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Trustee says Dilday firing reflects wishes  
of SBC leaders, but not instructions

By Greg Warner

WATAUGA, Texas (ABP) -- A trustee of Southwestern Seminary says he and his fellow trustees were carrying out the wishes of the Southern Baptist Convention's conservative leaders when they fired the seminary's president but afterward they were abandoned by those leaders.

In a letter to eight key figures in the conservative movement -- including six former SBC presidents -- Texas trustee Ollin Collins complains about their "strange silence" since the March 9 firing of president Russell Dilday.

"I say strange silence because it just seems strange that when we finally did what you men had been leading us to do, and saying needed to be done for some 10 years now, and yet once it was done it was as though we had leprosy and nobody wanted to touch us or be associated with us," wrote Collins, acting chairman of the committee seeking Dilday's replacement.

"We really feel like we have been hung out and left by our self and nobody that we have respected has stepped forward" to show support, he wrote.

The May 9 letter was sent to former SBC presidents Jimmy Draper of Nashville, Tenn., Adrian Rogers of Memphis, Tenn., Bailey Smith and Charles Stanley of Atlanta, Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Fla., current president Ed Young of Houston, and prominent pastors Homer Lindsay of Jacksonville and James Merritt of Snellville, Ga. Copies were sent to trustees.

Collins urged the leaders to speak out in defense of the trustee action.

"I truly feel that because of the lack of this type of leadership by any high-profile conservative pastor, that our conservative constituency is fragmenting," said Collins, pastor of Harvest Baptist Church in Watauga, just north of Fort Worth, where Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is located.

"I would urge you on behalf of my fellow trustees to prayerfully consider making some

kind of a public statement saying that you trust us, believe in the trustee process, and urge conservative Southern Baptists to trust us to be making a decision that is right for Southern Baptists," Collins wrote.

Six days later, Vines declared his support for the firing, saying trustees "made a decision which, in my personal judgment, was long overdue." Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, said he also spoke for Rogers, Smith and Stanley, who had authorized him to say so. The pronouncement was made in Vines' church newsletter, which was mailed to 8,000 pastors.

Immediately after the firing, Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, urged Southern Baptists to trust the trustee process at Southwestern, and Draper, president of the SBC Sunday School Board, declined specific comment but urged prayer for Dilday, the seminary and trustees.

In a May 24 interview with Associated Baptist Press, Collins denied the trustees were acting on specific instructions to fire Dilday. "Each one of us did what we felt God wanted done ... but we knew there were leaders in the convention who felt pleased with our action," he said.

"My question in writing the letter was, 'What happened to you guys?'"

"Everybody knows those men I wrote were leaders in seeing that the convention move back to a conservative direction," he continued. "While none of the leaders said ... 'You need to go get Russell,' I knew their hearts. They knew years ago Russell needed to leave."

In addition to Vines' statement, Collins said he since has received supportive letters from Rogers, Vines and Lindsay and a phone call from Draper.

The trustees now serving Southwestern were all elected since conservatives gained control of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies, in part by claiming liberalism was making inroads at the six SBC seminaries.

Trustee leaders said Dilday was blocking conservative reforms at the 3,000-student seminary, the world's largest. Since the firing, which was approved 27-7, the trustees have been criticized -- sometimes bitterly -- by seminary donors, alumni, students, faculty and one accrediting agency.

"We want to move on and find a president," wrote Collins, "but in all honesty we feel that we 27 who voted to terminate Russell are in this all by ourselves when we receive over 450 letters, are bombarded from every news media, Baptist included, telling us what reprobates we are, calling us ecclesiastical bigots, and told that there are special places in hell reserved just for us."

Collins told the SBC leaders he was not being critical of them. He noted his "love, respect and support" for them and their leadership.

Ralph Pulley, chairman of Southwestern's trustees, interpreted Collins' letter more as "encouragement" to the SBC leaders than complaint. "Nobody feels abandoned at all," said Pulley, a Dallas attorney and the strategist behind Dilday's firing. "This really hasn't been a subject of discussion among trustees I have talked to."

But Collins said other trustees have expressed similar feelings of abandonment.

