
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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IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Terms of severance agreement still unresolved, Dilday says
- * Agreement could bring abortion pill to U.S.
- * 'Consensus builder' tapped by Clinton for Supreme Court
- * Senate approves legislation protecting abortion clinics
- * New book highlights obscure biblical women
- * Chapman requests meeting with Texas cooperative giving group
- * Scheduled SBC preacher won't be a messenger

Terms of severance agreement still unresolved, Dilday says

By Bob Allen

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Fired Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Russell Dilday said he plans to vacate his seminary-owned house by a June 7 deadline, but his long-range plans are on hold as negotiations continue over severance benefits promised by trustees.

More than two months after trustees dismissed Dilday as president of the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary -- a post he held for nearly 15 years -- Dilday said in a May 17 telephone interview that terms of the severance plan have not been finalized.

Dilday said an attorney is representing him in negotiations with leaders of Southwestern's board of trustees. At issue are terms that would permit trustees to cancel severance benefits should Dilday make statements or involve himself in activities they perceive as harmful to the seminary.

"My effort in negotiation is to avoid being muzzled or limited in my activity and to give the severance some sort of permanence so we can make further plans," Dilday said.

One tangible and immediate concern for Dilday is a place to live. Trustees permitted Dilday and his wife, Betty, to remain in the seminary-owned president's home for 90 days after the May 9 firing. Dilday said they have submitted a contract on a house in Fort Worth, and if financing is approved they will move "in a couple of weeks."

That arrangement "still is somewhat temporary, because we don't know what our longer range future is going to be," Dilday said. He said he will need to be employed another two or three years in order to accumulate adequate retirement resources.

Dilday declined to discuss details about the negotiations but said he has been paid the two month's salary and office expenses promised in a severance package approved by the board of trustees when they fired him.

During the March 7-9 meeting, trustee leaders met privately with Dilday to offer him severance benefits totaling about \$400,000 if he would retire immediately. The leaders reportedly said if he did not retire, they had the votes to fire him and he would receive severance of only two months' salary.

The full board made good on the first threat, voting 26-7 to fire Dilday after he declined to retire. However, supportive trustees persuaded

the board to grant Dilday the full benefit package anyway, including his base annual salary -- about \$85,000 -- until September 1995, when he turns 65, along with a housing allowance, medical and annuity benefits and a \$3,000-a-month allowance for an off-campus office.

The provisions of Dilday's severance package require him to take no employment for 60 days (a deadline which would have passed May 8), that he not join a competitive venture, and that he do "only those things that are supportive of the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention."

Dilday said initially he could live with those restrictions, noting nothing in the provisions would prevent him from speaking his convictions.

He did not see a written severance document until two or three weeks later, however. He told Associated Baptist Press May 17 he balked at signing the agreement because of language that would place conditions on what he could do or say and give the board of trustees arbitrary power to determine if he keeps faith with those conditions.

In other recent developments at Southwestern:

-- A mostly orderly procession of 403 graduates received degrees at the school's spring commencement May 13 at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. One student, Robby Jones, 25, tore the signature of Damon Shook, immediate past trustee chairman, off his master of divinity diploma to protest Dilday's firing. "I just felt I couldn't have lived with myself if I hadn't done something," Jones said.

Some students wore buttons bearing Dilday's likeness and one student marched across the stage in bare feet to accept his diploma. But most heeded an appeal by acting president William Tolar not to let demonstrations of anger mar the ceremony. Students smiled broadly when they received their degrees. They broke into sustained applause when Tolar announced that their diplomas would bear Dilday's signature.

Faculty members had planned to wear white ribbons to the commencement to show their solidarity with Dilday, but at Tolar's request did not.

-- Dilday said he will not attend the June 15 annual gathering of Southwestern alumni and friends because it would detract from presentation of the school's distinguished alumni award, scheduled to be given to three recipients.

Some alumni had hoped the luncheon meeting at the Clarion Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Fla., would provide an opportunity for them to demonstrate support for Dilday.

However, Dilday said he has decided he will not be in Orlando either for the alumni meeting or the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled June 14-16. "I think my being there would simply refocus attention on this whole sad affair," Dilday said. "I would rather that not happen."

Advanced ticket sales for the luncheon are reportedly well behind last year. A spokesperson in the seminary's alumni office would not comment about ticket sales, but a recent report indicated about 200 advance tickets had been sold. Typically, about half the tickets are sold in advance of the meeting, said another seminary spokesperson. About 800 alumni attended last year's meeting in Houston.

