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

Phone: (904) 262-6626 Fax: (904) 262-7745 CServe: 70420,73

May 25, 1993

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * 'Dark horse' Jerry Rankin chosen as FMB nominee
- * Rankin's nomination drawing mostly favorable reviews
- * Yeary accepts pastorate of North Phoenix church
- * Baylor regents vote to open Truett Seminary in fall 1994
- * Honeycutt defends doctrinal stance, 'damage control' tactics
- * Another VP resigns from Southern Seminary

'Dark horse' Jerry Rankin
chosen as FMB nominee

By Greg Warner

BEDFORD, Texas (ABP) -- The committee seeking a new president for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has chosen a "dark horse" candidate, missionary/administrator Jerry Rankin of Singapore, as its nominee.

Rankin, FMB area director for Southern Asia and the Pacific, will be nominated to the full board of trustees in a special meeting June 14 in Houston, one day prior to the start of the annual Southern Baptist Convention in that city.

By nominating a missionary to the critical post, trustees likely will mute the criticism -- leveled by outgoing president Keith Parks and others -- that denominational politics has replaced missions as the trustees' primary agenda.

Parks retired last October, three years earlier than planned, in a dispute with trustees over the direction and control of the Foreign Mission Board, which has 3,900 missionaries in 129 countries.

The search group announced its decision Tuesday, May 25, after a weekend meeting in suburban Fort Worth, Texas. Most observers predicted Rankin will win easy approval from trustees despite the 75 percent endorsement required for election.

A 23-year missions veteran from Mississippi, the 51-year-old Rankin was not among the six finalists for the position confirmed by members of the search committee last October.

Trustee chairman John Jackson of Fairfield, Calif., described Rankin as a "dark horse" who only in recent weeks emerged as the favorite of the 15-member committee. "... Not until the last did he rise to the top."

Twice in recent months the committee offered the position to Oklahoma pastor Tom Elliff, a former missionary and conservative activist in the 14-year-old controversy that has racked the 15-million-member SBC. Earlier, in October, committee members acknowledged they had narrowed their choice to two men with missionary experience, Interim President Don Kammerdiener and Sunday

School Board administrator Avery Willis.

In the end, however, the search committee looked beyond its top candidates, deeper into the ranks of overseas missionaries.

"God put it together," said chairman Jackson, an ex officio member of the search committee. "Only in that way could Jerry have moved past board vice presidents and pastors and other leaders of the convention. It wasn't done with arm twisting. It came on a unanimous vote."

Also passed over were three megachurch pastors -- John Bisagno of First Baptist Church of Houston, Jim Henry of First Baptist Church of Orlando, and Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn.

The trustees' choice of Rankin "indicates they couldn't find a really strong fundamentalist who wanted the responsibility, for whatever reason," said Parks, who since leaving the FMB has assumed leadership of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's missions effort.

What the committee got was a seasoned missionary sympathetic to the cause of SBC conservatives and committed to biblical inerrancy, the pivotal issue in their struggle for control of the SBC.

Rankin disowned any involvement in the politics of SBC conservatives, but he told Associated Baptist Press: "I've always been concerned that we maintain our evangelistic thrust, and I see any position that would erode the authority of the Bible as being detrimental to being effective in winning a lost world. So to the extent that this is needed, I've been in sympathy with that (cause)."

Rankin said the committee's choice of a missionary should be an encouragement to his colleagues overseas, who insist only hands-on experience can prepare someone to lead the FMB's far-flung missions force. "It reflects that they (trustees) really are committed to missions," he said.

Trustees and others feared that choosing a high-profile conservative with no missionary experience would further undermine the confidence of missionaries, as well as Baptists in the pews who fund the FMB's \$180 million annual budget. Already financial shortfalls have forced the FMB to cut 37 jobs, or 8 percent, from its home-office staff in Richmond, Va.

In leaving the FMB after 37 years, Parks warned that the denominational controversy had infiltrated the FMB and was sapping strength from its worldwide missions effort.

Parks said the committee's choice of Rankin may have been influenced by trustee fear of further financial shortfalls and staff cuts. "Choosing him will create a great deal of relief in the minds of missionaries and missions supporters," he told ABP. "It's a much better choice than getting someone who had no missions experience."

