders as an abandonment of its original and historical mission, which was grounded in Baptist doctrine and polity and existed for the purpose of training full-time ministry leaders for churches.
3. The name-change actually ***did*** negatively impact the school by a perceived “watering down” of the requirements to hire staff and faculty who were in full agreement with the school’s doctrinal statement. This erosion was especially evident in the areas of Baptist nomenclature, polity, distinctives and dispensational position. A “larger tent” was created that was more tolerant of accepting other doctrinal positions, i.e. “you really did not need to be a “Baptist” any longer to secure a teaching position at the school”. Conversations among staff, especially middle-management staff, quite often drifted to questions of why we must keep the Baptist identity in our name, or why do we all need to be dispensationalists, since the majority of the evangelical church has moved toward a Covenant-Reformed hermeneutic? Erosion of the commitment to the school’s historic doctrinal positions became rampant in this culture of mission drift.
4. The name-change also opened the door to further changes of expanding its academic majors and curriculum far outside the original parameters of a Bible college / Seminary ministry school model.
5. At a time in its history when the school had experienced serious decline in enrollment (less than 400 students in the college), the school embraced a “university” status that implied, contrary to the facts, that the school had grown and qualified itself with a new and larger identity.
6. A stated reason for the name-change has since been proven to be false: that graduates from the school who wanted to enter certain foreign countries on a missionary visa status were being “denied entry since their diploma contained religious titles, i.e. Baptist, Bible”

Concerning the above-mentioned reasons for the name change, a number of stakeholders have weighed in on this decision. One anonymous alumnus stated, *“it would be great if a like-minded person who loved the Lord and wanted to get back to the proper mission would buy the school and bring it back. I know I’m dreaming, but God can do anything . . . the _____ notion that I kept hearing about missionaries having issues with the name -- seriously. That was one of the _____ things that I ever heard . . .”*

Personally, I think many of us swallowed some “*bad Kool-Aid*” on the name change issue. I am now ashamed to admit that I was part of that poor decision. Working in my role as *Executive Director for the President’s*

Office, I was duped into embracing that same train of thought, that “*Baptist and Bible*” in our name was a deterrent to missionaries getting into some foreign countries. I have now found out that was ridiculously false. In this age of information, any country that wants to prevent a missionary from entrance / access would simply need to do a background check on individuals to identify their red-flag issues for visa applicants. I was trying to be a loyal foot soldier to the new president who was leading the charge on the name change issue, but it was really the beginning of a slippery slope away from our mission as a school and away from *Holding Fast the Faithful Word*. In many ways, the real BBC&S that we knew and loved ended with that name change.

Drifting . . . Changes in Philosophy on Student Development

Another major change that was instituted in 2015 involved the *Office for Student Development*. A complete overhaul was initiated in regards to the approach of how to mentor and develop our students. The basic premise for these changes came from faulty reasoning that our previous approach was far too legalistic and was overbalanced with rules. Hence, some major restructuring and redefining took place. One of the questions that was debated on the administrative level involved whether we as an academic institution should only be involved in imparting knowledge through curriculum, or should we have an additional responsibility of shaping the character of students. Back in the 70’s & 80’s, a sign was hung in the front of the cafeteria that all students and faculty could see as they came into chapel; the sign read, “*We [faculty] accept the responsibility of shaping character as well as imparting knowledge.*” What do you think? Should a Bible college, a Seminary, a *Ministry Training School* have any role in shaping the *character* of its students, especially since we now live in the context of a woke society that is reshaping character on a daily basis with its perverted philosophies and non-Biblical world view? Does being made in the image of God relate to shaping character? Our answer to these questions should be a resounding YES! I think the Bible calls this process *spiritual formation*. Paul’s words in Galatians 4: 18-19 come to mind: *It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!* I appreciate deeply the mentoring relationship that I received from Godly faculty at BBC&S, that wanted to shape my character as well as my mind. Many parents sense that this process is an important benefit for their son or daughter to be impacted in this way on a Bible college campus. For a ministry school that is training men and women for ministry, a passage like *1 Timothy 3* should inform us on the process of spiritual formation; it is basically a list of *Godly character traits* that qualify pastors and other leaders for church ministry. In spite of this, OSD basically did a “180-degree turn” on the process of *spiritual formation* in the lives of students. The new normal seemed to be “*we have too many rules that the students do not understand; we need to give them what they want*”. Really? Though we should be equally concerned with an overly legalistic, extra-Biblical approach to rules and regulations on a college campus, are there not certain safeguards and priorities that students should understand as part of the shaping process in their lives? Some examples of philosophical and methodological changes that were made in relation to student development that are indicative of a school that once prioritized *spiritual formation* but now ignored it: students were no longer required to attend church on Sunday; students were no longer expected to be involved in any Christian service assignments in local churches; curfew times that were in effect to protect students were now abolished; gospel teams, choir tours were done away with, etc. We are puzzled at these decisions in light of the new promo tagline that CSU adopted: *Christ Centered, Career Ready Graduates*. The question is, how can the school claim that a CSU graduate has developed into a *Christ Centered* servant if they know nothing about being involved in and serving in the church that Jesus loved and died for? A Christ-centered life is also a Church-centered life; that had always been an integral part of the missional commitment of BBC&S.

