
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Rash of faculty departures
speeds shift at Southeastern

By Greg Warner

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- A rash of faculty resignations and retirements at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has spared the school's trustees their hardest task -- making room for inerrantist teachers who will transform the school into a bastion of conservative theology.

After opposing the conservative trend for four years, Southeastern's faculty has, by most accounts, given up the fight.

Trustees and administrators say faculty departures recently announced or pending will create enough vacancies for them to accomplish the desired theological transformation as early as two years from now.

At the start of the last school year, Southeastern's faculty numbered 27. By the end of the upcoming school year, at least 10 professors, and maybe as many as 17, will have left the classroom.

Some are due for retirement and others will retire early. Some will leave for other positions, but a few are resigning with nowhere to go.

Though a variety of reasons are given, most observers blame the departures on what one former faculty member calls the "emotional erosion" of four years of turmoil.

"Obviously, the faculty has pretty much given up," said trustee Robert Crowley of Rockville, Md. "The question now is not who's leaving but who's staying."

Ethics professor Furman Hewitt agrees the faculty has given in to the fundamental-conservative juggernaut. "It's like the curtain is coming down on the last act and everybody is taking their final bows," he said.

Hewitt, who is leaving, said he and other professors "stuck it out four years" even though they viewed the result as inevitable. "We had hoped we could come to some reasonable agreement with trustees and administrators to maintain a quality institution," he said.

The 54-year-old Hewitt recently announced he will take early retirement next spring, but as yet he does not have a job to go to. "Like many of my colleagues, I had planned to spend the rest of my career here," he said. "It's a sad time for all of us."

Among those not saddened by news of the faculty departures are fundamental-conservative trustees, who since 1987 have had a majority of votes on the trustee board and a commitment to put inerrantists in the place of faculty members they consider liberal.

Their agenda for theological reform has met stiff resistance in recent years from both the faculty and the school's accrediting agencies. Many observers had predicted a prolonged confrontation, perhaps resulting in faculty firings.

"We were probably headed for confrontation," said Russ Bush, who was brought on by Drummond to be dean of the faculty. Bush said he feared the conflict between trustees and faculty eventually would come to "naming names," adding, "I was hoping to avoid that."

Now, however, trustees and administrators appear to have relatively

clear sailing for their agenda of reform.

"We are well on our way to doing what our goal has been from day one -- establishing the greatest conservative seminary in the world," Crowley said.

Some trustees who had braced for a fight with faculty are calling the sudden turn of events "a miracle" from God, according to one trustee source.

Not only will the faculty departures speed the addition of inerrantist professors, they also will help Southeastern stem the growing financial crisis at the seminary, which threatens to reduce the school's \$6 million budget by more than \$1 million.

In a meeting with a group of trustees July 2 -- part of which was held behind closed doors -- administrators raised the specter that "human lives would be affected" by the next round of budget cuts. With reductions already made in most areas except faculty, some observers have feared trustees would use the financial crisis as an excuse to dismiss professors trustees consider liberal.

Fueling those fears is the fact Southeastern has almost as many professors now as it did before controversy engulfed the school in 1987, yet four years of turmoil has cut student enrollment almost in half. With classroom instruction accounting for almost a third of Southeastern's budget, and teacher tenure offering no protection during times of financial crisis, faculty members have viewed their job security with growing dread.

Already gone from last year's faculty are church-history professor Thomas Halbrooks and pastoral-care professor Richard Hester, who each took new positions. Both were considered outspoken leaders among the faculty.

At least three professors are expected to leave after the fall term, some for other positions: Samuel Ballentine, Old Testament; William Clemmons, Christian education; and Glenn Miller, church history. Another four will follow in the spring: Michael Hawn, church music; Eugene McLeod, librarian; Richard Spencer, New Testament; and Furman Hewitt, Christian ethics, who will take early retirement.

Ethics professor Thomas Bland is scheduled to retire at the end of 1992. Theology professor John Eddins recently announced plans to retire in 1993.

As many as four others reportedly are negotiating retirement or departure arrangements with administrators. Plans for another four or five are unknown.

That leaves eight to 10 faculty members -- including Drummond and the three professors he has recruited -- who are expected to stay after the transition is complete.