Pulley said he has received "strong encouragement" from all those addressed by Collins' letter. "Directly or indirectly, I've had expression from all of them," he said.

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Sid Smith, Bob Burroughs  
named to Florida state staff

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- The Florida Baptist Convention has added an African-American to its administrative staff, becoming perhaps the first state convention to place an African-American in such a high-level position.

Sid Smith, 50, will become director of African-American ministries for the Florida convention June 1. He will be one of nine people who make up the convention's administrative

team.

The convention's State Board of Missions, meeting May 20, also hired popular composer and teacher Bob Burroughs as director of the church music department and Orlando pastor Robert Mounts as director of the family ministries/moral concerns department.

Smith served as the first manager of the black church development section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board 1987-90. Currently he is president of his own consulting firm, Black Church Consultants of America, based in Nashville, Tenn.

In his new position, Smith will work with the 75 African-American churches affiliated with the Florida convention and help start new churches in black communities. He holds a master's degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate from California Graduate School of Theology in Glendale.

Burroughs, 57, has been associate professor and composer-in-residence at Palm Beach Atlantic College in West Palm Beach, Fla., since 1990. He has written more than 1,250 music compositions and conducts national workshops for Southern Baptist agencies.

Burroughs' wife, Esther, is a popular inspirational speaker and evangelism consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Burroughs will replace Paul Bobbitt, who retired. A Virginia native, Burroughs holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as minister of music for churches in Georgia, Oklahoma and Texas and taught at Samford and Mercer universities.

Mounts, 56, has been pastor of Delaney Street Baptist Church in Orlando since 1986. A licensed family counselor, he also heads his own counseling and Bible-teaching ministry. He holds degrees from Tennessee Temple University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Bob Jones University.

A native of West Virginia, Mounts will fill a position left vacant by the retirement of David Roddy in 1993.

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-- By Greg Warner and Barbara Denman

Baptists, others rebut administration  
in dispute over church keeping tithes

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Justice Department's contention that a Minnesota church should return more than \$13,000 in tithes contributed by a couple headed for bankruptcy has elicited a stern rebuttal from Baptist and other religious groups.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee joined five other groups May 23 in asking the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to reject the Clinton administration's argument that Bruce and Nancy Young were giving away creditors' property when they donated \$13,450 to Crystal Evangelical Free Church during the 12 months before they filed for bankruptcy in February 1992.

The two Baptist organizations earlier joined a similar coalition of religious and civil-liberties groups siding with the church when it appealed a federal court's order to turn over the funds to a bankruptcy trustee to help pay debts owed to the couple's creditors.

The coalition's latest friend-of-the-court brief responds to an argument filed recently by the Justice Department which contends that the funds donated by the Youngs actually belonged to their creditors. Recovering the funds would violate neither the First Amendment's free exercise guarantee nor the recently enacted Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the government brief also contends.

University of Texas Law School professor Douglas Laycock wrote the religious groups' response to the Justice Department brief. In addition to the CLC, the social concerns agency of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the BJC, a religious liberty watchdog coalition of several national Baptist bodies formerly including the SBC, Laycock's brief represents the Christian Legal Society, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the National Association of Evangelicals and the Traditional Values Coalition.

Laycock accepts the Justice Department's view that religious liberty does not include the right to give someone else's property to one's church but insists that in this case, "the property contributed to the church was the property of the debtors."

The church is offering religious liberty claims, which the Justice Department brief rejects. The Youngs' free-exercise rights are not "substantially burdened," the government contends, because bankruptcy law does not interfere with "a debtor's ability to dispose of money or property the debtor has the right to give away."

The government also argues that recovery of funds from the church is not barred by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act -- which requires government to show a "compelling reason" to restrict religious freedom. In this case, the compelling interest served is that of "protecting the property of others," the government's brief states.

"The government's interest is not in protecting anyone's property, but in enriching unsecured creditors at the expense of churches," Laycock contended. "The interest in enriching unsecured creditors is not generally pursued and is not compelling."

Laycock noted that bankruptcy laws permit debtors to spend money without benefit to creditors in a host of ways during the year before bankruptcy. If debtors spend \$13,000 on "luxuries, travel, parties, gourmet food, liquor, prostitutes, casino gambling, or lottery tickets," Laycock wrote, the bankruptcy estate could not recover the money.