Drifting . . . Toward Woke Ideology, DEI, Gender Equality, Social-Justice

These world system philosophies identified in Romans 1 that replace a Biblical world-view, *Imago Dei*, and a complementarian view of gender are rampant in higher education today, even among so-called evangelical schools; in addition, there is a further erosion of gospel-centeredness in great commission ministry. Symptoms of all of these issues were also appearing at CSU. Consider the following:

1. The administration set as a priority agenda item to pursue racial and gender equality at all costs, feeling that the school was “not up to speed” in these areas. Drifting in the areas of qualifications for chapel speakers, hiring qualifications for new faculty and staff, etc. were greatly affected by this agenda.
2. This pursuit led to violations of school mission, values, and policies, especially in its admissions policies. The school had always maintained the policy requirement for student applicants to state and affirm their personal testimony of faith in Christ, yet exceptions were being made for admitting certain students that openly and honestly stated that *they were not Christians*, so that they could be recruited to participate in the school’s intercollegiate athletic program. This was a direct violation of school admissions policy.
3. Redefining the school’s position on complementarianism to embrace a more egalitarian position on the differing roles of men and women in ministry drove the administration in its decision to change the seminary to a co-educational program. It also led to purposeful decisions to place women in administrative leadership roles, regardless if there were more qualified men available for the same positions. In addition, this agenda led to both perceived and realized nepotism in hiring practices. To be clear; we certainly are not against appointing qualified women or men to administrative and faculty positions in a Bible college. Rather, we stand against an agenda that makes those choices based solely on the gender of the individual. Hiring practices should be based on experience and competency, not gender preference; the days of “Un-Equal Opportunity Employment” hiring practices should be long gone.
4. One of the defining marks of the school, it’s commitment to Global Missions, also took a major hit. Not only was the school totally bankrupt of missions majors and no longer turning out students into missionary service, the annual school missions conference took on a decidedly different tone. *The Global Ministry Forum* became a platform for social justice and international entrepreneurial programs, instead of a focus on church planting and evangelism. The original purpose of this conference was seriously undermined with speakers who should never have been invited to speak; to the disdain of many, one of these international speakers used guttural language and cursing numerous times in his presentations, which went completely unchecked by administration with no acknowledgement of mistakes made in bringing such speakers to the conference, nor an apology for their un-Christlike speech. These “missions” forums created such a negative impression with representatives from Baptist mission boards that attended annually, that they stopped sending their staff to CSU to recruit students for missions. More drifting . . .