Because of the faculty departures, Bush said, "the shift will come in a less confrontational way."

It is unclear what effect, if any, the faculty departures will have on the school's effort to retain its accreditation, however. Because of the ongoing dispute between the faculty and trustees, the school has been told by the Association of Theological Schools to "show cause" why it should not have its accreditation removed.

Although trustees have considered faculty opposition to reform a stumbling block to accreditation, it is uncertain the faculty shift will come soon enough to influence the accreditation process, which is due for a decision next year.

Still it's little wonder trustees viewed news of the rash of resignations as miraculous, since it offered solutions to two of their thorniest problems -- an uncooperative faculty and a looming budget crisis.

The "miracle" solution may also have saved the job of President Lewis Drummond, who has been under fire from some trustees for most of the year.

"The solution is being viewed as something he masterfully worked

out," said one trustee. "It's not his initiation, but he's going to get the credit for it."

Drummond was elected in 1988 after then-President Randall Lolley resigned in a dispute with trustees over their plan to reshape the school, one of six Southern Baptist seminaries. Although Drummond was expected to usher in changes, some trustees have since grown impatient with the slow pace of reform.

"Dr. Drummond has been here since 1988 and has been able to elect only three people to the faculty," said Bush, one of the three. "That's been some of the trustee frustration."

Drummond also drew criticism for spending an estimated \$200,000 to remodel and furnish his office and residence at a time when the school faces a serious financial crisis.

Drummond privately has expressed fears his trustees might fire him. Some trustees -- though probably not a majority -- were ready to make such a move at their meeting last March.

But in his report to trustees in March, Drummond conceded his approach to solving the seminary's problems had "in large measure failed" and pledged "a fresh new course." That course correction, he said, would include assuring the "theological integrity" of the seminary by seeking faculty adherence to the school's Articles of Faith.

That speech, as much as any other factor, prompted faculty members to reconsider their own approach, insiders say. With the March speech, one trustee said, "the playing field changed."

To the faculty, the speech meant "we're going to have a witch-hunt," recalled Hewitt. "For the president to call for theological integrity, by implication, says those of us on the faculty do not have it."

Despite assurances from Drummond and Bush that professors would not be fired, many on the faculty took the president's renewed resolve as their cue to give up the fight, sources say.

"The president's speech may have been a significant factor," agreed Bush.

But there are other factors that contributed to the recent rash of resignations, according to Hewitt and others on the faculty. Among them are:

-- The widespread perception that the SBC controversy is winding down, with moderate-conservatives, the faculty's natural allies, now charting a course outside the denominational structure -- and away from the seminary.

-- The inevitability of the struggle. "There is no way in the long run to preserve the Southeastern we knew," said one professor.

-- The faculty perception that trustees are not taking the threatened loss of the school's accreditation seriously enough.

-- The faculty's fear that Drummond's rumored departure would leave the seminary with an even less sympathetic president.

Rumors that Drummond might leave or be forced out -- rumors that have been rampant this summer -- may have brought the faculty's simmering unrest to a boil in recent weeks.

Most of those rumors were linked with talk that Dallas educator Paige Patterson, a leader of the fundamental-conservative movement, was Drummond's likely successor. Patterson, who was a top candidate for the Southeastern position when Drummond was hired, has himself been battling rumors he would be forced to leave Criswell College soon.

"That may have caused the mass resignations," said one faculty source. Professors who were considering leaving may have hurried their plans along, added another, for fear "we could get an even worse person to deal with."

That line of thinking led one trustee to observe wryly that Patterson accomplished more faculty reform as a rumor than Drummond did as president.

Bush called the Patterson rumor "unfortunate" because "it made it appear Dr. Drummond was on the verge of being fired." That in turn probably influenced the resignations, the dean added, because professors are leery about another change in seminary leadership.

Ironically, rather than replacing Drummond, Patterson (or the specter of him) may also have helped the president salvage his job. Trustees say the threat against Drummond will subside now that a shift in the faculty is on the horizon.

"I think it saved his can," said one trustee. "He has avoided an immediate crisis. We'll see what happens long term."

The quickened pace of faculty resignations has sparked speculation around campus that some professors are being offered lucrative retirement and severance packages just to leave.

