

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Administrator leaving Midwestern Seminary to lead M.Div. program at Hardin-Simmons**

By Bob Allen

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Vernon Davis, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has resigned to direct a new graduate theological education program at Hardin-Simmons University.

He will join the Hardin-Simmons faculty Jan. 1, announced Lanny Hall, president of the Abilene, Texas, university. Davis will teach theology and lead the school's new master of divinity program, scheduled to open in the fall of 1995, Hall said.

Davis, 60, said the impending retirement of Midwestern President Milton Ferguson played a role in his decision. Ferguson, 66, often at odds with conservative trustees in 21 years as president of the Kansas City, Mo., seminary, announced in May he will step down in July 1996.

"Midwestern is in a time of transition," said Davis. "It is obvious that those who are charting the new course for the school will desire new academic as well as executive leadership."

While as a tenured professor he would have the option of returning to the classroom at Midwestern, Davis said, "I do not believe I could find a sense of personal fulfillment in the years of ministry remaining to me within the prevailing educational environment."

In his resignation letter, Davis told Ferguson it is difficult to leave Midwestern, where he came in 1983 with "a deep conviction ... that this would be the place where I would serve the remainder of my active ministry."

Davis said the position at Hardin-Simmons "will enable me to remain within theological education and will challenge the continued use of my experience gained here in academic administration at a time when theological education is rethinking both its mission and method, not only in the Southern Baptist Convention but throughout the theological world."

Davis said he was not asked or advised to resign but that "I feel this is just a good opportunity for me at this stage."

Ferguson said Davis' "wise and competent leadership" will be missed. He appointed Christian ethics professor John Howell as Davis' interim replacement Sept. 1. Howell, a faculty member since 1960, was the seminary's academic dean for six years before resigning in 1982 to allow him more time to teach and write.

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Davis joined Midwestern's faculty in 1983 as associate professor of Christian theology. He assumed his current administrative post in 1987.

Davis is a native Texan, from Austin, and a graduate of two Texas schools: Baylor University in Waco, where he earned his bachelor's degree, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, where he received the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees.

He is a former campus minister, who directed Baptist Student Unions at Rice University, the Baylor College of Medicine and other schools in the Texas Medical Center from 1962 to 1965. He was associate pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston from 1965 to 1967 and pastor of Grace Temple Baptist Church in Denton, 1967-71.

Davis was pastor of First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Va., from 1971 to 1983. He was president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and chairman of the convention's general board in 1981-82. He was a trustee of the Religious Herald, Virginia Baptists' newsjournal, 1983-86, and Midwestern Seminary, 1979-83. He was a member of the SBC Committee on Boards in 1980 and a member of the executive board of SBC Today (now Baptists Today), an independent national moderate publication, 1983-86.

He has written three books and a weekly column of Sunday school commentary in Word & Way, the Missouri Baptist paper, since 1984.

Hardin-Simmons trustees voted in May to begin offering master of divinity degrees through its Logsdon School of Theology, which has offered master's degrees in religion since 1982, to respond to needs of pastors and other ministerial students in the area, President Hall said.

Hall said every phase of Davis' ministry "has been marked by success and distinction."

"Our theology students will benefit greatly through their contact with -- and instruction from -- such an outstanding Baptist leader," he said.

Davis' resignation from Midwestern Seminary is effective Dec. 31.

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## Stay-at-home moms say choice makes sense

By Debbie Von Behren

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (ABP) -- "There's no place like home" is more than Dorothy's most famous line in "The Wizard of Oz." It also describes the attitude among many former working mothers.

The percentage of women in the work force between the ages of 25 and 44 is dropping for the first time in more than 25 years. The decline is most pronounced in the 20-to-24-year-old age group, where the level of working women has slipped to 70 percent from 75 percent since 1989.

This national trend is being debated by demographers, economists, feminists and traditionalists. Some demographers question the legitimacy or the significance of the finding from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Others offer a variety of reasons for this apparent shake-up in the three-decade-old pattern of women flooding into the work force.

But women who are part of the trend say it makes sense.

Alana Stump is one. The former secretary at South Haven Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo., had worked for nine years before she decided to be a stay-at-home mother for her infant son. That was about a year and a half ago, and Stump says she doesn't regret her decision.