Drifting . . . Abandoning the Relationship with Local Churches

Many of these changes were indicative of an even greater DNA problem at the school: ***it no longer valued the importance of local churches, who were the main constituency group of the school for years; and it no longer valued teaching students how to prioritize the ministry of a local church in their lives.*** The school gave up on

developing a continued relationship with local churches. They stopped student recruiting efforts in local churches; they no longer scheduled student recruitment opportunities with church youth groups, Christian schools, Christian camps, and state fellowship youth events. They even minimized the value of recruiting students at their own major summer youth event: *Teen Leadership Conference*. Those that led TLC instead believed that it was an entity unto itself; that recruiting students for the college at this event was counterproductive to the TLC program. When churches tried to reach out to CSU for placement help when they were looking for a new pastor, youth pastor or other staff, they were often turned away with the answer, *We really do not have any one to recommend to you*. This was not a total surprise, since the pastoral ministry major at the college had dwindled significantly; they no longer had an active pool of pastoral program graduates to recommend to churches. A ministry school that once was a key partner in providing well trained pastoral staff graduates for church ministry had now become non-existent. What happened to this priority relationship that the school had with local churches? Why did it stop caring about churches, and why did it no longer train students to serve in churches?

Drifting . . . Expanding Academic Programs Beyond the Scope of a Bible College Curriculum

From the very beginning of the school, and through much of its history as *The Ministry School*, BBC&S was well-known for its reputation of turning out quality, well-prepared full-time ministry graduates. The original mission of the school translated into an abundance of qualified alumni, ready to enter the harvest field. Traditionally, the school was turning out graduates with majors in pastoral studies, youth ministry, Christian education (both local church and Christian school), missions, and church musicians. The definition of a Bible college is established in its curriculum and its major degree programs; this is affirmed by standards set by the [Association for Biblical Higher Education](#), [click on hyperlink to view website] the professional accrediting agency for Bible colleges like BBC. A minimum number of credits in Bible and theology must be achieved in each academic program that is offered. A Bible college is also known for its major purpose in preparing students for ministry. In light of this clear definition of what a Bible college is, and what BBC&S had always intended to be, the question must be asked, “*Why did this new administration choose to abandon its historic mission, and turn instead to developing a Christian liberal arts curriculum?*” Perhaps due to the pressures of declining student enrollment, the leadership was determined to expand its degree majors and program offerings well beyond the original mission of a Bible college in order to increase enrollment. But there is intrinsic faulty reasoning in this approach. ***Best practices in higher education agree that expanding academic offerings during a time of declining enrollment and financial stress is actually counterproductive.*** A school cannot reap the enrollment and financial gains of adding new programs for new students fast enough, while they actually create more stress to the budget by hiring new faculty to teach in those new programs. Expanding the academic programs at CSU became a black hole and a death knell. In addition, stakeholders were confused as to why the school, with its excellent track record of turning out full-time ministry graduates, was now trying to change its mission and attempt to compete with already well-established, larger Christian liberal arts colleges. One of the strengths of BBC over the years has been the quality of its full-time Bible faculty. For the past 8 years, this once premier Bible faculty was reduced to ***1 full-time faculty member***; how is that even possible for a Bible college? During the same period, new academic majors were added; a new business program was developed, and even an attempt was made to start a new criminal justice program. At the same time that the college could not afford or chose not to hire additional Bible faculty, they instead hired 3 new full-time business program faculty. What is the rationale to add those new liberal arts programs at the expense of abandoning your core Bible and ministry programs? Those new programs belong in a Christian liberal arts college, not a

Bible college, but that is exactly what the new administration was trying to create. It seems quite deceptive for the administration to continue to promote CSU as a Bible college – “*nothing has changed – we are still true to our original mission*”, while pursuing this new agenda toward an expanded liberal arts curriculum. CSU was no longer the same BBC&S; that is not a statement of nostalgia; it is a description of what the school had actually become due to this substantial mission drift.

Paul Golden, a very good friend of mine, is a graduate of both the college and seminary. We worked closely together as colleagues on the BBS administration team for 20 years; when I left the school, he continued to serve there for 6 more years. He has been a loyal and very effective employee during his entire career at the school, serving primarily in the areas of seminary recruitment, as well as alumni and church relations for CSU. In Paul’s very informed [Facebook post on the closing of CSU](#), he wrote this accurate assessment: “*We drifted to some degree from the school’s original mission of preparing men and women for full-time ministry (large M) positions; philosophical and pragmatic reasons (the need for more students) slowly led to missional changes. There was some fuzziness among constituents as to whether CSU was Bible college, Christian liberal arts school or a hybrid of both. This perhaps contributed to a sort of identity problem for CSU, i.e. who we are and where are we going?*” [click on hyperlink above to view post]

These decisions and directions from leadership clearly set the school on a downward spiral of **mission drift**.