"It is frivolous for the government to claim a compelling interest in prohibiting religious contributions when it claims almost no interest in preventing irresponsible consumption," he stated.

Laycock also argued that ruling for the church in this case would not create a religious shelter for debtor misconduct. Gifts to churches with the actual intent to hinder creditors still could be challenged, he said.

All that is at issue in this case is whether churches can be forced "to repay contributions made in the ordinary course of the free exercise of religion," Laycock stated.

Virtually all U.S. religious bodies supported enactment of RFRA, which was introduced in Congress after the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly ruled that in most cases, government needed only a plausible -- but not compelling -- reason to restrict religious practice.

Group representatives disagreed strongly with the administration's stance on RFRA's application in this case.

"The (Justice) Department's position reflects a remarkable disregard for the purpose intended for RFRA by a near-unanimous Congress and by President Clinton," said Steve McFarland, director of Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom.

McFarland said the Justice Department's view in the case "could leave RFRA functionally impotent to protect any citizen's free exercise of religion."

Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Brent Walker said the government "is dead wrong" on its reading of RFRA.

"If invading the collection plate to take a tithe already dedicated to God's kingdom doesn't 'substantially burden' free exercise, I don't know what does," Walker said. "And the state hardly has a compelling interest in compensating unsecured creditors when the loop-hole-ridden bankruptcy code routinely exempts other property that could be used" to satisfy debts.

The government's view fails to appreciate the importance of tithing to religious Americans, Walker said.

"It's not just a way to keep the lights on in the church house," he said. "It's nothing less than an act of religious worship."

The government's brief also drew fire in Congress where Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, a leading RFRA co-sponsor, accused the administration of interpreting the act "in a manner that effectively guts it."

Hatch called the Justice Department's position in the case a "slap in the face to our religious community" and said it "should not stand." Hatch said he would ask Attorney General Janet Reno to reconsider the Justice Department's position in the case.

By siding with the church in this case, BJC Executive Director James Dunn said the Washington, D.C.-based religious liberty agency is not seeking to bind creditors with a debtor's diminished responsibility because of future tithes.

"This case is concerned only with past gifts," he said. "If a debtor wishes to continue tithing after a bankruptcy proceeding, perhaps a payment schedule can be extended to ensure creditors receive the amount to which they are entitled."

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High court declines to review  
religion-based juror exclusion

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Despite ruling in the past that lawyers cannot dismiss potential jurors because of their gender or race, the U.S. Supreme Court refused May 23 to extend that ban to prohibit exclusion of a potential juror based on his religion.

The court declined to review a ruling by the Minnesota Supreme Court that upheld a prosecutor's decision to exclude a Jehovah's Witness practitioner from a jury that eventually convicted a man of armed robbery.

During jury selection procedures, the prosecutor said she eliminated the potential juror because of her view that Jehovah's Witnesses "are reluctant to exercise authority over fellow human beings in this courthouse."

Two members of the Supreme Court issued a sharp dissent to the refusal to review the case.

Justice Clarence Thomas, joined in an opinion by Justice Antonin Scalia, said the case should have been accepted and returned to the Minnesota Supreme Court for reconsideration in light of the April 19 ruling that barred gender-based exclusion of jurors.

Before last month's ruling, the Supreme Court had barred only juror challenges based on race.

Thomas and Scalia, who objected to the court's April decision to bar challenges based on gender, accused the majority of inconsistency by permitting jurors to be excluded based on religion.

In a brief note concurring in the court's rejection of the case, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote that Thomas and Scalia provided an "incomplete" portrayal of the Minnesota court's opinion.

"That court made two key observations: (1) 'religious affiliation (or lack thereof) is not as self-evident as race or gender;' ... (2) 'ordinarily ... inquiry ... into a juror's religious affiliation and beliefs is irrelevant and prejudicial, and to ask such questions is improper,'" Ginsburg wrote.