"It is my perception that people are planning not to be there," said Roberta Damon, national alumni president. "I think the fat lady has sung."

But a seminary spokesperson said the slow ticket sales may simply mean many alumni have not made up their minds about attending the luncheon. He said he expects a larger-than-usual sale of tickets at the convention.

-- Longtime administrator and teacher Scotty Gray has been appointed acting dean of the seminary's School of Church Music. He succeeds James McKinney, who retires July 31 after leading the music school 38 years.

Acting President William Tolar announced the appointment at the seminary's May 13 commencement. "I am extremely pleased we could go with an insider for acting dean of the School of Church Music and that insider is Scotty Gray," Tolar said. "I have no doubt he will be highly effective as acting dean."

Gray, executive vice president at Southwestern and member of the music school faculty since 1966, will assume the role of dean in addition to his current responsibilities Aug. 1.

Dilday recommended the music deanship be added to Gray's responsibilities in a cost-cutting staff realignment proposal that trustees blocked at the March 7-9 board meeting. The board's apparent willingness to endorse the move now on an interim basis "is an affirmation of the wisdom of the plan being recommended to the board at the last meeting," Dilday said.

Dilday predicted the alignment will be temporary, because outspoken board members critical of the music school's historic emphasis on classical training prefer an "outsider" as the permanent dean. In the interim, however, Dilday said, "I think Scotty Gray is certainly the best person to handle that job."

One complaint leveled by trustees against Dilday was he was not responsive to their insistence that the music school broaden its emphasis to include more training in popular and contemporary music. Both Dilday and music school faculty members say trustee concerns were taken seriously.

-- Scott Collins, director of public relations for Southwestern, will leave the seminary to take a similar post with Buckner Baptist Benevolences in Dallas. "I felt I couldn't work in that environment anymore," he said of the seminary. "But I feel this is providential. Buckner is a great organization." Owned by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Buckner operates nine children's homes and four retirement centers and offers adoptions, child assessments and other services.

-- While Dilday's firing spawned a flurry of inquiries about Baylor University's new George W. Truett Theological Seminary, the Waco, Texas, school remains on target for an inaugural class of about 50 students, said dean Robert Sloan.

The school announced May 12 the acceptance of its first student, Chad Prevost of Richmond, Va., who May 14 received an undergraduate degree from Baylor. Classes at Truett are scheduled to begin in August. They will be held at First Baptist Church of Waco until a permanent seminary facility is built.

Sloan said the Truett seminary has stated it is willing to increase the enrollment ceiling if necessary to accommodate students seeking an alternative to Southwestern. "I think the situation at Southwestern is still unresolved," Sloan said.

Most current Southwestern students are likely waiting for further fallout and to learn who the next president will be, Sloan said. Typically, those already enrolled will be inclined to finish their degrees at Southwestern, if possible. The largest impact on enrollment will most likely not be transfers, he said, but a decline in new students. Next year's application process was well in progress when Dilday's unexpected firing occurred, Sloan said.

-- Another denominational casualty, Lloyd Elder, who was forced out as president of the Baptist Sunday School Board by adversarial trustees, has written a response to a mass mailing from Southwestern Seminary trustee officers. Elder, who earlier served as seminary vice president under Dilday, offered a detailed critique of the trustee mailing, which was sent

to 40,000 Southern Baptist churches to state the trustees' rationale for firing Dilday. Elder listed 72 questions, asking for full response and documentation by May 15.

Elder said May 17 that he received a letter of acknowledgement from trustee chairman Ralph Pulley, but that response did not answer his questions or request for documentation. Elder said he wrote a follow-up letter reiterating his request.

-- Friends and supporters of the ousted president have scheduled a dinner to honor Dilday and his wife June 6 at a Dallas hotel. Among the planners are Ken Cooper, who before Dilday's termination chaired the Southwestern Council, a fund-raising group, and Wayne Allen, a conservative trustee who opposed Dilday's firing.

-30-

-- Jim Jones of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram contributed to this story.

Agreement could bring
abortion pill to U.S.

By Greg Warner

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The French firm that makes the controversial abortion pill RU-486 has been persuaded by the Clinton administration to give the U.S. patent rights to a New York organization, which will open the door for testing and possible approval for use of the drug by American women.