Drifting . . . Toward Financial Insolvency

It is no secret that the school has been in financial trouble for quite some time. With declining enrollment, shrinking tuition / student fee income, and the additional financial stress of adding new programs and staff, the operating budget for the school was moving toward a fatal blow. This problem worsened continually during the past 8 years under the current administration. Further exacerbating the problem was the President’s refusal and/or incompetency to build a comprehensive fundraising strategy for the school. A school cannot survive if it becomes totally dependent on student tuition and fees; it must find ways to develop an income funnel through gifts and fundraising. [Dr. David Turner cites factual evidence](#) of the school’s dangerous condition: “*According to the tax docs . . . contributions amounted to only 12.8% of CSU’s 2023 income. Investments (apparently from endowments) brought in a minuscule 1.2%. **A whopping 84.7% of the budget came from services provided to the students—tuition, room, and board.***” [click on hyperlink to view report] This seriously low percentage of contributions vs. student tuition and fees is unsustainable for a school to survive. Consider the plight of how much debt the school was increasingly multiplying during the early years of this administration, and the “last minute efforts” to stave off financial ruin:

- May, 2015: The school is in danger of finishing its fiscal year with a \$1 million deficit. Solution: the President and a trustee meet with a long-time friend and donor of the school, who had planned to give \$1 million to the school in his will; they ask if he could possibly gift that money now to the school. He agrees, but tells them that no more money will be left for the school when he dies.
- May, 2016: Once again, the school is in danger of finishing its fiscal year with a \$1 million deficit. Solution: At the advice of a trustee and a “consultant” who was on loan to the school as a financial advisor, they convince the trustees to sell the seminary building for over \$1 million dollars, thus staving off another emergency solvency situation. The seminary building, completed and occupied in 1991, only lasts 25 years before it is sold.

- May, 2017: Once again, the school is in danger of finishing its fiscal year with a dangerous deficit. Solution: Major staff cuts. 50% of the seminary faculty is cut, along with other staff members; 2 vice presidents are let go.

This pattern of not meeting annual budgeted income needs continued in the years following. More staff cuts would follow, budget cutting, even temporary employee furloughs during the December break are initiated to try to stop the bleeding. In order for a school to thrive, it is essential to have a President (and supportive trustees) who has the ability to clearly communicate the mission of the school to its stakeholders, and translate that mission/vision into a comprehensive development plan that leads to long-term financial stability. In other words, whether we like it or not, a president must be the point-man in leading a comprehensive fundraising plan. Schools benefit from this type of financial leadership. The present administration at CSU did not have that. The Vice President for Development position, plus the entire development department, including the successful *BBC Foundation*, was scrapped and no comprehensive plan was in place. The President refused and/or was ill-equipped to do fundraising himself. This scenario raises a number of questions: *If there was no comprehensive fund-raising plan, where did the administration think that the additional funds needed to operate would come from? How long would this inertia exist, refusing to do anything about the problem? If the President did not feel equipped or qualified to do fund-raising for the school [this should have been a requirement by the trustees when he was hired], why did he not hire someone with experience in this area to assist him?* Schools in financial distress often use the excuse that they cannot afford to hire a development director / fund-raiser, but in reality, the opposite is true: schools in this situation **cannot afford to NOT hire such a person** [double-negative intended]. The “head-in-the-sand” approach to solving financial problems, pretending that they do not exist, is not acceptable; it constitutes a serious leadership failure. Were there any efforts between administration and trustees to address this serious lack of fund-raising? Any new ideas? Any benchmarking strategies with other schools? Any attempts to engage the services of financial consultants? We find it troubling that in the same month that CSU announces its closing, another college in close geographic proximity shared some very different news: the University of Valley Forge, a Bible college connected with the *Assemblies of God denomination*, shared that their [President just raised \\$365,000 at their annual President’s Banquet](#). [click on hyperlink to view report] This school is about the same size and type of school as CSU, yet they are pursuing ways to ensure the future sustainability of the school. Could ideas like this have helped CSU? At this point, we will never know. Last minute video pleas on Facebook to alumni is not the answer; that does not constitute a well-planned and comprehensive fund-raising plan. Although we commend many loyal alumni who responded with concern, prayer, and gifts, the total amount needed to save the school was not possible in the time allotted for this short-sighted approach. It was too little, too late; the administration tried to solve a serious deficit by putting a band-aid on a broken leg. A comprehensive fund-raising program is urgently needed at smaller schools like CSU who do not receive government assistance and are not heavily endowed. Schools need to have contingency funding plans in place to weather the storms of financial crises. If the school was training graduates for ministry, and part of that training involves teaching the need to understand and practice Biblical stewardship principles in life and ministry, why was the school’s administration not doing this? The example of Joseph comes to mind; he saved an entire nation and his own family by practicing wise financial stewardship for the lean years of famine, and the example of industry in ant colonies also rings true: *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? . . . Poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 6:7-11*. Biblical stewardship principles work for those that practice them, even Christian colleges.