Parks said he "worked well" with Rankin when both served in Indonesia. "He has a lot of gifts and a lot to commend himself for this position," he said. "Jerry is very bright and has clear grasp of mission principles and a background in missions experience."

Parks said Rankin was not known to have sympathies with SBC conservatives. "I never had experienced him that way, but in recent months some of the missionaries and some of the staff say he has been very careful to identify himself as part of the conservative resurgence."

Rankin said he does not anticipate facing the same conflicts Parks encountered with trustees. "I've not made any compromise in order to work with them," he added. "I discerned that these guys have a heart for the Lord and are genuinely interested in winning a lost world to Christ."

"I refuse to accept (that they have) any other agenda than representing Southern Baptists and winning a lost world to Christ," he said.

Rankin acknowledged some may view that attitude as naive. "I have claimed naivete in this whole process, and I hope that reflects a confidence

in the Lord and what he's doing."

Can Rankin work effectively with trustees? "A lot of it depends," Parks said, "on whether the trustees allow him to function as president or want him to be a figurehead while they continue to run the board. My feeling is he is the type of person who wants to function as the leader."

Like Parks, most missionaries who have worked with Rankin praise his intellect and commitment. Those who acknowledge any shortcomings usually cite his administrative style, which some say is autocratic.

"His commitment and dedication are unquestionable," said Harold Malone, who worked closely with Rankin for 10 years as a mission volunteer. "His methodology may leave some missionaries not so satisfied."

"His style of management is more to make decisions and tell you, rather than working with people, getting input and making them feel they are part of the decision-making process," said Malone, now retired and living in Augusta, Ga. "That is one thing missionaries in general will have a difficult time with."

Rankin, who as area director has supervised 480 missionaries in 15 countries, defended his management style. "I get fairly impatient when things get bogged down in bureaucratic decision making," he said. While his pattern is to collaborate with those affected by decisions, he said, he avoids group decision-making that produces "mediocrity."

Although Rankin has not been part of the FMB's administrative inner circle, from which previous presidents have been chosen, that distance may serve as an advantage, according to search committee chairman Joel Gregory of Dallas.

"Even though he's in the structure, he's in a healthy sense independent of the structure," Gregory said. "We questioned him carefully about independent judgment. We have no question he will take creative initiatives internally at the board and externally in the denomination and on the mission field."

Rankin was first interviewed last August, but the search committee pursued other candidates. After unsuccessful attempts to find a nominee among their six finalists, the committee returned to Rankin. He was interviewed three more times.

Finally, Gregory said, each committee member was asked to list his or her top four candidates, and anyone he or she could not support. Rankin received more first-place votes than anyone, and no negative votes, Gregory said. The committee then focused solely on Rankin until there was unanimous agreement.

A native of Tupelo, Miss., Rankin graduated from Mississippi College in 1964. He received a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He and his wife, Bobbye, were appointed missionaries to Indonesia in 1970. Rankin served as a general evangelist in Indonesia, a consultant for evangelism and church growth in India, associate area director, and administrator for India before being named area director in 1987.

The Rankins have two grown children. Rankin said he may be a distant relative of Theron Rankin, FMB chief executive 1945-53.

Rankin declined to speculate on why the search committee would pass over Don Kammerdiener, who has more administrative experience, for him. But he said he wants Kammerdiener to remain as executive vice president.

Rankin's nomination drawing
mostly favorable reviews

By Greg Warner

BEDFORD, Texas (ABP) -- Reaction to the nomination of Jerry Rankin as president of the Foreign Mission Board is generally favorable from those who have worked with him overseas, although some colleagues question whether Rankin's management style will be well received.

Most reassuring to missionaries interviewed is the fact Rankin -- unlike other finalists for the position -- has served among them overseas. A 23-year FMB veteran missionary and administrator, Rankin is area director for Southern Asia and the Pacific.

"I'm just thrilled to death," said Kathleen Jones, a former missionary physician who worked in Indonesia when Rankin was appointed there in 1970. "He is sort of like my little brother. He's a very, very fine person. He was quite young when he was named area director, but he has matured greatly."

