

Associated Baptist Press

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July 21, 1994

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Southwestern given chance to avert probation

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) — Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary must show cause why it should not be placed on probation by at least one of the school's accrediting agencies.

The Association of Theological Schools took the action in early June after visiting the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary, which has been in turmoil since trustees fired president Russell Dilday March 9.

In a June letter to seminary officials, ATS cited six concerns and called for the seminary to demonstrate why those concerns should not result in probationary status for the 4,000-student school, one of six Southern Baptist seminaries. Probation, while not as serious as withdrawal of accreditation, can hinder the school's ability to attract students and financial support.

The seminary has not released the contents of the ATS letter, and ATS policy leaves it to the school's discretion whether or not to announce the agency's actions. But faculty members who were read the letter told Associated Baptist Press it cited six factors which threaten the school's status with ATS:

-- Institutional integrity. Has the seminary violated its established policies of governance, and does it remain both stable and credible? This is an overarching criterion, one that addresses the overall health and operation of the school.

-- Freedom from external harassment. Have influences outside the established channels of governance influenced the seminary? Have established policies been bypassed?

-- Academic freedom. Are students and faculty free to pursue truth?

-- Evaluation process for the president. Is the process used by trustees to evaluate the performance of the school's president appropriate and was it followed? Trustees have already acknowledged their official evaluations of

Dilday prior to his firing were all very positive.

-- Evaluation process for faculty. Does the seminary follow appropriate, established policies in evaluating faculty members for hiring, promotion and tenure? In at least one recent case, trustees considered whether a prospective professor was a member of a church supportive of the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship -- a criterion not included in the school's policies.

-- Fiscal integrity. Does the loss of financial support, such as from donors sympathetic to Dilday, pose a threat to the school's financial health?

Most of those concerns stem from the trustees' decision to fire Dilday, whom conservative trustees said was sympathetic to moderate causes and blocking conservative reforms.

In a rare letter of censure immediately after the firing, ATS Executive Director James Waits urged trustees to reconsider the firing, which he said "is a clear violation of accepted governance practices and places in jeopardy the vitality and basic integrity of the institution."

A five-person joint committee representing both ATS and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the seminary's other accrediting agency, visited the campus in May to interview administrators, faculty, trustees and students. The group's findings were reported to their respective agencies, which have since each written to the seminary reporting their actions.

It is not known if SACS cited the same six concerns. But Jack Allen, SACS associate executive director, said, "Those generally are some concerns that are part of our follow-up."

Both ATS and SACS will visit the seminary again, at which time Southwestern will respond to their concerns. The SACS visit is scheduled for spring. ATS has asked for a fall visit, but the seminary has requested that the visit be postponed until spring because of the impending election of Dilday's successor, Ken Hemphill of Atlanta.

If the second visit comes in the spring, both agencies likely would take action on Southwestern in June, when their accrediting commissions regularly meet. An earlier visit, however, could result in ATS action by January.

Southwestern's trustee chairman, Ralph Pulley of Dallas, said he would not comment on ongoing communications with either ATS or SACS. "We're sensitive, certainly, to the input of the accrediting agencies," Pulley said, but he added he does not believe the seminary's accreditation is jeopardized.

"We don't expect any problem with ATS or SACS. The accreditation of Southwestern is strong and positive, and with a new president coming in with a new direction, new vision and strong leadership, we expect Southwestern to soar in every phase," the Dallas attorney said.

William Tolar, acting Southwestern president, also declined to comment on the ATS action. "All I can tell you is they sent us a letter saying they would like to come back for another visit, and we said fine. We probably will ask them to let us have time to get our new president in and get settled in."

A "show cause" letter from an accrediting agency places the burden of proof on the seminary to demonstrate why its actions should not result in probation.

Like Pulley, Tolar earlier predicted Southwestern will not be given probation. But some faculty members say it is inevitable. "I don't think there is any way they will escape probation," one professor said.

