
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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Trustee says Southwestern board
should apologize for 'wrongs'

By Greg Warner

CARROLLTON, Texas (ABP) -- Trustees of Southwestern Seminary should apologize to Southern Baptists for seven "wrongs" committed in the firing of seminary president Russell Dilday, said trustee Wayne Allen. "Failure to do so is to refuse to be accountable," the Dallas-area pastor said.

Allen and other trustees want to call an emergency trustee meeting to make amends for the way the board fired Dilday, president of the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary -- Southern Baptists' largest -- since 1978.

In a press release issued April 19, Allen said Southern Baptists "should demand accountability" from trustees. But Allen and like-minded board members apparently have fallen two votes short of the required 20 votes needed to call a meeting.

"In spite of the fact that 18 trustees have requested an emergency meeting, the chairman, vice chairman and secretary refuse to have a meeting ...," wrote Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church of Carrollton, a Dallas suburb.

Trustee chairman Ralph Pulley, a Dallas attorney, could not be reached for comment April 19 but earlier said an emergency meeting would be unwise and unnecessary.

Two trustees -- Robert Anderson of Louisiana and Pat Campbell of Missouri -- reportedly got the required 20-vote majority by 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, but the effort fell apart within hours.

"By 9:30 p.m. some very selected telephone calls had been made and one of the 20 called to have his name removed," Allen wrote. "By Thursday morning another removed his name, leaving only 18 -- not enough to force a meeting."

"Unless there is an absolute demand by fellow Southern Baptists that such a meeting be held, it appears that in spite of the desires of 18 trustees -- almost 50 percent of the board -- the meeting will not be held. Surely that tells us something."

Allen, a staunch conservative, earlier parted company with the conservatives who dominate Southwestern's board because of the way the March 9 Dilday firing was handled. He called for an investigation by the Southern

Baptist Executive Committee but later dropped that request after meeting March 29 with Pulley, who led the dismissal effort, and other trustee officers.

At the time Allen said he accepted their explanation that the firing was a matter of conviction and not "a mean-spirited political takeover."

"Now I must state publicly," Allen wrote April 19, "that I do not see the willingness on the part of the officers and several trustees of Southwestern to be accountable."

Allen cited seven "wrongs" for which trustees need to answer and make amends. "These are facts -- not assumptions -- because I was there," he said.

"Because of these 'wrongs' thousands of Southern Baptists feel bitter and betrayed," he said.

The list:

-- The "plot" to fire Dilday was "carefully orchestrated and planned" by a group of trustees, without the knowledge of the rest of the board, at least a week and probably longer before the meeting at which it happened, Allen said. Trustees were polled ahead of time to determine how they would vote, Associated Baptist Press learned.

-- There was a "deliberate plan," Allen said, to keep him and other trustees from knowing about the effort to fire Dilday -- a fact confirmed by the trustee chairman.

-- Dilday, students, faculty and some trustees were led to believe no attack on Dilday was imminent, Allen said. "This was deceit," he charged.

-- Each day of the three-day March board meeting, trustee leaders denied that a move against Dilday was afoot, Allen said. "The trustees either pretended not to have any knowledge or in some cases deliberately denied it," he said.

-- Pulley and other trustee officers, Allen said, were out of line when, 30 minutes prior to their last session, they told Dilday he could accept a "buyout" or be fired. The leaders "did not have the authority to make such an offer," Allen said, since the trustee board had not approved it.

-- Neither were Pulley and the others empowered to hire former seminary vice president John Earl Seelig to handle public relations for the seminary, Allen said. Seelig, forced to retire for his role in a failed 1989 attempt to fire Dilday, was in place within an hour and a half of the March 9 firing, Allen said. "He already had an office and was handling every press release coming from the seminary, and has continued to do so until this very hour," Allen wrote.

-- Changing the locks on Dilday's office and his computer-access code created the public perception that Dilday was guilty of some criminal or immoral act, Allen said. "This was wrong!"

The trustee leaders have conceded mistakes were made in the firing, but they have said an emergency meeting would accomplish nothing.

"This is not satisfactory and ... in my opinion unless some 'repentance' and 'apology' is shown by the board of trustees in a special called meeting, then they are refusing to be accountable," Allen wrote.

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Dean of Christian education school
appointed at Southern Seminary

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- A Colorado educator has been chosen to lead the School of Christian Education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Seminary President Albert Mohler appointed Dennis Williams, professor of educational ministries and administration at Denver Theological Seminary,

dean of the School of Christian Education, one of the Louisville, Ky., seminary's five main academic divisions.

The seminary's board of trustees, meeting April 19, voted to elect the new dean to the faculty as professor of Christian education with tenure.

The appointment fills an eight-month vacancy created by the resignation of former dean William Rogers. Rogers and another dean left administrative posts last July citing philosophical differences with Mohler, whose election last spring signaled a more conservative era in the 134-year-old seminary.

School of Church Music dean Milburn Price left the seminary to become dean of the school of church music at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala. Rogers, meanwhile, remained on Southern's faculty, returning full-time to the classroom. Both resigned effective July 31, 1993, the day before Mohler officially succeeded Roy Honeycutt as president.

In January, Mohler promoted a music school faculty member, Lloyd Mims, to succeed Price and announced the appointment of Thom Rainer as the first dean of the new Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. The other two deans are David Dockery, who leads the seminary's School of Theology, and Diana Garland, dean of the Carver School of Social Work.

Williams has been on the Denver seminary faculty since 1971, where he directs church-assisted seminary education. Earlier, he worked 12 years as a minister for education, youth and music in churches in Arizona and Texas.