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-- By Larry Chesser

Former seminary trustee pleads guilty  
to understating his income to IRS

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (ABP) -- A Missouri pastor who in recent years has served as a seminary trustee and a teller at the Southern Baptist Convention was sentenced to two years' probation and 100 hours of community service and ordered to pay back taxes, interest and penalties totaling \$92,000 after confessing in federal court to two counts of understating his income on tax returns.

James Reimer admitted to a U.S. District Court in Springfield, Mo., that he underreported income in 1986 and 1987 from his collection of deer antlers, a hobby-turned-business that Reimer said sometimes earned up to \$50,000 a year.

Reimer claimed, however, he never intended to defraud the Internal Revenue Service but blamed his offense on poor accounting.

"My record system was virtually nil," Reimer told Judge Russell Clark at a hearing May 2. "I wrote things down on the back of envelopes and on napkins. Things got very confusing." But he said he was not trying to excuse himself. "I put myself in the position that opened me to these charges. I never should have done that."

After a five-year investigation by government agencies, Reimer pleaded guilty to the two counts to avoid prosecution on eight counts of understating his income. He was told he would go to prison if convicted.

He resigned as pastor of Second Baptist Church of Springfield, Mo., a position he held 12 years, effective April 30 to "minimize the hurt to the church," he said. Before coming to Missouri in 1982, Reimer was president of Biblical Financial Concepts, an agency advising churches how to raise money for building programs.

From 1988 until 1993, Reimer was a member of the board of trustees at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, an SBC school in Kansas City, Mo. Last year he was replaced for a term scheduled to end in 1995. He also has been a trustee of Southwest Baptist University, a Missouri Baptist Convention school in Bolivar. In 1991 he was appointed by SBC president Morris Chapman to serve on the convention's tellers committee.

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Accident kills five students  
of Southwest Baptist University

BOLIVAR, Mo. (ABP) -- Five Southwest Baptist University students died from injuries received May 8 in a traffic accident near Bolivar, Mo.

The five were returning from a weekend trip in Kansas City when their 1984 Oldsmobile crossed the center line on a hill and collided head-on with a pickup truck. The accident occurred at about 7:30 p.m. on Missouri Hwy. 13 six miles north of Bolivar, the small southwestern Missouri town where the campus of the 2,000-student college is located.

A state trooper told Associated Press the driver, Kent Graham, may have fallen asleep at the wheel or been distracted. Graham, 23, and his sister, Stacy Graham, 20, were returning from a weekend at their parents' home the Kansas City suburb of Raytown, Mo., with three friends. Also killed were Michelle Huffman, 20, of Raytown; Beverlee Cohee, 18, of Lawton, Okla., and Scott Cook, 20, of Decatur, Ill.

Kent Graham was transported by helicopter to a Springfield hospital, where he died during surgery. The other four victims died at the scene. The driver of the pickup truck, Jesse Armstrong,

33, of Poplar Bluff, Mo., was hospitalized in Bolivar and listed in good condition.

Another carload of Southwest Baptist students was following the Graham vehicle and witnessed the accident.

Three of the victims, the two Grahams and Huffman, were members of First Baptist Church of Raytown. Pastor Paul Brooks described them as some of the finest young people in the church -- "kids who influenced other young people for the Lord."

"It's a very, very sad day," Brooks said. "We are all wounded and hurting. One of these days when we all get to heaven we're going to understand why this happened. But we're not going to know until then."

A joint service for the three was held at the church May 11.

Hundreds of students at the university, which is affiliated with the Missouri Baptist Convention, joined together the evening and morning after the tragedy for prayer and remembrance, said Roy Blunt, Southwest Baptist University president. "Our university feels the devastation of this sudden end to the promising lives of these young people," he said.

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### California Supreme Court allows murder charge for killing of fetus

SAN FRANCISCO (ABP) -- The California Supreme Court has held that a person can be convicted of murder for causing the death of a fetus, even though the fetus could have been legally aborted.

The May 16 ruling, by a 6-1 majority, will allow prosecutors to charge a defendant with murder for causing a pregnant woman to miscarry, even if her fetus is incapable of surviving outside the womb.

The ruling will not directly affect abortion rights, which since the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* ruling have been protected under constitutional rights to privacy. However, both pro-life and pro-choice groups monitored the case for its ruling on a legal definition of when life begins.