This is the third time that actions by conservative Southern Baptist seminary trustees have brought scrutiny from the accrediting agencies.

In 1987, conservative trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina voted to hire only biblical inerrantists to the faculty. Then-president Randall Lolley and other administrators resigned in protest, prompting an investigation and probation from ATS and SACS. The probation was recently lifted.

In 1991 trustees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky tried to enforce the findings of the SBC Peace Committee on seminary faculty. The faculty objected. An ATS investigation followed. The trustees and faculty worked out a compromise, called a "Covenant of Renewal," which eased tensions.

'Empty nest' may mean empty pews as boomers age, study suggests

By Bob Allen

HARTFORD, Conn. (ABP) -- The baby boomers led their parents into the revivals of the 1950s, plunged the mainline denominations into decline by leaving organized religion in the 1960s, and renewed hope for denominational leaders with their prodigal return to the pews during the last decade.

Now they may be about to wield their influence on American religion once again, according to a recent study.

New research suggests that church attendance drops off for baby boomers as their children age. That phenomenon has led sociologist David Roozen to predict the next banner for the generation born between 1946 and 1965 might be: "Empty Nest, Empty Pew."

"One of the major contributing factors in boomers' return to active religious participation during the 1980s was their movement into parenting roles," said Roozen, a sociologist at Hartford Seminary's Center for Social and Religious Research.

Given that the heralded return of baby boomers to the pew in the 1980s assumes that they must have "left" during a pre-childrearing period, researchers have wondered if boomers would leave again after they move out of parenting roles, noted Roozen in a study titled "Empty Nest; Empty Pew: The Boomers Continue Through the Life Cycle."

Analyzing what he says is the first available data on boomers with adult children, Roozen said it is "too early to provide a definitive and controlled answer" to that question, but early findings "suggest it is an emerging trend worth watching."

Roozen analyzed surveys on worship attendance patterns collected by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. Focusing on older boomers, those born between 1946 and 1955, Roozen found worship attendance highest for marrieds with preteen children.

With the first appearance of empty nesters in a 1990 survey, he noted a "relatively dramatic drop" in the percentage of boomers who attend worship regularly -- 52.9 percent for married boomers with preteen children and 37.2 percent for empty nesters.

The drop-off in regular worship attendance actually begins even before the empty nest stage, he said. The percentage of boomers who attend worship regularly drops to 45.2 percent when their children hit the teens.

While worship attendance declines for empty nesters in all age groupings, the decline will be "much more dramatic" for boomers, Roozen predicted. A "consumer attitude" toward religion documented among boomers makes it plausible they will become less involved in church after their children receive religious training, he observed.

"What that sets up is you don't go to church or synagogue out of duty or loyalty. You go to it if you get something out of it," he said.

While not all baby boomers returned to church when they became parents -- they still attend church less regularly than the generations born before World War II -- the numbers of those who did were sufficient to stabilize church attendance after 15 years of decline. Likewise, Roozen predicted, "the inevitable and relatively massive transition of the boomers out of active parenting roles should exert considerable downward pressure on overall levels of religious participation for at least the next 20 years."

Roozen predicted that shrinking demographics will continue to affect church attendance for several decades. The first age group to follow the baby boomers, sometimes called the baby bust generation, is very small. Even if it does follow the pattern of increased church attendance as it moves into child-rearing years, those gains will not nearly offset the losses caused by the boomers' anticipated retreat, he said.

Meanwhile, the generation following the baby busters into adulthood -- often called the "baby boomlet" and

second in size only to the boomers -- will move into young adult life cycles traditionally low in church involvement.

The resulting pressures on churches trying to fill their pews will be akin to those felt during the late 1960s and early 1970s, he said.

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Fellowship officers eliminate two of three giving plans

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, responding to the Southern Baptist Convention's recent refusal to accept money from the Fellowship any longer, voted July 6 to eliminate two of the three basic giving options it offers to contributors.