Jones, who retired in 1987 and now lives in Little Rock, Ark., predicted Rankin will be able to work with the FMB's conservative trustees, who have been accused of pursuing their own agenda overseas. "I think he will be a bridge builder. He's very firm in his beliefs."

"He's head and shoulders above anybody we've heard mentioned," added Ruth Vanderberg, a missionary nurse who also served with Rankin in Indonesia. "He served out in the boondocks. He and his wife (Bobbye) stuck by the stuff. They are truly wonderful Christian people."

Vanderberg, who also now lives in Little Rock, said Rankin's missionary experience will count for a lot with his colleagues. "There is no way that you can possibly know what it is like to serve as a missionary," she said. Electing a president without that experience would be "like going to battle with an armchair general," she said.

Rankin's overseas experience and commitment to biblical inerrancy are likely to assure his election, but his encouragement of charismatic gifts on the mission field, including glossolalia, is likely to raise some trustee eyebrows.

Those colleagues who acknowledge any of Rankin's shortcomings usually cite his administrative style, which some say is autocratic.

"His management style has not always made missionaries happy," said Henry Turlington, who worked briefly with Rankin in India. "He makes decisions by himself rather than consulting with missionaries."

"He is a likeable kind of guy who has a love for missions," added Turlington, a retired missionary now living in Chapel Hill, N.C.

"His commitment and dedication are unquestionable; his methodology may leave some missionaries not so satisfied," said Harold Malone, who worked closely with Rankin for 10 years as a mission volunteer.

"His style of management is more to make decisions and tell you, rather than working with people, getting input, and making them feel they are part of the decision-making process," said Malone, now retired and living in Augusta, Ga. "That is one thing missionaries in general will have a difficult time with."

Rankin defended his management style. "I get fairly impatient when things get bogged down in bureaucratic decision making," he said. While his pattern is to collaborate with those affected by decisions, he said, he avoids group decision-making that produces "mediocrity."

The man Rankin is likely to succeed, former President Keith Parks, suggested Rankin's management style may bring him in conflict with trustees. "A lot of it depends on whether the trustees allow him to function as

president or want him to be a figurehead while they continue to run the board," said Parks. "My feeling is he is the type of person who wants to function as the leader."

Rankin said he does not anticipate facing the same conflicts Parks encountered with trustees. And he added: "I've not made any compromise in order to work with them. I discerned that these guys have a heart for the Lord and are genuinely interested in winning a lost world to Christ."

"I refuse to accept (that they have) any other agenda than representing Southern Baptists and winning a lost world to Christ," he said.

Rankin acknowledged some may view that attitude as naive. "I have claimed naivete in this whole process, and I hope that reflects a confidence in the Lord and what he's doing."

Rankin's unabashed commitment to evangelism and distaste for institutionalized missions likely will endear him to trustees, associates add.

Rankin has downplayed traditional institutions overseas, said Calvin Parker, a missionary to Japan from 1951 to 1989. "I can understand how he might come to the top," said Parker, now retired and living in Mars Hill, N.C. "I presume he is willing to work with trustees in a way that will please them."

"I can't say that I welcome the news," Parker said of Rankin's nomination. "He has not established himself as a leader to the Southern Baptist constituency."

Ed Oliver, a retired missionary now living in Tampa, Fla., called Rankin's choice "ideal." "He's a sharp administrator. He's personable and relates well to people. He speaks eloquently and to the point.

"How he would relate to the takeover group I would not know, because he is a thinker and not one to kowtow to a narrow system of directives," Oliver said.

On charismatic gifts, Rankin acknowledged his views have been a point of some contention on the mission field. "I believe the gifts of the Spirit are valid and relevant to today and are used of God," he told Associated Baptist Press May 25.

Rankin cited two reasons for his view: 1) "From the standpoint of biblical authority, I don't think we can arbitrarily eliminate one or two (spiritual) gifts. That's an infringement on the sovereignty of God." 2) "From a missiological perspective, the abundance of God is moving in manifestations of power, particularly overseas and in Third World countries."