Anne Kindt, executive director of the Right to Life League of Southern California, called the ruling "a victory of sorts" because it asserts that life in the womb is legally regarded in California as a human life.

Abby Leibman, executive director of California Woman's Law Center, said the California court moved the law "in a very troubling direction" by paving the way for regulation of abortion.

Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas wrote for the majority that killing a fetus can be considered murder "... as long as the state can show the fetus has progressed beyond the embryonic stage of seven to eight weeks."

Before the ruling, most courts have interpreted California laws to provide for murder charges only in the killing of a fetus that could survive outside the womb of the mother, generally not earlier than the 25th week of gestation. Under *Roe vs. Wade*, a woman is free to abort her fetus until it becomes viable outside the womb.

The court ruled in a San Diego case in which a 20-year-old man was convicted of murder for causing a woman to miscarry during a robbery in March 1991. During the trial, experts testified that the fetus was 22 to 25 weeks old and disagreed about whether it could have survived outside the womb.

The new interpretation gives California arguably the nation's toughest fetal-murder law. It means that a robber could be sentenced to death if in the course of his crime he wounded a pregnant woman and caused her to miscarry, even if he was unaware of her pregnancy. Prosecutors also may charge a defendant with multiple murder -- a capital offense -- for killing a

pregnant woman whose fetus could not survive outside the womb.

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Editor's note: The following two stories were posted yesterday for CServe users.

Bruster resigns church  
to accept Fellowship job

By Greg Warner

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- Texas pastor Bill Bruster has accepted the offer to become western coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the leading organization of moderate Southern Baptists.

Bruster, 54, resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church of Abilene May 22 to take the newly created position. He will direct the Fellowship's work in Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Louisiana, Arkansas, Kansas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

While less than one fourth of Fellowship-supporting churches are located in the West, one third of the contributions come from those western churches, Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman told the group's Coordinating Council, which approved the position May 4.

Bruster has been active in moderate organizations for years and was a founder and president of Texas Baptists Committed, the predominant moderate organization in the state.

In resigning May 22, Bruster told his congregation he is making the move to help the Fellowship carve a future for moderate Baptists.

"I am under the profound conviction that we must build a fellowship within the Southern Baptist Convention which will provide future generations of Baptists with a positive way to work together in missions and theological education," he said. "I intend to commit the rest of my life and energies to that end."

The Fellowship, chartered in 1991, is seen by many of the SBC's current conservative leaders as the forerunner of a new Baptist convention. But, Bruster said, a split with the SBC has never been the Fellowship's intent.

"But if we don't do something now there will be no Southern Baptist Convention left for our children," he said. "I believe I can do more to change that in the Fellowship position than I can as a pastor. That's what I feel God leading me to do."

Bruster said the March 9 firing of Russell Dilday, president of the the SBC's Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, "helped push me over the edge." Dilday's firing by conservative trustees has sent shock waves through the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention.

Sherman said Dilday's firing -- and the backlash it created among Texas Baptists -- was part of the reason for moving quickly to fill the western coordinator's position. The Coordinating Council took the unusual step of authorizing Sherman to fill the vacancy -- with a salary of \$84,000 -- even though Sherman declined to name the person he had picked out for the post.

Associated Baptist Press reported May 9 that Bruster had been offered the position. Bruster, who said at the time he had not decided to take the job, protested the announcement by ABP.

Sherman said a western coordinator is necessary for the Atlanta-based Fellowship because he has had a hard time spending an appropriate amount of time among Fellowship churches in the western states.

Of the 1,200 churches that channeled contributions to the Fellowship in 1993, 283 were

from the nine states assigned to Bruster. Texas, with 165 churches, accounted for more than any other state except North Carolina (221).

Bruster said he will remain in Abilene, but Sherman said he likely will move to the Dallas-Fort Worth area eventually.

Sherman said Bruster has "deep roots" in the Fellowship and the moderate movement. "Early on he ... committed himself to remaining a Baptist, although the SBC was wavering, drifting from Baptist principles," Sherman said.