The action, taken by the Fellowship's officers, was communicated to pastors of Fellowship-supporting churches in a July 12 letter from CBF coordinator Cecil Sherman.

The officers voted to replace the Fellowship's three giving plans with a single plan which supports only Fellowship causes and Fellowship-endorsed agencies. The change is effective retroactively to the June 16 SBC action instructing denominational agencies no longer to accept gifts channeled through the Fellowship, Sherman wrote.

The change will have little effect on the churches which now contribute to the Fellowship's Vision 2000 plan, earmarked solely for missions and ministries of the Fellowship and related moderate alternative ventures, Sherman said. Percentage allocations for the various recipients in the Vision 2000 plan were adjusted slightly to correspond with the 1995 budget, adopted in May at the Fellowship's general assembly.

Gone are the Fellowship's Transitional Plan, which channeled almost all its funds to selected SBC agencies, and the Ventures Plan, which supported both SBC and CBF causes.

Gifts received after June 16 that would have been channeled to SBC agencies and institutions will be held until the churches and individuals which sent them contact the Fellowship with written instructions about how to dispose of those funds, Sherman said. Any of those funds remaining after Dec. 31 will be applied to the Fellowship's global missions offering, he reported.

The officers' action is not a "knee jerk reaction" to the SBC's decision but "a reasoned response to the new realities created by the convention's action and other recent developments in the denomination," Sherman said.

He said the officers opted for a simple change, rather than asking churches to implement a more complicated and cumbersome plan on short notice.

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-- By Bob Allen

William Jewell College taps West Virginian as president

By Bob Terry

LIBERTY, Mo. (ABP) -- Trustees of William Jewell College elected Baptist educator Christian Sizemore as next president of the Liberty, Mo., school in a called meeting July 15.

Sizemore, 56, is currently president of Alderson-Broadus College in Philippi, W.Va. He plans to move to the Missouri school by mid-August.

John White, chairman of William Jewell's 18-member board of trustees, called Sizemore's election "the beginning of a new era at William Jewell."

"The trustees hired Dr. Sizemore to move the college toward stronger relations with the Missouri Baptist Convention," White said. "We are all committed to the mission of William Jewell as a premier Baptist liberal arts college. Dr. Sizemore is right for that task. That is what he has done where he is and that is what he wants to do at William Jewell College."

Contacted by telephone in West Virginia, Sizemore said, "One of the things that attracted me to William Jewell College was its church relations. We have strong church relationships here and they are very important to me. I look forward to being in the churches and working with Missouri Baptists."

Before going to Alderson-Broadus, Sizemore was at South Georgia College in Douglas for 17 years. At various times he served as acting president, academic dean, dean of the college and professor. He also taught and served on the staff of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., for two years.

A native of Virginia, Sizemore is a graduate of the University of Richmond and Southeastern Seminary. He earned a master's degree in library science from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and the doctor of philosophy degree from Florida State University in Tallahassee.

Since becoming president of Alderson-Broadus, an American Baptist-affiliated school, he has served on the West Virginia Baptist Convention executive board.

His wife, Anne, has also been active in church life in Georgia and West Virginia. She is a graduate of University of Richmond and holds a master's degree in journalism from West Virginia University. For the past five years, she has served as an instructor in journalism at Alderson-Broadus College.

The Sizemores have three grown sons and two grandsons.

In 11 years at Alderson-Broadus College, Sizemore led the school to record-breaking enrollments, increased financial resources and increased recognition for the school. Last year Alderson-Broadus led all West Virginia colleges and universities with a 14 percent increase in enrollment.

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Religious leaders in CIS nations pledge cooperation to promote peace

MOSCOW (ABP) – Religious leaders from across the former Soviet Union have banded together to appeal for an end to ethnic, social and political strife in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States.

The historic gathering of 180 religious leaders convened in Moscow June 21-23 at the invitation of Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexei under the banner of the International Interconfessional Conference on Christian Faith and Human Enmity.