THE FINAL CURTAIN

July 1, 2024. That date will be remembered by all of us who have been impacted by the school over the years, including alumni, former staff, and faculty. We are grieving at the demise of this once great ministry school. ***It did not need to happen this way.*** Contrary to statements that have been made, the decision to close the school did not just happen “out of the blue”, nor was it a totally unexpected surprise to the administration: they *knew it was coming*. This fact is perhaps the most unsettling of all that is known about the closure, that if they knew what was coming, why did they wait so long to inform their stakeholders of impending peril? Faculty and staff, students and parents, alumni and donors were all ill-served by the inaction of the administration to go public with the school’s financial and accreditation issues in a timely manner. Integrity and testimony were sacrificed on an altar of unethical and deceptive behavior. This important question should be raised: *What did the administration know about the crucial accreditation and financial issues that the school was facing, and when did they know it?* To answer this question, a timetable of events from this past year sheds light on the process of their demise.

- November 20, 2023:** a letter was sent to CSU from the *Middle States Commission on Higher Education*, informing the school that they are being placed on “***probation, and that the institution’s accreditation is in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard V [Educational Effectiveness] and Standard VI [Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement].***” [PDF of letter available upon request] Translation: the school is in serious jeopardy of losing its accreditation, due to non-compliance on the issues of serious financial issues that are causing educational programming to suffer. In addition, MSA requires CSU to submit a monitoring report by August 1, 2024, to show that the school has successfully remedied these deficiencies to sustain ongoing compliance. This was never going to happen. The administration knew that they did not have the means to solve the non-compliance issues by August 1, and was in danger of losing its accreditation. This in turn would cause the school to lose its approval to participate in federal and state student loan and grant programs. If students cannot get loans, they cannot fund their education, and they will not enroll in a school that is unaccredited and does not qualify for student loans. No money + no accreditation + no student loans = school closure is imminent. Having received this warning notice from MSA, the CSU administration goes silent; no information on this action is sent to any stakeholders, other than the requirement from MSA to list their accreditation probation status on their website.
- June 5, 2024.** About 3 weeks after graduation, the President sends out an email to all alumni, informing them of a “*significant financial gap*” due to not meeting fiscal year-end fundraising needs. Translation: once again the school faces a serious deficit of over \$1 million at the end of its fiscal year. As a result, the school announces that it is “*following legal advice*” and is working with a “*trusted partner*” to help solve this issue. Unsuccessful attempts will be made in the following weeks to secure loans and other types of funding to resolve the deficit. Immediate action was taken to “***mandate a [temporary] furlough of all CSU employees***”, with the “*intention*” of solving the financial crisis, returning employees to their jobs, and “*welcoming residential student on campus in August.*” Local newspapers and media outlets publish stories on this action. Of course, the financial situation was not resolved, employees were not returned, and the school would not open as planned. Having served as an administrator at the school for 20 years, and out of concern for the seriousness of the situation, I emailed a letter to the Officers of the CSU Board of Trustees,

requesting information and answers regarding the situation. I received a reply and phone call from one of the trustees, confirming that the questions/issues that I raised in my letter were indeed serious concerns.