"The (search) committee has looked into this thoroughly and is convinced there is no doctrinal problem in this," Rankin said.

Rankin acknowledged the issue brought him into some conflict with his supervisor, FMB vice president Bill Wakefield, but he denied Wakefield sought to have him dismissed as a result. "He was very concerned about allowing this to become disruptive among nationals," Rankin explained.

Wakefield was traveling and unavailable for comment.

"I can't remember a time when I wasn't identified as being somewhat charismatic," Rankin said, "maybe because I go around saying 'Praise the Lord' a lot."

Yeary accepts pastorate
of North Phoenix church

By Greg Warner

PHOENIX, Ariz. (ABP) -- Dan Yeary of Miami has accepted the offer to become pastor of the 23,000-member North Phoenix Baptist Church, the largest Southern Baptist congregation in the West.

Yeary will succeed Richard Jackson, one of Southern Baptists' most popular pulpiteers, who has led the Phoenix, Ariz., church for 25 years.

Yeary, 54, has been pastor of the 4,000-member University Baptist Church in the Miami suburb of Coral Gables for 18 years. He said his long tenure at University made the decision to leave difficult, but he was attracted by the opportunity to reach more people through the Phoenix church, which has an extensive television ministry.

In a letter of acceptance read to North Phoenix members May 23, Yeary said the church "represents the grandest of opportunities for God."

Members who heard Yeary preach Wednesday, May 19, voted overwhelmingly to call him as pastor -- 96 percent by ballot. Before the vote, however, he told the church he would not respond to an invitation for several days.

He wired his acceptance May 22 and announced his decision to his Coral Gables congregation May 23. He will begin his duties in Phoenix Aug. 1.

A Texas native, Yeary is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Texas. He and his wife, Melinda, have three grown children.

Jackson, 54, retired from the pastorate in January and was named pastor emeritus by the church. But he has continued his preaching ministry, leading crusades and revivals around the country and directing the Richard Jackson Center for Preaching and Evangelism, a private, non-profit organization located on the campus of Grand Canyon College in Phoenix.

North Phoenix Church, which had only 200 members when Jackson became pastor in 1967, built its current 40-acre facility in the 1980s. The congregation has been a consistent statistical leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, topping the list for both the number of baptisms and contributions to the SBC budget, the Cooperative Program.

Yeary's tenure at University Church bears some similarity. Under his leadership, the church grew from 300 members in 1973 to approximately 4,000 during a period when population changes produced a 25 percent drop in Baptist membership in Miami.

Jackson said he was not involved in the selection of his successor but was "pleasantly surprised" with the choice of Yeary. "He's a man of great energy," Jackson said. "He will do good and innovative things that, frankly, I didn't have the capability to do."

While many pastors have difficulty following a popular and long-tenured pastor, Jackson said he is confident Yeary can lead the church effectively. "He's a secure man who knows who he is. He's going to do it his way."

Jackson said he plans to continue as a member of North Phoenix Baptist, although his preaching schedule keeps him out of town much of the time. "When I'm in Phoenix, I'll be right there in the nursery working with my wife," (Wanda).

Jackson became a prominent figure in the SBC controversy in 1987 and 1988, when he drew the support of Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives in two unsuccessful bids for the SBC presidency.

Yeary has maintained a low profile in the controversy, although he did speak at the 1990 meeting that led to the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Jackson said he did not push North Phoenix Church to identify with the Fellowship for fear it might "fracture" the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. The church plays a central role in the 360-church convention, claiming one fifth of all Arizona Baptists and contributing one fifth of the convention's budget.

Last year the church contributed \$425,545 to the Cooperative Program, most of which remained in Arizona to fund Baptist work in the state.

-30-

Baylor regents vote to open
Truett Seminary in fall 1994

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Baylor University board of regents voted unanimously May 21 to open the George W. Truett Theological Seminary in 1994, pledging not to duplicate existing seminaries but to offer a distinctive approach to ministry preparation.

"We're not competing with any of the existing seminaries," said Herbert Reynolds, president of Baylor University in Waco, Texas. "We are very interested in seeing what we can do in a distinctive kind of way."