The group included representatives of evangelical, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, according to the European Baptist Press Service. Several Russian Baptist leaders played leadership roles in the conference, which took place at the Russian Orthodox St. Daniel's Monastery.

The leaders adopted an appeal recognizing that efforts to build statehood under new historical realities in the former Soviet Union have brought mistakes, resulting in cultural, social and political tensions and in some cases outright violence.

They pledged "to make a new beginning in our common work to put an end to God-defying violence so that peace with justice and accord can be established in our lands."

The religious leaders urged state authorities and the people of their nations to "stop all fratricidal strife" through "reasonable concessions and compromises, among other means." They asked for those involved in conflicts to solve them through dialogue, embracing principles of love and respect for others, and to "promote reconciliation and to oppose enmity."

The leaders expressed "profound concern" over human-rights violations and a shared commitment to "generally accepted principles of respect, including the right to the freedom of conscience and equality of people of different nationalities, religious and other convictions before law."

The leaders pledged that the individual churches and associations they represent will continue to seek an end to strife, but stated that "it is only together that we can serve the cause of reconciliation." They pledged regular coordination of their religious and social actions and to maintain dialogue on problems affecting both Christians and the rest of society.

Karl Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, said the conference represented "a real step forward" in achieving religious freedom in the CIS.

However, Walter said, serious concern emerged in small group, round-table discussions over aggressive tactics used by some parachurch organizations. "There was strong opposition to parachurch groups which work within the context of Christian churches but which refuse to cooperate with existing churches," he said.

Russian Baptists were among the leaders of the major denominations represented in the CIS to serve on a preparation committee which planned the conference. Afterward, the committee remained intact with instructions to continue to work on issues which surfaced in discussion during the conference.

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-- By Bob Allen

Baylor receives grant for Truett seminary

WACO, Texas (ABP) – Baylor University has received a three-year grant of \$150,000 to support curriculum and faculty development for the George W. Truett Theological Seminary, scheduled to open this fall in Waco, Texas.

The grant, from the Henry Luce Foundation of New York, will be used to build a theological education program that balances intellectual pursuit, spiritual formation and the practical dimensions of ministry, said Herbert Reynolds, Baylor president.

The Henry Luce Foundation was established in 1936 by the co-founder of Time magazine to honor his parents, Presbyterian missionaries to China. The foundation funds programs in higher education, theological education, American art, Asian studies and public affairs.

Reynolds announced the opening of the Truett seminary in May 1993. It will hold classes at the First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, until a permanent facility is built on Baylor's campus.

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Home hardly a haven of rest in household with 18 children

By Tim Palmer

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. (ABP) -- For Pat Williams, general manager of the Orlando Magic National Basketball Association team, crowds, noise and media glare are the name of the game.

And that's before he leaves for the office.

Williams and his wife, Jill, are parents of four biological children and 14 others they have adopted from four foreign countries. They display their brood proudly as a poster family for international adoption, a cause Williams

promoted while bringing greetings to this summer's Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Fla., and in an interview with Word & Way, newspaper for the Missouri Baptist Convention.

The 14 adopted children are natives of Korea, the Philippines, Romania and Brazil.

"I think international adoption is every bit as miraculous as biological birth," Williams remarked. The process involves a mental struggle, he explained. Parents will ask themselves: "Why this child? Why this country? How can I adopt this child on the basis of a little photograph and sketchy information on his/her physical condition?"

For Williams, he said, those answers came from the Lord. "God knew all about it. He had them hand-picked. He moved on our heart."

The Williamses' faith pilgrimage has continued, as costs associated with child-rearing multiplied. They are looking at perhaps a \$2 million outlay for college. "We're trusting Him to provide," Pat said.

"We did not count the cost," he added. Still, the Williamses urge prospective parents not to be intimidated by costs, including the high price of an international adoption.

