

**RETIREMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF
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With both anticipation and sadness, I announce my intention to retire from my ministry as BSK Professor at the close of the spring semester. After having “failed” two previous retirements, I am cautious but really, really intend this as my final retirement.

I express deep gratitude to Dr. Wade Rowatt for inviting me to consider this ministry, to President Cassady and former Dean Jackson for calling me, and to the faculty and staff for their welcoming, indeed immersing, me into the mission of this theological school.

What is the primary memory I will take with me as I leave? Transition and change! I joined the BSK faculty in January 2020. Our transformational journey of the past four years has been challenging, to say the least. As I teach about transitional experiences, they are always for better or for worse. Ours have made us better. And my 4½ years with BSK have been transformational for me, which was wonderful given that I was even then at a life stage where transitional experiences are not always welcome.

We have been transformed by a new curriculum. In January 2020 the faculty had recently redesigned BSK degree requirements from 90 semester hours to 75 semester hours. That transition required that we redesign the Pastoral Care and Counseling curriculum and course offerings. Soon an unasked-for world catastrophe shook our communities and then BSK! By April we were no longer meeting in person but were totally committed to distance learning methods. A transformation that we may never have voluntarily accomplished.

While managing our corner of the COVID pandemic, we engaged a new partnership with the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., as well as new Cooperative Baptist Fellowship partners. Our previous intentions to inclusivity were tested in ways that required changes in course foci and emphases. And we received a blessed influx of students both from NBCA and other communities. We doubled our enrollment within just 2 years. BSK is a very different educational community than the one I joined in 2020. Another transformation for which I thank our God!

And I am a very different professor than I was in January 2020. I had taught courses from time to time in 5 theological seminaries. I was accustomed to changing my courses and style to fit the needs of the students I served. I had expected a shorter, more transitional tenure in 2020. I am grateful that the dynamics have allowed me to see students graduate who took Introductory courses with me. I am grateful to have learned with students now serving in

congregational and public ministries. I am grateful for colleagues who received me openly and freely tapped into my 40+ years of experience while kindly correcting what just did not fit today. I too experienced transformation.

BSK is still changing as a school and creating transformational experiences for our students. I recall the love expressed by a beloved aunt as I departed for my own seminary education in 1974 - "Steve, you go up there and learn a lot but don't let them change you." I am so grateful to BSK for the opportunity to continue ignoring my aunt's advice, even at the end of my employed ministry. Transition and transformation – clearly at the core of both life and Christian experiences.

Thomas Merton frequently provides deep wisdom for my journey. In this moment I offer his wisdom for us all. "You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope." May our transforming God be with us through all our transformations.