- **June 26, 2024.** An update from MSA is sent to CSU, notifying the school that the August 1 deadline is now changed to the more serious requirement of **show cause**; in other words, the school must now demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn because of the previously stated non-compliance issues. Although this notification comes only 5 days prior to the announcement that the school is closing, it only confirmed what the school already knew: that they could not meet these requirements and that their accreditation would be withdrawn. A more comprehensive report which outlines CSU's history of accreditation status, issues, and challenges is available for public view at this link to the MSA website: <https://www.msche.org>
- **July 1, 2024:** not even one month after the "temporary action to furlough employees" occurred, a **Critical Announcement from CSU** was emailed to all alumni and other stakeholders that "*the Board of Trustees made the difficult and painful decision to begin the process of closure.*" The school would no longer offer classes for the Fall term. This announcement was posted on the school's website, www.clarkssummitu.edu, and the updated story is again covered by all of the local news media outlets.
- **July 1, 2024:** in an [article published by Sarah Hofius Hall, WVIA News](#), entitled **Updated: Grief, Gratitude at Clarks Summit University as School Announces Closure**, she quotes a response from the President that relates to the closure: "*This was not what I expected at the beginning of this year, in the middle of this year, or even toward the end of it, but it just came around suddenly . . .*" Seriously? The President did not see this coming in November? He did not track the progress of the *fiscal year-end fundraising needs* to know that the school was coming up short? This all came as a surprise to him? Who was minding the store on this? The President? The Trustees? Anyone?

This timeline of events shows clear evidence that the administration surely should have known as early as November, 2023 about the serious nature of their accreditation probation issues, and the related financial insolvency problems that could not be resolved by the end of the year. The current administration was too late in owning up to these problems, and it drove the accreditation probation status to a point of no return. If they knew this in November, they should have taken steps then to immediately notify their stakeholders that this would be the last year of operation for the school. Instead, they waited to the last hour, and left staff, students, and parents in the lurch, trying to figure out how to acquire new jobs and a new school to attend with only six weeks until the fall semester. This is a clear example of failed leadership, and a serious blow to those who were heavily invested in the school. As stakeholders, we should be very disappointed in the way that all of this was handled. It was an inexcusable approach to the situation that has brought shame to the testimony and reputation of the school with its constituents and in the public arena. In response to this mishandling, Jeff Spear, Principal at CFO Colleague, writes, "*It is no real surprise but Clarks Summit University has decided to close. Their preview of this occurred last month when they furloughed all of their employees. Unfortunately, the President adamantly declared that they would be open in the Fall, even though their regional accreditor was openly skeptical of their ability to continue . . . the school knew of their imperiled financial status well over a year ago. Instead, they wind up closing when Fall students were due to arrive next month. The President's declaration may be construed as being unethical, but in reality, it is downright*

deceptive. Students, faculty, staff and alumni have been treated with profound disrespect.” The evidence in support of the school knowing about its dire financial situation last year is available in Jeff’s 6-page *Analysis of Audited Performance Report – CSU*. <https://cfocolleague.com/our-team/> [click on hyperlink to access report] It is disheartening to observe that the administration seems to have shown no remorse, taken no responsibility and no accountability toward stakeholders for their inaction and poor leadership in this process, and that their handling of the situation has brought great hardships on faculty, staff, students, and parents, as well as alumni. Will there be any admission of mistakes and apologies on the horizon that will be made to these stakeholders?

CONCLUSIONS & TAKEAWAYS

This has been a heart-wrenching ending to a very beloved school for so many of us. As previously cited, and to be fair, there were some external factors that contributed to the closing of CSU, but our responsibility as stakeholders is to also recognize the number of crucial internal factors of administrative weakness and failed leadership that led to its untimely closing. The common notion, *“Everything rises and falls on leadership,”* comes to mind. This returns us to the question that was originally raised: ***Why do some schools survive and thrive, while others meet their demise and close?*** It is clear that these **3 internal factors** over the past 8 years played a primary part in the school’s closing.