"The rumor is there are funds available," said Fred Grissom, professor of church history and the faculty's spokesman.

But Bush denied rumors that a "slush fund" has been established to buy out certain professors.

With reports that Southeastern's fund-raising efforts had improved somewhat in recent months, Bush said, "the word could easily have gotten out that money is available now that might not be in two years."

"If we have to cut a \$1 million from the budget, we wouldn't have enough money to help anybody with retirement packages," Bush explained.

Bush acknowledged that administrators are negotiating various departure arrangements with professors, but he added there is nothing "underhanded" in the way the agreements are being handled. No offers are being made and all those who have negotiated departure packages have come on their own initiative, he said.

Bush agreed the pace of faculty departures has been hastened by concern over the seminary's financial situation, but he added, "We're not making this (financial crisis) up to deal with personnel."

Auditors hired by the seminary have told administrators the school stands to lose between \$1 million and \$1.4 million when the Southern Baptist Convention adjusts the school's funding to account for its falling enrollment.

Southeastern's enrollment has dropped from 1,098 in 1987 to 603 this year, and administrators are expecting another dip this fall. However, the five other SBC seminaries agreed in 1989 to "freeze" SBC funding, which is based on enrollment, at then-current levels. If the freeze is removed as scheduled in 1993, it will cost the seminary \$1.2 million, assuming enrollment stays around 600.

The faculty departures will reduce Southeastern's budget significantly. But since many of the retirements won't take effect for a year or two, the savings won't be immediate. And since some of the professors will have to be replaced, the savings won't be enough to avert the coming budget crunch.

Crowley, who serves as chairman of the trustees' instruction committee, said his committee will meet with Bush in September to find out which of the departing professors to replace.

He said he is not too concerned about having enough money. "We need to replace the maximum number of professors and we need to do it on faith," said Crowley, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Md.

Asked if he would be asking SBC fundamental-conservatives to donate the money to hire inerrantists to the faculty, he said, "You've got it!"

Crowley said hiring inerrantists will solve the school's enrollment problem, since conservative students are still reluctant to attend. "Until we get a faculty that is solidly inerrantist, we're not going to do anything," he said.

"That day is very near," he promised, "and those students can come to Southeastern Seminary and have full confidence they are going to have that kind of education."

Crowley predicted the transformation of Southeastern will spark "a mighty movement of God unheard of in the history of Christianity."

"Baptist churches on the East Coast that have dried up because of the liberalism emanating from Southeastern for so many years now are going to flourish."

-30-

--Deborah Aronson-Griffin contributed to this story.

U.S. Senate joins House
in 'gag rule' opposition

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate approved a bill July 17 that mirrors a House bill reinstating abortion counseling at federally funded clinics.

Both bills are intended to reverse White House-supported regulations banning such counseling.

The Senate approved the Title X Pregnancy Counseling Act (S. 323), sponsored by Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., that allows federally funded health clinics to provide pregnant women with complete information about their options when asked for such information.

Established in 1970, the Title X program serves about 5 million women every year and is the only federal program specifically for family planning.

The U.S. House of Representatives attached a similar measure to an appropriations bill (H.R. 2707) that would prevent the Department of Health and Human Services from denying women information about abortion.

The Reagan administration proposed the ban on abortion counseling at federally funded clinics in 1988. The ban was ruled constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in May.

While the House attached the provision to the \$203 billion HHS appropriations bill, the Senate approved a separate, free-standing bill that has bipartisan support.

The Senate Appropriations Committee also has included the abortion-counseling provision in its version of the HHS appropriations bill.

President George Bush has promised to veto any legislation that weakens current regulations for abortion-related activities.

Chafee said most people would assume doctors give patients complete information about their medical options as standard procedure. "This is the standard procedure for those of us who can afford a private physician," he said.

"But for the millions of women in America who do not have enough money to pay for health-care services, there is a new and different standard," Chafee continued.

"Those low-income women will only receive information which is censored by the government. The government has determined it has this right because the government is paying for those services."

Chafee said the regulations are "bad policy" for several reasons. First, they conflict with the professional ethics of major medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association, he said. Second, the regulations create a two-tiered system of health care determined by financial status, he said. Third, the counseling ban also places health-care professionals at risk for medical malpractice.