He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Bob Jones University, Greenville, S.C., and a master's degree in music from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Ariz. He holds the master of religious education and doctor of education degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

He has served as chairman of the Christian education commission of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and is currently a member of Riverside Baptist Church, Denver, Colo.

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America must take lead
in human rights, Drinan says

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The world stands at a "sublime moment in history" during which universal human rights can be achieved, according to a Jesuit priest and former U.S. congressman. However, just when the world most needs America's leadership, it has lost its resolve to push for human rights, he added.

The last four decades have seen a "moral revolution" in the area of human rights, said Robert Drinan, a member of Congress from 1971 to 1981.

Numerous countries have begun to participate in human-rights accords and the United Nations now has nine worldwide committees monitoring various human-rights agreements, he said. Human rights is no longer perceived as just a Western value, he said. In the next century the whole world will be saying, "We need some world law."

However, Drinan said, while other nations have moved to the forefront of human-rights advocacy, the United States has lost ground.

"The rest of the world went forward, and we went backward," said Drinan, professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center. Drinan was keynote speaker April 14 at the 1994 Cynthia Wedel Lecture sponsored by The Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, an ecumenical group.

Preoccupied with the Cold War, the United States appeared confused on human rights in the 1980s, Drinan said. But with a new administration in place, he expressed hope that America can refocus and once again stand

clearly for human rights.

"We are clearly at a turning point," Drinan said. America is "on trial before the entire world" as it seeks to re-exert its influence on the world's values regarding human rights, he added.

Policy-makers alone are not to blame for America's drift, he said, adding that an element of moral indignation from the nation's churches and synagogues has been lacking in the debate over human rights.

The world will not change until the religious community changes first, he said. Quoting Baptist minister and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Drinan said, "Those whom we seek to change, we must first love."

Despite worldwide gains in human rights, new abuses come every day, Drinan said. For example, he said 40,000 children die daily and 350 million children worldwide have no school to attend. Those crises are correctable, he said, but the world is looking to America for leadership.

"We have a moral mission as a wealthy nation, as Christians -- a mission that we cannot deny, denigrate or walk away from," he said.

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-- By Pam Parry

Second grader loses legal battle
to show religious video to class

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The refusal by a Michigan school district to allow a second-grade class to watch a videotape of one of its students performing a religious song during a worship service has been left standing by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court refused April 18 to review lower-court decisions which sided with the ruling by Livonia Public Schools not to allow the videotape to be shown.

Kelly DeNooyer and her mother, Ilene DeNooyer, sued school officials after the second-grader was prohibited from playing the videotape during a "show and tell" period. Teacher Sandra Solomon instituted the "VIP of the Week" program to promote self-confidence and poise by focusing attention on selected students, who made verbal presentations to the class on subjects of interest and importance to them.

Kelly DeNooyer sought to play a videotape recording of her performance of a religious song describing the benefits of a child's early relationship with Jesus Christ during a worship service at Temple Baptist Church in Redford, Mich.

The lawsuit filed by the student and her mother alleged violations of free speech, free religious exercise and free association.

In upholding a trial court's dismissal of the lawsuit, however, a federal appeals court said the school may regulate both the medium and content of student presentations as long as its regulations are reasonably related to legitimate educational concerns.

The teacher's concerns about using the videotape -- including that it did not achieve the same goal as having students make verbal presentations -- are legitimate educational concerns and sufficient alone to uphold the lawsuit's dismissal, the appeals court said.

The appeals court did not address other issues raised by Kelly and Ilene DeNooyer, including the trial court's rejection of their free-exercise claim. The trial court said the plaintiffs presented no evidence that the school's decision "substantially burdened any central religious belief or practice."

-- By Larry Chesser

Arkansas CBF participants
affirm Dilday, elect officers

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas, which gathered recently for the its second annual meeting, adopted a statement asking the trustees of Southwestern Seminary to "repent of their un-Christian behaviors" in firing seminary president Russell Dilday.

The group also elected officers and heard a report from national Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman.

The statement about Southwestern, read to participants by author Fred Ball of Little Rock, affirmed Dilday and the students at Southwestern. It called for the school's trustees to "repent of their un-Christian behaviors, to ask forgiveness of those they have wronged and to restore the vitality and academic integrity of the institution by reversing their actions."

The document charged that the process employed in Dilday's termination "included deception, the failure to grant due process and the abandonment of Christian regard for Dr. Dilday as a brother in Christ."

Ball explained to participants that there is a sense among many Arkansas Baptists that "something ought to happen" and that "students at Southwestern Seminary need to hear from Baptists to know we love them and support them."

Members voted to send the statement both to students and trustees.

Meanwhile, the Missouri chapter of the Fellowship likewise adopted a statement in support of Dilday during that group's annual meeting March 26. Participants asked that prayers be offered for "God's Spirit to intervene in the politically motivated devastation" at Southwestern and that a similar fate not befall Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

In Arkansas, Fellowship participants elected Layne Smith, pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Fayetteville, moderator; Diane Swaim, a member of Second Baptist Church in Little Rock, moderator-elect; and Henrietta Holcomb, a member of Rolling Hills Church, recorder.

Smith said his plans as moderator include "establishing some goals for an inclusive Baptist presence in the state and creating a missions statement reflective of historic Baptist principles that will be our guiding light for future." He said an ad hoc committee is in the process of being formed to address both goals and a missions statement.

He said he views the organization's role in Arkansas as "continuing to be supportive of Arkansas Baptist life and creating a place for persons struggling in all that is happening in our convention. That is important because I don't want to lose good Baptists from our family."

CORRECTION: A story in yesterday's ABP identified C.A. Johnson as a trustee at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Johnson has moved from Arkansas and is no longer a member of the seminary's board of trustees.

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