Roussel Uclaf, the French manufacturer, has been reluctant to seek U.S. approval to market the drug because of the charged political climate surrounding abortion. But at the urging of Donna Shalala, secretary of Health and Human Services, the company donated its U.S. patent rights to Population Council, a New York-based non-profit research organization that promotes contraception and abortion.

RU-486, or mifepristone, is praised by abortion-rights advocates as a safe, non-surgical alternative to abortion. Critics say its use is immoral and will increase the number of terminated pregnancies in America.

"When the history of the late 1990s is written, President Clinton and HHS Secretary Donna Shalala will be recorded not as great liberators of women but as accessories to the murder of women and their unborn children," said Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The president waffles on most issues but not on the relentless assault on babies in the womb."

Population Council will begin testing the drug this fall in hopes of getting quick approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. If approved, the drug could be available from American doctors as early as 1996.

The pill has been used by about 150,000 European women since the late 1980s.

Roussel Uclaf originally balked at introducing the drug in the United States after then-President George Bush opposed it. President Bill Clinton, however, has pushed for its introduction, a company spokesman said, prompting the firm's turnaround "out of respect for the president."

The chairman of a congressional subcommittee conducting hearings on the pill praised the Clinton administration May 16 for breaking the logjam. Rep. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) credited Shalala, whom he said "essentially bird-dogged this every step of the way."

RU-486 blocks development of progesterone, a natural steroid hormone

that is essential for maintaining pregnancy. The drug, which must be administered before the 50th day of pregnancy, causes a fertilized egg to detach from the uterine wall. Two days later the patient returns for a dose of prostaglandin, which causes the embryo to be discharged from the uterus.

Both drugs are administered by a doctor. Because the procedure can cause significant pain and bleeding, the woman must remain in the doctor's office or clinic until the abortion is complete and return in a few days for a follow-up visit.

RU-486 also is being tested as a treatment for breast cancer and endometriosis, among other diseases. But Rep. Wyden, in opening remarks to the subcommittee hearing, said the drug has become "a lightning rod in the abortion debate."

"Although an important new medical agent in its own right, this drug's political symbolism has nearly overshadowed its pharmacological importance," Wyden said.

Margaret Catley-Carlson, president of the Population Council, said her organization is seeking to bring RU-486 to the United States "not to increase the incidence of abortion but to provide a choice of safe abortion methods."

The drug reportedly is 95 percent effective as an abortion agent when used with prostaglandin.

"The drug is not safe," countered the CLC's Mitchell. "For the unborn it is more lethal than an AK-47 assault rifle. Sadly, the drug is fairly effective -- if your goal is to kill babies in the womb."

-30-

'Consensus builder' tapped
by Clinton for Supreme Court

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON -- President Clinton has nominated another centrist, consensus builder to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Federal appeals court judge Stephen G. Breyer -- like Clinton's first high court nominee, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg -- is viewed as a centrist or slightly left of center on most issues.

Breyer's record on the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals shows support for abortion rights and individual liberties, including religious freedom.

Nonetheless, his overall judicial record and his stint as top counsel on the Senate's Judiciary Committee are earning broad bipartisan support for confirmation to become the high court's 108th justice.

Clinton nominated Breyer to replace Justice Harry Blackmun, who is retiring after a quarter century on the Supreme Court bench. At a May 16 White House ceremony, Clinton praised Blackmun for serving "with fortitude, vision, fairness and enormous courage and passion," and predicted Breyer would also "grace the court with greatness."

Clinton noted that Breyer had served in all three branches of government with the heart and head of a reformer.

"In addition to his extraordinary intellectual talents," Clinton said, "Judge Breyer will bring to the court an abiding sense of decency and an unswerving dedication to ensuring liberty and justice for all."

Breyer also possesses "a well-recognized and impressive ability to build bridges in pursuit of fairness and justice," Clinton said.

A former law clerk for the late Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, Breyer pledged to "try to make the law work for people, because that is its defining purpose in a government of the people."

If confirmed, Breyer said he would devote himself to ensuring "that both the letter and the spirit of our laws continue to serve the people of this country."

After reviewing some of Breyer's writings as a federal judge, Baptist church-state attorney Brent Walker described the 55-year-old San Francisco native as "a balanced separationist who seems willing to enforce both religion clauses (of the First Amendment) in a way that takes into account the impact that judicial decisions have on ordinary individuals."