"Staying home with my son has worked out very well," she said. "I love being at home with him. I wanted to see my baby take his first step and roll over for the first time. I just couldn't leave him with someone I didn't know."

This aversion to day care is shared by many young mothers, and it appears to be a factor causing the exodus

from the workplace.

Susan Doyle of Birmingham, Ala., has been a stay-at-home mother since July 8 when she quit her job handling news and media relations for Woman's Missionary Union to stay home with her seven-month-old daughter.

"We weren't going to do day care," Doyle said. "I feel like she's my No. 1 priority. I felt like God had given her to us, and it was important for me to fulfill my responsibilities with her and see she was raised with the background I want her to have. I don't feel I can delegate that responsibility to someone else."

Doyle wants her daughter to have the same strong family network she had while growing up. "My mother was always at home," she said. "I remember the secure feeling that gave me."

As a working mother, Doyle explained, she realized she wasn't measuring up to the standards she believed in.

"My husband and I both felt that our home life was out of control," she said. "For one thing, we were both so busy that we weren't able to be a Christian presence in our neighborhood. We know this will help our church life and family life."

Leaving the work force was not a quick decision for either woman, in part because of the question of finances. In a recent article in Barron's financial weekly, economist Richard Hokenson identified the traditional one-paycheck family as the fastest-growing household unit.

In the 1990s, Hokenson said, households with "more time than money" are replacing families that have "more money than time," as women bow out of the work force to spend more time with their children.

"Quitting my job to stay at home with our son was something I had been praying about," Stump said. "I didn't think at first we could handle it financially, but I really felt it was what the Lord wanted me to do."

Stump said the decision has been the right one for her family.

"For us, life has been a lot better," she said. "Things work themselves out. You can find a way to live on what you make."

Bob Curtis, pastor of Ballwin Baptist Church in suburban St. Louis, Mo., has echoed that sentiment many times as he has shared his family testimony with a variety of churches over the years. In 1983, Curtis' wife, Debbie, quit her job as a service consultant with Bell Telephone to stay home after the birth of their first child.

"I was at my first church out of seminary and our total income went from 100 percent to 40 percent," Curtis said. "In addition, she had health benefits which we had to pick up. God has provided all of our needs through the years."

In the Barron's article, Hokenson said an estimated 80 cents of every dollar earned by the average working mother goes to child care, meals at work, gas and clothing. This factor influences women to leave the work place, because for many, going to work just doesn't pay off. Also, many women are simply tired of juggling work and family.

Curtis agrees with that assessment.

"I think women are under a considerable amount of stress at work and also stress at home," he said, "because their husbands sometimes take them for granted."

He said he tries not to make that mistake. "I appreciate my wife. I don't take it lightly that she has shifted her career emphasis. She has made a sacrifice. Deciding to quit her job was a tremendous commitment on her part, but we've been more than blessed."

While Madison Avenue is debating how the trend will affect purchasing habits of American families, the stay-at-home trend also has implications for religious organizations. Both Doyle and Stump said staying home has given them more time to be involved in their churches in recent months.

"Deciding to be a stay-at-home mom has absolutely made a difference in my church life," Doyle said. "My church involvement was almost non-existent. For example, on Wednesday evenings, I didn't want to pick her up right after work and then just take her straight to the nursery at church."

Besides the time factor, Stump said her energy level kept her from a more active church life. "Before, when I worked, at the end of the day I just wanted to relax," she said. "Now, I can go to mission groups, even during the day. Not working has freed me up to do that."

Curtis said Ballwin Church has been affected by the trend.

"We have had some mothers recently decide to stay at home with their children," he said. "We are a sociologically, economically mixed church. We have corporate people, laborers, all types of people. We have mothers who work and mothers who stay home. However, I think there is a trend to look at the home more from that perspective now."

Doyle said she hasn't felt isolated.

"I know quite a few women who have done the same thing," she said. "It's kind of nice. You can get together with them and go to the park or something like that. You have a support group."

For the Curtis family, a stay-at-home mom has had a positive influence on their lives, the pastor said. "While we haven't had everything we've always wanted, we've had everything we've needed," Curtis said. "It's been a blessing, a growing experience, and we have a firm conviction that God is in control."

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