"He is a man of good temper and good humor. He is not contentious. And he will serve us well. The churches he has served have thrived. His character is exemplary and we are blessed to have him come to us."

A native of Oklahoma and graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Bruster holds master's and doctoral degrees from Southwestern Seminary. He previously held pastorates in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Tennessee before moving to Abilene, where he served First Baptist for nine years.

He and his wife, Charlotte, have two children -- a daughter, Julie, in law school and a son, Anthony, in high school.

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-- Roy Jones of the Abilene Reporter-News contributed to this article.

Truett Seminary expansion OK'd,  
contingent on donors, student demand

By Bob Allen

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baylor University, which had planned to move gradually into theological education, now says it is willing to raise by tenfold the number of students who can enroll in its George W. Truett Theological Seminary if student demand and financial support are there.

Baylor's board of regents, which had limited this fall's inaugural class at Truett to 150 students, voted May 20 to accept as many as 1,500 students at the Waco, Texas, campus and possible satellite sites around the state.

The move would position Truett for an exodus of students and faculty expected by some observers from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in nearby Fort Worth, the Southern Baptist school rocked by the March 9 firing of President Russell Dilday.

The Baylor plan would double the 150-student limit for the Waco campus, plus open the door for 250-300 students on each of four satellite campuses -- in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston. Classes are scheduled to begin in Waco in August, using the facilities of First Baptist Church in that city.

Future expansion could continue beyond the borders of Texas and perhaps into key international locations, said Baylor President Herbert Reynolds. Reynolds said Baylor will open other satellite campuses "wherever highly capable faculty and adequate financial resources permit."

The rate of expansion is contingent on donor support, faculty availability and student interest, Reynolds said. To plan specifically for this fall, he said, donor pledges must be in by June 20 to allow time for hiring of faculty.

"What this is is an offer or a challenge to Baptists that if they will commit financially to this kind of enterprise and if there are sufficient numbers of students, Baylor is willing to do it," said Robert Sloan, dean of Truett Seminary. "If things stay as they are, we will continue with our plans to open up with about 50 students this fall."

Reynolds announced establishment of Truett Seminary in May 1993. Early on, supporters saw a seminary at Baylor primarily as a safety net for Texas moderates should Southwestern

Seminary's domination by fundamental-conservative trustees ever result in a doctrinal purge at the school.

That fear became more imminent with the March 9 firing of Southwestern president Russell Dilday by trustees, who said he stood in the way of conservative reforms. Southwestern is the world's largest seminary with more than 3,000 students. More Southwestern students come from Baylor than any other college.

The vision for Truett, named after the longtime pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, "started small because that's the amount of money we had in place," Sloan said. Recently, however, "there has been a lot of interest expressed in someone stepping forward in Texas to set up a seminary that will meet a larger need," he added.

Sloan said he is uncertain about how much money has already been raised for the venture or what the fund-raising potential might be. "I think Baptists will give some support to this. What the extent of it would be, no one could predict."

Truett's curriculum -- based on low student-to-faculty ratios, interaction between faculty and students and emphasizing spiritual formation -- will "dovetail very nicely" with the satellite concept, Sloan said.

The seminary will aim for one faculty member for each 20 students, using both full-time and adjunct professors. Faculty likely will be recruited from existing schools, including seminaries owned by the Southern Baptist Convention, Sloan said, a former Southwestern professor.

"We could draw on any of the seminaries," he said. "I know the Southwestern faculty very well and I would gladly and readily look at faculty from Southwestern as well as any other seminaries."

Churches in the targeted cities have already been contacted about providing facilities for satellite campuses, Sloan said.

"The real issue is financial support and student demand," he said. "We've in effect opened up a 30-day window of opportunity. We are waiting to see how Baptists will respond."

Reynolds discussed Truett's expansion with Dilday, Sloan reported. Dilday reportedly is considering continued involvement in theological education in Texas as an option after his severance with Southwestern is completed.

Since Dilday is negotiating with Southwestern Seminary trustees about terms of his severance benefits, however, Sloan said, "it would not be responsible" for him to comment about what if any connection Dilday, a Baylor alumnus, might have with the Truett school.

"We are big fans of Russell Dilday. There's no doubt about that," he said.

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