As a federal judge, Breyer:

-- held that certain provisions of a federal labor law did not apply to a religiously affiliated college;

-- held that a Baptist school's free-exercise rights were not violated by requiring its secular curriculum to be approved by local school officials;

-- wrote a concurring opinion holding that state-paid transportation for private school students is constitutionally permissible as a student benefit, even though it involved inter-district busing;

-- dissented from the appeals court's ruling that theology students seeking federal assistance had to complete the application's statement of compliance with the military draft.

"It is fair to say that Judge Breyer carefully applied the 'compelling interest' test in free-exercise cases, though he didn't always rule for the religious claimant," said Walker, general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee. He noted that Breyer has participated in no free-exercise cases since the Supreme Court ruled in 1990 that government no longer needed a compelling reason to restrict religion.

As for church-state separation, Walker said Breyer has shown a concern for church autonomy and has rigorously applied the Supreme Court's ban on church-state entanglement.

Breyer's writings, Walker said, reveal no philosophical problem with the controversial Lemon test used by the Supreme Court to preserve governmental neutrality toward religion. Lemon requires government actions to have a secular purpose, neither advance nor inhibit religion, and avoid excessive entanglement between religion and government.

"His record on the circuit bench reminds me of Justice Ginsburg's when she was nominated -- a careful attention to precedent and to the details of the record," Walker said. "His style of writing and reasoning reminds me of Justice (David) Souter -- thorough and scholarly, but practical and common-sensical at the same time."

Breyer's selection appears likely to preserve, not shift, the court's balance on church-state issues. "Even if Breyer turns out to be very good on church-state issues, it will be difficult for him to match Justice Blackmun's record," Walker said.

In a pair of abortion-related cases, Breyer dissented from the appeals court's decision upholding a Massachusetts parental-consent law and the next year voted against the Bush administration's ban on abortion counseling at federally supported clinics.

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Senate approves legislation
protecting abortion clinics

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate approved May 12 a bill that would make it a federal crime to block access to abortion clinics, damage property and physically intimidate patients and clinic workers.

The Senate approved the bill 69 to 30. The U.S. House of Representatives previously approved the measure, and President Clinton is expected to sign it.

Bill supporters say the measure is needed to combat a growing epidemic of "vigilantism" employed by some anti-abortion groups. Opponents counter that the measure violates their right to free speech.

The measure would impose up to six months' imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine for first-time, non-violent offenders, those who block access without damage to property or persons. Violent offenders would receive stiffer penalties -- a maximum of \$100,000 in fines and one year in prison. Bodily injury and/or death would carry the stiffest penalties.

The bill also would establish the right to bring civil suits to stop such activities, as well as to collect damages.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said that in the last 15 years more than 1,000 violent acts against abortion providers, more than 100 cases of arson and bombings, and hundreds of blockades, invasions and vandalism against clinics have been documented.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., also supported the bill, saying, "The freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution does not include bombings, vandalism, assault, arson, destruction of property and physically preventing people from entering medical clinics. Unfortunately, it took the murder of Dr. David Gunn in Pensacola, Fla., for many people to recognize the danger in the escalating pattern of violence that has been directed against abortion providers in this country."

Sen. Robert Smith, R-N.H., strongly opposed the bill. The penalties for non-violent protesters are far too harsh, he said.

"This senator recognizes, of course, that acts of civil disobedience are, by definition, sometimes unlawful," Smith said. "But I firmly believe that acts of politically motivated, peaceful civil disobedience should only be punished in generally the same manner as would the same underlying unlawful conduct when it is engaged in by anybody else."

The bill also contains a provision, offered by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, that would make it a crime to block access to churches and synagogues or to vandalize those facilities.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

New book highlights
obscure biblical women

By Melanie Childers

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Remember the biblical stories of Huldah, Hagar, Shiphrah and Puah?

Although not "regulars" in Sunday school curriculum or weekly sermons, they still have important lessons for today's Christians, a Baptist author says.

Huldah, Shiphrah and 21 other biblical women are featured in a new book called "Sister Images," written by Mary Zimmer of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

In this collection of guided meditations and commentaries, Zimmer uncovers the stories of obscure, even nameless, women of the Bible, while also offering new perspectives on traditionally recognized heroines such as Deborah, Ruth and Mary.

Zimmer is assistant to the dean at Southern's Christian education school and a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville.

"It was the case of writing my first book because I couldn't find it," Zimmer said. She had searched unsuccessfully for careful scholarship of biblical women's stories, with practical, contemporary relevance.