"This is not about abortion rights," he emphasized. "That is already an established legal right in our country that is protected by the Constitution. This is an issue about health care."

A similar bill sponsored last year by Chafee raised concerns it would require individuals to talk about abortion against their will. The 1991 bill allows clinic personnel to give non-directive counseling or to decline to discuss abortion on religious or moral grounds. If persons decline to discuss abortion based on the bill's exemptions, they must refer the patient to a clinic that can give them the information.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, opposed Chafee's bill. Hatch noted that "the vast majority of people in this country do not want abortion used as a family-planning device."

"It is difficult for me to recall an issue that has been more distorted than raised by the pending bill," Hatch said. "The question posed by the bill is this: What should be the role of abortion in the Title X family-planning program?"

Hatch said two fallacies have confused the issue. The first, he said, is that Title X has to do with pregnant women, and the second is that the regulations "amount to a gag rule impeding free speech."

Hatch said Title X is a preventive program for women who are not pregnant.

"The pending bill would require Title X grantees to provide or refer for counseling on abortion. It has been said that the bill seeks to overturn a gag rule. It would instead put into place a gag rule, a rule (that) requires non-directive counseling -- if there can be such a thing."

On July 16, the Senate also adopted as part of the bill two incongruent parental-notification provisions for minors. One was very restrictive while the other was lenient, providing a variety of exceptions.

A parental notification amendment to the House appropriations bill was ruled out of order in that body.

-30-

U.S. Senate takes steps
to avoid postal rate hike

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate has appropriated \$266 million less than the \$649.3 million the Postal Service says is needed to fully fund the postal subsidy for non-profit mailers.

But in an effort to avoid any rate increase stemming from a shortfall in the subsidy, the Senate approved an amendment designed to reduce postal processing costs.

The \$19.5 billion Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill (H.R. 2622) allocates \$383 million for the non-profit mail subsidy for fiscal 1992 and was approved by a 91-8 vote.

Those organizations that use the non-profit rates include most state Baptist newspapers and many churches.

The House earlier approved \$649.3 million for the subsidy.

While less than the amount the House voted to appropriate, the Senate bill is \$200 million more than the Bush administration proposed to spend for the subsidy. The president's proposal would result in a 33 percent rate increase for the non-profit subsidy, known as the "revenue foregone" appropriation.

Revenue foregone reimburses the Postal Service for the non-profit mailers' share of overhead expenses. Non-profit mail rates reflect only the cost of handling that class of mail.

Sen. Peter Domenici, R-N.M., recognized the contributions of the non-profit groups but said financial restrictions simply prohibit full accommodation. He co-sponsored the cost-cutting amendment with Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz.

The amendment, based on a July 8 Postal Rate Commission report, would

reduce the processing costs for the Postal Service by \$180 million, DeConcini said. The amendment eliminates the subsidy for third-class non-profits that mail "flats" -- items other than letter size. The Postal Service cannot process flats mechanically, requiring more personnel to hand-sort each piece.

The operational savings would be about 4.4 cents per item, resulting in the \$180 million reduction, DeConcini said. The non-profit groups that continue to mail flats would pay the extra processing costs, he added. More than 80 percent of the preferred mailers currently use letter-size.

"This amendment will permit us to meet our budget deficit targets without hurting those organizations whose very existence is dependent on the sustaining of the revenue-foregone program," DeConcini said. "We are attempting to generate savings by changing the behavior of the mailers," he added.

Domenici said the Postal Rate Commission recommended the reform after a study of third-class non-profit mail.

Both senators also said they believe the Postal Service has overestimated the amount needed for the subsidy by about \$64 million. Domenici said the combination of the \$180 million in savings and \$64 million overestimate would allow the current rates to be maintained with a \$404 million subsidy.

"We will have to find the additional \$21 million" when the bill goes to conference committee, he said. A House-Senate conference committee will have to resolve any differences between the two bills.

Sen. Robert Kerrey, D-Neb., raised concerns about the revenue-foregone provision: "It affects the mail you receive from your church, your college or university, your child's Little League.... These mailers have traditionally been provided subsidized mailing rates because of a policy decision that the contribution they make to our society merits the benefit. I believe that policy remains as valid as ever."