The adoption agencies have to stay in business, Williams pointed out, and they have a lot of expenses. "That's the real world -- nothing is given to us."

A couple who cannot afford an international adoption on their own often find amazing support from their church family, Williams noted. "If a family really wants to do it, they can do it."

He doesn't necessarily recommend an exploratory trip to a foreign country prior to an adoption, based on his own emotional reaction to such visits. "My heart is bigger than my head," he said. "Literally I would take 10 more kids."

Teamwork is big around the Williams house. Children are assigned chores and are held accountable for doing them. They learn to carry their share of the load and to do things well. "No kid in the world likes to sweep," Pat observed. His try to cut corners, he added, but Jill won't let them get away with it.

The name of the game -- and "a worthy goal as a parent" -- is raising children to be self-reliant adults. "We really are focused hard against their 18th birthday," Pat said. All the children stay busy in school and extracurricular activities, especially sports.

"I think it's vital for adoptive or biological parents to find out their children's desires and get them focused on that," Williams said. "A life headed for trouble is a child who doesn't have anything he or she is really interested in. They're going to drift into something -- every child is."

Not all the Williams children are athletic. One daughter "couldn't catch athlete's foot" but loves being a Brownie. Another is "allergic to sweat," but she's a talented artist and a gifted cook -- for 20 people.

Sports has a side benefit, Williams noted. It wears out the children. "I want them at bedtime to be absolutely exhausted -- so tired they couldn't even think of a troublesome act."

The bottom line, Williams concluded, is that parents must take the initiative and must be willing to drive the children to various activities. "The kid is doomed if the parents don't care."

Bible study and prayer are another daily component of life in the Williams household. The family has a five- or six-minute devotional each day at breakfast, often led by Pat. "We're teaching our kids to pray out loud," he said. On Sundays the family fills a couple of pews at First Baptist Church of Winter Haven.

Until tuition costs hit \$50,000 a year, all the children attended Christian schools. Now just one does, but the others have adapted well to public education. "I've been amazed at the number of Christian teachers they've had in public schools," Williams said.

Still another aspect of their lives is a "never-ending procession" of print and broadcast media reporting on the family -- they have been featured in magazines like Sports Illustrated and Good Housekeeping and on television networks including NBC, CBS and Dutch national TV.

"We even are hitting the tabloids this summer," Williams said, referring to an article in Globe. He and Jill have allowed their brood to become some of the most visible children in America to spread the message of international adoption.

They tell their children, "You've found your forever family," and that the Williams family can help other parents and children find each other.

Pat and Jill's children also carry a certain amount of celebrity by virtue of their father's job with the NBA franchise that employs superstar Shaquille O'Neal. Pat doesn't let them exploit it for their friends.

"I tell them 'just say no' to drugs and alcohol and 'just say no' to Shaquille autograph requests."

The Williamses' pastor before they moved from Orlando to nearby Winter Haven, SBC president Jim Henry, said that in a world where children are abused and misused, loving adoption can be a positive Christian witness.

Henry noted that God's Word calls compassion for widows and orphans a religion that works and a true faith. "Jill and Pat exemplify that and show that's one way to express faith," he said.

On a recent Sunday at First Baptist Church of Orlando, Henry recalled, a couple came up to him and proudly showed him their new baby. The couple had adopted the child overseas after hearing the Williamses speak at the church.

When their family was much smaller than it is now, the Williamses co-authored a popular book titled "Rekindled," which described how they breathed life into a dead marriage.

Having 18 children makes nurturing the marriage a lot harder, Williams acknowledged. He continues to rely on the four keys listed in "Rekindled" -- blessing, edifying, sharing and touching. Neglecting any of those can lead to rocky times. "I've learned one thing," Williams said. "You're never there. There's never a point when you've arrived as a husband. It takes an awful lot of attention daily."

For Pat and Jill, time alone and time away can be hard to come by. The two do make occasional trips together, nervously. "It's a rather terrifying experience to leave behind 18 children," he said.

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