But a spokesman for nearby Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, which was founded on the Baylor campus in 1905, said the two schools will nonetheless compete. Southwestern, located 90 miles north in Fort Worth, is the largest of the Southern Baptist Convention's six seminaries, with 4,000 students.

Truett may not compete with Southwestern for the same students, but there will be significant competition for donor dollars, said Southwestern's Executive Vice President Scotty Gray.

Robert Sloan, dean of Truett Seminary and a former Southwestern professor, said Baylor will be distinctive by creating an ethnically inclusive school with a strong mentoring program.

The Baylor regents, meeting at the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, agreed to launch the new seminary in response to "a new day with new needs and new realities," according to chairman Daniel Vestal, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston.

"From the very beginning, this seminary will be committed to a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic diversity," Vestal said, noting that the board of regents includes African-American and Hispanic members, and it has both laity and clergy represented.

"If we are going to evangelize the world, it's going to have to be done in a genuine partnership with all racial and ethnic groups. So this seminary is committed to multi-cultural, multi-ethnic diversity."

Sloan emphasized the new school's niche as a practical training ground for ministry that will rely heavily upon local church ministers as mentors and guides.

"We intend to place a heavy emphasis on mentoring, apprenticeships and internships," Sloan said.

"It's not just a field-education requirement tacked onto an existing program, but an integral part of the curriculum."

Seminary classes and administrative offices will be located at First Baptist Church of Waco, but the administration plans to build a multi-purpose building on the Baylor University campus within the next ten years, Reynolds

explained. Enrollment will be limited to 50 students the first year with a maximum enrollment of 150 projected after three years.

The faculty will be all Baptist but not necessarily all-Southern Baptist. It will include about a half dozen professors and expand to more than 15 within three years, Reynolds said.

Early on, Reynolds had indicated the seminary would not be launched until it had a strong financial base, emphasizing that it would not be allowed to drain resources from the university's operations. But "two major gifts" in particular made possible the fall 1994 starting date.

Within 10 years, Reynolds said he anticipates no less than a \$14.5 million endowment. The operating budget for the first year of seminary operations will be roughly \$1 million.

Anticipated student cost at the seminary will be half of the Baylor University tuition cost, which is currently \$215 per semester hour.

Although Truett Seminary is included in the giving plans of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, anticipated income from the Fellowship was not a part of the seminary's financial plan, explained John Boyd of Amarillo, Texas, chairman of the regents' seminary committee.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is an Atlanta-based organization of moderates who have become disenchanted with the fundamental-conservative leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Baylor University reserved the name George W. Truett Theological Seminary in 1990, honoring the longtime pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, who was a champion of religious liberty.

In March 1991, Baylor's board of regents approved the incorporation of the Truett Seminary and elected its first trustees. The articles of incorporation of the seminary provide for a 15-member, all-Baptist board of trustees elected by Baylor's regents.

When University regents initiated proceedings to establish the seminary, they said the school would begin operations if it were determined that the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries were being led away from their historic purpose by their boards of trustees, which are controlled by fundamental-conservatives.

Last year, Southwestern president Russell Dilday led a faculty delegation to formally asked Baylor to delay opening Truett Seminary.

In announcing Baylor's decision to go ahead anyway, Reynolds and Sloan both underscored their belief that Truett Seminary would not be in direct competition with Southwestern. They stressed the cordial relationship between the two Texas schools.

Southwestern's Gray also said he hopes the good relationship between the schools will continue, but he expressed concern about the Baylor action.

"We have some degree of disappointment that they see the need for another seminary this close, particularly in light of all we have been able to achieve in recent years with our trustees," Gray said.

"We do not perceive the need for another seminary, and we are disappointed that they do. We still consider ourselves very much in the mainstream of Southern Baptist life."

Southwestern would not anticipate any fierce competition for students from the much-smaller Truett Seminary, Gray said, but the Fort Worth school could feel a pinch in competition for development funds from potential donors.

"In the current climate, we could expect some donors to feel more comfortable contributing to the seminary at Baylor," he acknowledged.