She said she tried to bridge the gap between academic theology/biblical interpretation and "the women in the pew."

"It's a miracle we even have these stories of biblical women," she said, given the low status of women in the culture during biblical times.

But Zimmer discovered that the stories of biblical women got told because of what those women did and said. And today's Christian women have much to learn from their biblical counterparts, she added. The meditations "are intended to be empowering to women."

In "Sister Images," published by Abingdon Press in 1993, the women's stories are organized into groups representing sisters of wisdom, strife, faith, woe and courage.

Each chapter includes the reprinted Scripture passage; a brief commentary providing connections between biblical women and today's Christian women; a guided imagery meditation; and a closing prayer.

"It's designed so that people could pick up one story (as a devotional) or use a set for a theme interpretation," Zimmer explained.

Several factors contributed to Zimmer's six-year endeavor to write her first book.

With a master's degree in social work, a master of divinity degree in Christian education and leadership roles in the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry organization, Zimmer has been a close observer of matters in the Southern Baptist Convention. Living through this era caused her to question her role as a woman in the SBC, she said.

Meanwhile, personal retreats and careful readings of women theologians offered new insights into Scripture, she explained. "I started seeing things I'd never heard in Sunday school or worship before."

Then in 1985, when she was asked to prepare theme interpretations for a women's retreat through her church, Zimmer said, she chose to focus on three biblical women. That laid the groundwork for "Sister Images."

By the time she submitted her work to Abingdon Press in 1991, most of the meditations had been honed and edited from multiple uses in retreats and homilies.

Zimmer said her personal favorites include the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15, because "she was the first assertive woman," and Deborah, the Old Testament prophetess and judge, for her strength and ability to bring "peace for decades."

This book isn't just for women, the author said. She hopes men who preach about women in the Bible will use "Sister Images" to take a second look at the stories and "not just say what's always been said."

Zimmer plans for her next book, also geared toward women, to focus on prayer. It will be oriented toward the Christian year and will include quotes from various women writers, she said.

-30-

Chapman requests meeting
with Texas cooperative giving group

By Toby Druin

DALLAS (ABP) -- At his request, Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, will meet with the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Cooperative Missions Giving Study

Committee at its next meeting in Dallas, May 23, or the following meeting, June 8.

Chairman Cecil Ray said the committee has been polled and agreed to hear Chapman. The 22-member panel similarly heard from Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, at its April meeting. Loring made the motion at last fall's annual meeting asking that a committee be appointed to study how to enhance cooperative missions giving in Texas.

Ray said the committee had made good progress in exploring its options in addressing the assignment given it by the convention.

"The committee has not determined its recommendations, even though some options have received favorable interest," he said. The committee, he added, expects to come up with a recommendation on schedule. Loring's motion asked that the committee report to the 1994 convention in Amarillo, Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

The committee expects to have a recommendation completed in time to present at the Aug. 18-19 meeting of the BGCT Administrative Committee and to the Sept. 13 meeting of the Executive Board," said Ray.

"A full release of the committee's proposal will be made to Texas Baptists by this date, likely through the Baptist Standard," he said.

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Scheduled SBC preacher
won't be a messenger

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (ABP) -- For the first time in memory, the annual sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention will be preached by a pastor whose church cannot send messengers to the annual meeting.

Bobby Boyles was pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, Okla., last year when he was selected to preach the 1994 convention sermon. Boyles' associate pastor at the time, Fred Powell, chaired the committee on order of business which nominated him.

Since that time, however, the Moore church has split. Boyles resigned as pastor to start Eagle Heights Church in February. The new church, comprised largely of former members of First Baptist, meets temporarily on south Western Avenue in Oklahoma City.

The SBC constitution allows representation only to churches which have been bona fide contributors to the convention's work during the previous year. For this year's convention, that record must be established between September 30, 1992, and Oct. 1, 1993, said Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary.

New churches and missions organized after Oct. 1, 1993, must wait until at least 1995 to send messengers, Porter said.

Eagle Heights has petitioned Capital Association for membership and is contributing to the association and also through the Cooperative Program unified funding plan for both the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and the SBC.

However, according to Porter, neither Eagle Heights members nor Boyles may register as messengers to this year's meeting.

A spokesman for the SBC Historical Commission in Nashville said that convention documents describe no qualifications or requirements for the preacher of the annual sermon. "Taking it to the extreme, if the committee nominated the pope as the preacher and the messengers approved its report and nomination, the pope would preach," he said.

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