The amendment was approved 98-0.

Non-profit groups, however, do not favor the Senate's solution to the revenue-foregone problem.

"We oppose it," said Dan Doherty, executive director of the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers.

The amendment was produced suddenly based on a report that nobody outside the Postal Rate Commission had a chance to analyze, Doherty said. The amendment makes permanent changes based on assumptions that might not hold up, he said.

"I'm not at all sure the Senate knew upon whom it was putting the costs," he said.

Many flat pieces -- such as magazines and newspapers -- could not easily reduce to letter size or switch from third- to second-class mail, he said. If there is a migration from third- to second-class non-profit mail, the second-class subsidy could escalate.

"I don't think it will fly," Doherty said. "My position is to ask the conference committee to go for the House (appropriation)."

-30-

--By Pam Parry

HMB approves move to suburbs,
resolution thanking Chapman

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board voted July 17 to move their national headquarters from midtown Atlanta to

the northern Atlanta suburbs in 1995.

Board members shouted "hallelujah" in a unanimous voice vote to relocate 22 miles north in Alpharetta, Ga.

Plans call for the new building to be completed in 1995 before the agency's 150th anniversary and the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, June 20-22, 1995.

The 90-member board agreed to buy 34 acres of property for \$1.3 million from Dallas millionaire Ross Perot Jr. The site is located near the intersection of Georgia 400 and State Bridge Road in a booming area of north Fulton County.

Board members also adopted a resolution urging SBC churches to "prayerfully consider" SBC president Morris Chapman's appeal to double their goals for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions next year and to "jump-start 1,000 new churches" on Easter Sunday of 1992.

Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, issued the challenge during his June 4 presidential address to the SBC meeting in Atlanta.

Chapman's proposal was "unprecedented," said HMB President Larry Lewis. "Never before in SBC history has a convention president challenged us to start 1,000 churches in one day."

Lewis said the HMB would not be able to respond effectively unless churches also heed Chapman's appeal to double Annie Armstrong gifts next year.

Lewis said he was deeply disappointed that the news media "buried" Chapman's challenge beneath the huge volume of SBC news, saying Chapman's challenge only received one paragraph in the Baptist Press releases. "Most people have ignored it," Lewis said.

During a press conference following the board meeting, trustees listed 10 key reasons why the site committee recommended the Alpharetta location. They included:

- Quality of life in the area, including good schools, churches, parks, recreation facilities, availability of jobs, and infrastructure;
- Location adjacent to Georgia Highway 400, a limited-access freeway which provides a direct route 25 miles to downtown Atlanta and 32 miles to the airport;
- Projected plans for public transportation (bus and rapid rail) to the area;
- Research which shows the area will increase in property value in the future;

- Convenience to the majority of employees of the HMB.

Since 1968, the board has occupied offices at 1350 Spring Street NW in the midtown area of Atlanta. Lewis said the board hopes to maintain an Atlanta post office box and mailing address.

In July 1990, the HMB sold its five buildings and 6.3 acres of land to a Chicago development company for \$14.5 million and voted to lease the buildings until a new headquarters is completed in 1995.

Income from the sale of the property has been designated to buy the land and build the headquarters office, said Lewis.

In other actions, the board elected four new staff members, promoted two existing staff, and presented Emmanuel McCall a plaque and resolution of appreciation. McCall joined the HMB staff in 1975 as director of the black church extension division. He resigned this year to become pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in Atlanta.

New staff members elected by the board include:

- Everett Anthony as associate director of metropolitan missions. He moves from Chicago, where he is director of the Chicago Baptist Association.

- Joe Westbury as home mission study editor. Westbury, who formerly served as HMB associate director of news and information, moves from Jackson, Tenn., where he is public relations director for Union

University.

-- Steve Whitten as associate director of program research department. He is pastor of University Baptist Church in Amherst, N.Y.

-- Eliu Camacho-Vasquez as director of the Caribbean office in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He is currently language missions director for Ohio Baptists.

-30-

CORRECTION: In the 19th paragraph of the story "Draper Wins Easy Election..." (July 19), the word intentional is misspelled.

***** END *****