Southwestern Seminary grew out of the Baylor Theological Seminary, established in 1905 after more than a decade of organized theological instruction in Waco. In 1908, the name was changed to Southwestern Baptist

Theological Seminary and the school moved 90 miles northwest to Fort Worth in 1910.

-30-

Honeycutt defends doctrinal stance,
'damage control' tactics at Southern

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Critics who claim Roy Honeycutt has not stood firmly by the doctrinal statement of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary are misguided and engaging in "libelous" activity, the retiring seminary president said during his last commencement address.

Honeycutt, who will retire July 31 after 11 years as seminary president, delivered the keynote address during commencement ceremonies May 21 in Alumni Chapel at the Louisville, Ky., seminary.

With some of the strongest language he has used publicly in recent years, Honeycutt said he wanted to "set the record straight" about his tenure as president and "drive down a stake" to show what the seminary has become under his administration.

He praised the current faculty and student body, reiterated his commitment to women in ministry, and lamented the strife that has rocked the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979.

The overflow crowd gave him an extended standing ovation both before and after his address. "I have something to say, and I'm going to say it," Honeycutt declared in introducing his remarks.

Honeycutt's successor, Al Mohler, has made much of his intent to return the 134-year-old seminary to its "historic roots" based on a solid commitment to the Abstract of Principles, the doctrinal statement that shaped its formation.

"Some seem to believe among trustees and critics that I have been less diligent than I should have been or than they wanted me to have been" in regard to the abstract, Honeycutt explained.

"We have affirmed the Abstract of Principles, regardless of what others may say," he asserted. He labeled any account to the contrary as "libelous."

Honeycutt said the most painful experience of his tenure was having to dismiss professor Dale Moody, who after becoming the focus of convention debate over his views of apostasy said he could no longer affirm the abstract. Moody, who was renowned in every other way as a brilliant conservative scholar, came to believe a Christian could fall away from salvation.

"For supporting the Abstract of Principles I paid the greatest price of my career," Honeycutt said. "... I want the record set straight about my maintaining the Abstract of Principles."

Talk about returning the seminary to its "historical foundations" through political action misses the point, he said later. "We are moving in a new direction where we have never been; not to a renewal of our beginnings and the theology of (seminary founder) E. Y. Mullins."

Authentic faith must be relevant to modern life, Honeycutt said. "Every generation must state its faith for itself or we relegate faith to the role of an antique relic which we admire on the shelf but which has little use in daily life."

Honeycutt also made a point of his support for women in ministry, an issue that has become the first major flash point between the president-elect

and some students, faculty and alumni.

Mohler has stated he does not believe women should serve as pastors or in certain other leadership roles in the church, although he has said women will be accepted in all the seminary's degree programs.

Honeycutt said affirming women in ministry is "consistent with the heritage of Southern Seminary," "faithful to the Bible," "consistent with the unique nature of the divine call to Christian ministry," "faithful to the Holy Spirit's indiscriminate distribution of God's gifts," and "faithful to Southern Baptist polity."

Honeycutt also addressed moderate Baptists who have accused him of giving in to conservative demands. That he and trustees have seen things differently is well-known, he admitted.

But after the Atlanta SBC meeting in 1991, Honeycutt said he "made a commitment to preserve as much of the wholeness of this seminary as possible."

"Damage control" rather than victory became his objective from that point on and will continue to be his priority, he said.

"Some would prefer the active abolition of the seminary by its friends, including faculty, staff and students. Others would prefer its demise rather than any change from the past," he reported.

But the outgoing president said he believes "we should preserve as much of our heritage for as long as we can in this seminary."

Honeycutt said those who claim he has lost courage or abandoned conflict due to fear are dead wrong. "I fear no person between heaven above and hell below."

However, he does fear "those who can kill the soul" as well as those driven by pride, anger, petulance, hostility, short-sightedness "and other things I can't mention." he said.

The criticisms he has received during the recent years of denominational controversy have affected him increasingly less, Honeycutt said. He has come to realize that "nothing else matters but to live in Christ, to manifest Christ through personal relationships, to magnify Christ in my vocation, and when life's work is complete to rest in Christ eternally."