- 1. Mission Drift.** *The school had lost its purpose and changed its reason for existence.*
- 2. No comprehensive fundraising strategy.** *Nothing was being done to ensure long-term viability.*
- 3. Incompetence in Leadership.** *Poor decisions and lack of action in crucial areas for survival.*

It is probably too late to rescue the school from closing; if only there were a path to identify a new ownership group that was in line with the original mission and had the financial backing to buy back the school and set it right. In light of this, we cannot help but ask, *What could have been? What fruitful future would our school have known if it had stayed true to its original mission, and had been guided by competent leaders that believed in and affirmed that mission?* As previously stated, one of our purposes for this article is the hope that publicly stating these reasons for failure may help other Bible college presidents, administrators, and trustees to not repeat the same mistakes at their schools; as we now see how CSU did not stay focused on original mission, transparent leadership, and sound fund-raising strategies, ***this may serve as a case study for other Bible colleges of what not to do.***

There are still a few good Bible colleges out there that are making a difference . . . but only a few, and their number has dwindled over the past 10 years. However, there is one comparison that comes to mind of a sister school, about the same size as CSU, and historically part of the same GARBC constituency group, that seems to have found success in moving forward toward a future of thriving and sustainability. It is both interesting and informative to look at the 2 divergent paths that both CSU and *Faith Baptist Bible College, Ankeny, Iowa*, have taken over the past 10 years:

<i>A Comparison: What Could Have Been?</i>	Clarks Summit University <i>Stats prior to closure</i>	Faith Baptist Bible College <i>Current stats from website</i>
New President was appointed	2015	2015
Current student enrollment	Approx. 330	Approx. 500 for Fall, 2024
Curriculum & majors	Changed from ministry majors to broadened liberal arts majors	Majors in Bible, pastoral ministry, missions, Christian Ed, music, etc.
Financial & accreditation status	\$7 million debt; selling campus & liquidating assets. Accreditation probation.	Financially solvent. Accredited.
Continuity of Original Mission	No longer the <i>Ministry School</i> ; abandoned full-time ministry model to pursue liberal arts degree programs	Has stayed true to its original mission as a Bible college to train full-time ministry leaders
Local church constituency/relationship	Fragmented. Lost connection & viability to serve churches in the Northeast	Strong association with IARBC and other Midwest churches
Future Vision	Non-existent. The school has closed.	Thriving toward sustainability

Through this period of dealing with the school's closing, many alumni have reached out to share their concerns and questions. Can anything be done? Some have succumbed to resignation; *what's done is done, the school is closing*. Others have encouraged me to just let it go; but what does that do to the thousands of alumni, donors, and other stakeholders who have truly sacrificed much over the 92 years to keep the school going, and they now feel disenfranchised, ignored, and discouraged by the lack of transparency that is coming from the administration regarding the closure? I found no joy in writing this article, and even cried numerous times as I wrote. Some have told me that the closing is part of the plan of our Sovereign God. I have no doubt that God is indeed sovereign, and works *all things together for good for those who are called according to His purpose*. However, my understanding of the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God is that it works in concert with our human responsibilities, in that God expects us to respond to Him in obedience as good stewards of the gifts that He has given us, and He holds us accountable when we fail Him in those responsibilities. When we do fail Him, it is not a legitimate excuse to say, *well, that was part of God's sovereign plan*. The sovereign will of God was revealed to the unjust steward, to whom He said, *"take the one talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents."* I am also reminded of what the Lord said in His final warnings to churches in Asia Minor: *"... do the works that you did at first; if not, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place [Ephesus] . . . you have a name [reputation] of being alive, but you are dead; wake up and strengthen what remains [Sardis]"*. I do know the difference between the academy and the church, and I do know that CSU was not a church; yet I also know that the original mission of BBC&S was to be a *partner agency with local churches to train men and women in building Christ's church through Great Commission ministry*. So, if there is an application here of the sovereign will and plan of God, is it perhaps that God chose to remove the lampstand from a school that was once alive and had a great reputation for producing servant-leaders for the church, but has now lost its way and is no longer of value in the harvest field? The *"city on a hill"* has now gone dark . . .