He urged the graduating students, when they feel uncertain about the future, to go back to the "holy place of meeting" where God first called them.

Likewise, ministers of the gospel must help free others from bondage, Honeycutt said. "What God does, he does through human instruments. ... He has sent you into Egypt to deliver people from their bondage."

In his wide-ranging address, Honeycutt also said:

-- "God rewards a holy curiosity." He cited the early Christian leader Augustine, who said, "A free curiosity has more efficacy in learning than a frightful enforcement."

-- "There is no conflict between mind and faith. Christ came to take away our sins, not our minds. ... Intellectual honesty and spiritual piety are not in conflict."

The seminary awarded degrees to 266 students during the commencement exercises.

Also, Honeycutt presented the school's distinguished service award to Ernest Hogan, a seminary benefactor from Florida. The faculty award for teaching excellence, voted annually by students, faculty and alumni, was given to Molly Marshall, associate professor of theology.

Another VP resigns
from Southern Seminary

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Elisabeth Lambert has become the second of four vice presidents at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to resign her post as the Louisville school undergoes a leadership change.

Lambert, vice president for student services since 1985, will leave her job July 31, the day President Roy Honeycutt retires.

She is the fifth top administrator to announce plans to step down since the March 26 election of Al Mohler as Honeycutt's successor. Mohler, who will take office Aug. 1, has vowed to steer the Southern Baptist Convention's oldest seminary in a more conservative direction.

Lambert declined to discuss the reasons for her departure but said in her resignation letter to Honeycutt that she can "no longer serve the seminary."

Her letter describes the Southern Seminary she has been proud to serve as a place where "the highest standards of academic inquiry and the principle of the priesthood of the believer" were fostered.

"I especially value the open, candid pursuit of truth that characterized Southern Seminary in those years as women and men from diverse backgrounds and perspectives prepared for ministry in a changing world," she wrote.

Southern has provided encouragement to women ministers in recent years, but President-elect Mohler has stated his opposition to women serving as pastors and in some other leadership positions.

Lambert's husband, Frank, is a professor at Purdue University in Lafayette, Ind. They have commuted between the two locations for several years.

Lambert said she plans to relocate full time to Lafayette, where she will seek employment in a social-service agency.

She holds the master's degree in social services work from the University of Louisville, as well as the master of arts in Christian education degree from Southern Seminary and the bachelor of arts degree from Mississippi College.

Prior to becoming Southern's first female vice president in 1985, Lambert served the seminary as dean of students and as director of student services. She has worked for the seminary since 1975.

Lambert's departure, along with the resignation of David Wilkinson, vice president for seminary relations, leaves only two vice presidents in place: Tom Mabe, vice president for development, and T. J. McGlothlin, vice president for business services.

A fifth person who holds a key administrative position but is not classified as a vice president also has resigned. Ron Dempsey, Southern's director of academic services, has been named assistant dean of Presbyterian College in Clinton, S.C.

Southern's provost and two deans also have announced plans to step down before Mohler takes office. Provost Larry McSwain has been elected president of Shorter College in Rome, Ga.; music dean Milburn Price has been named to a similar position at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.; and Christian education dean Bill Rogers has resigned that post but plans to remain on the seminary faculty.

Anne Davis, dean of the social work school, had announced before Mohler's election her plans to return to full-time classroom duties. Honeycutt has named professor Diana Garland the new dean for that school.

If he remains in place, David Dockery, dean of the theology school since

August 1992, will have the longest tenure of any academic administrator on campus after July 31.

Replacements for Price and Rogers have not yet been named by President-elect Mohler. However, Bob Hughes, associate professor of Christian education, has been named acting dean for the school of Christian education, and Lloyd Mims, associate professor of church music, has been named acting dean for the school of church music.

Southern operates Boyce Bible School as a separate division with its own dean. Boyce dean Bob Johnson remains in place, but his assistant dean, Robert Shippey, has resigned. Shippey, who also serves as Southern's director of continuing education, has been named chairman of the theology department for Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Ga.

Cheryl Caddell-Shippey, his wife, is Southern's assistant director of alumni/ae relations. She also will leave her post before the fall semester begins.

-30-

***** END *****