So, nothing can be done to resurrect the school; yet some have asked, if the President (and the Trustees, to whatever extent they were informed and involved in the school's closing) failed in their leadership of the school, either by negligence, poor judgement, or not being forthcoming with truthful information, are there any steps of responsibility and accountability that should be taken? It will not change the outcome, but I certainly would suggest the following steps:

1. The President should admit that he knew from the November 20th letter from Middle States that the school was in serious trouble; they were placed on accreditation probation, and would be required by August 1 to show cause to Middle States as to why they should not have their accreditation removed. That letter, along with the school's total inability to solve its current and future financial solvency crisis, should have triggered action to begin closure, and it should have been publicly announced to all stakeholders no later than January 15, the beginning of the spring term. This proactive approach would have shown greater respect to faculty, staff, current students, and future students by giving them an 8-month window to find new employment or a new school to attend.
2. The President should be transparent, with details, about the full extent of the financial crisis, by disclosing the total amount of the \$1.5 million financial shortfall for the fiscal year, as well as an additional \$7 million long-term indebtedness. With this huge amount of indebtedness, why did the administration continue to ask its constituents for donations during May and June knowing that it would be impossible to raise that amount in such a short time? What has happened to those good-faith donations? Why did the school continue to recruit students for the Fall 2024 term, and continue to collect deposits from future students during this time?
3. The President, and the Trustees, should publicly release a well-crafted statement of apology to all stakeholders, admitting the mistakes that were made, and accepting culpability for financial insolvency and lack of transparency.
4. The President and Trustees, should promise, upon sale of the property and liquidation of the school's assets, to reimburse all faculty and staff for wages and benefits that were withheld during the "temporary" furlough period of June 1 to August 15. They should also promise to settle all current student accounts as soon as possible to reimburse students for any deposits, fees, or tuition payments that were received toward the Fall 2024.

As stated, these steps of accountability will not change the outcome, but they may be received by stakeholders as good-faith actions to restore a bit of trust and partially remedy the adverse circumstances placed on faculty, staff, and students.

No doubt, BBC&S greatly enriched my life, both as a student in the college and the seminary, and as part of the administrative team at the seminary and in the office of the President for those 20 years. I grew up in the church in Johnson City, New York, where the school was founded in 1932. This legacy for me, my family, and thousands of alumni serving Christ around the world will remain. I am saddened, however, that the closing of our school translates into so many lost opportunities to put servants in the harvest field to continue to build Christ's church until He comes again. Arthur Bowser's concluding thoughts in his 50-year history of the school, *Holding Fast the Faithful Word* (1982) seem quite fitting: "As we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, we do so with thanksgiving of the founding of Baptist Bible College, for the great things which God has wrought in our midst. Expectantly and prayerfully, we look to the future . . . Sad to say, the light has dimmed and gone out, and that future will not be realized as we had hoped for. We have witnessed the unthinkable in our time, the *Drifting Past the Faithful Word that led to the Demise of a Once Great Ministry School*. For alumni that desire to remain faithful, and seek to "occupy until He comes", I leave you with the encouraging words of our school hymn:

*Faithful He who promised life, True is the Word He gave.
Faithful is His blessed Son, Believing souls to save.*

*Jesus Christ the living Word, Comforter, Guide and Stay,
Bids us point lost souls to Him, The Life, the Truth, the Way.*

*He our Master lives on high; Soon He will come again;
Then we'll go to be with Him, And with Him we shall reign.*

***Holding fast the faithful Word; Holding fast the faithful Word;
Until He comes again, we'll follow in His train. Holding fast the faithful Word.***

Dr. Lee Kliewer is a graduate of Baptist Bible College (Bachelor of Sacred Music, 1979) and Baptist Bible Seminary (Master of Ministry, 1992). He is also a graduate of Nova Southeastern University (Doctor of Education in Higher Ed Administration). After serving in pastoral ministry for 20 years, he returned to BBC&S to serve in various roles on the administration of Baptist Bible Seminary for 18 years, as Seminary Registrar, Assistant Dean, and Seminary Dean. He also served for 2 years as the Executive Director for the Office of the President at BBC&S / CSU. He returned to full-time pastoral ministry in 2018, and also serves as the Dean of the Northeast School of Theology & Ministry.

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