

# Associated Baptist Press

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
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## **Baylor taps Dilday as interim Truett dean**

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University has named Russell Dilday interim dean of the university's new theology school, George W. Truett Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dilday currently is professor of preaching at Truett and special assistant to Baylor President Herbert Reynolds. He will continue in both those roles while serving as interim dean, Reynolds said.

In the past year, Dilday has moved from president of the world's largest seminary -- the 3,000-student Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas -- to one of the newest, Truett, which opened with 50 students last fall. Dilday was fired last March by Southwestern's trustees, who said he was blocking conservative reforms at the Southern Baptist school.

Dilday, 64, will take over for Truett dean Robert Sloan, who was elected Feb. 24 to replace the retiring Reynolds. On March 17 Reynolds announced Dilday's selection, which must be approved by Baylor's regents when they meet March 24 in Dallas.

"Dr. Dilday's acceptance of this interim leadership position at Truett frees Dr. Sloan to concentrate on the transition to the Baylor presidency," said Reynolds, who will become chancellor of the Waco, Texas, university June 1.

Dilday, a Baylor graduate, was unavailable for comment March 17. When asked recently about the Truett dean's post, he told a reporter: "I believe God has his hand on Truett. I'm enjoying my work and would do whatever I could to help the seminary."

Truett organizers expect the school to double to 100 students by fall and hope to open a Dallas branch within the next year. Southwestern Seminary was started on the campus of Baylor in 1908 and moved to Fort Worth in 1910.

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-- By Greg Warner

## **New Orleans trustees outline process for choosing president**

NEW ORLEANS (ABP) -- Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary approved a process for selecting a successor to retiring President Landrum Leavell at a meeting on the seminary campus March 13-16.

A new president will be elected at a specially called two-day board of trustee session, but not before the list of candidates is narrowed, according to the chairman of a presidential search committee.

Search committee chairman Morris Anderson of Pigeon Forge, Tenn., reported that 22 recommendations had been received for the seminary post. The committee will no longer solicit nominees, but could consider other names if they are submitted, he said.

The search process calls for narrowing the field to a short list and then presenting a single candidate to meet with the full board over two days. A vote would be taken at the end of that session.

Anderson also outlined criteria being used by the search committee. The new president should exhibit impeccable integrity, statesmanship, conservative theology and bring administrative skills and pastoral experience to the post, he said. He should also be visionary, innovative and able to raise funds for the school.

The new president will be the eighth for the seminary, which was established in 1917. It is one of six theological seminaries owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Leavell, who retired in December but continues as interim president until his successor is named, has led the school since 1975. Enrollment has increased 500 percent during his tenure.

In addition to receiving the search committee report, the trustees also:

-- Adopted a \$9.2 million budget for next year, 10.7 percent larger than this year's budget. The budget hikes various student fees and includes a 3.5 percent increase in faculty-staff salaries.

Seminary Vice President for Business Affairs Clay Corvin told trustees that school leaders felt the need to improve faculty/staff compensation. He outlined several changes in benefits, including the salary increases and a reduction in annual teaching loads.

The salary jumps moves New Orleans near the top of the pay scale for Southern Baptist seminaries, Corvin noted. And even with the increases in student fees, the school remains at the lower end of the scale among other convention seminaries, he said.

-- Named the seminary's evangelism and church growth center after the outgoing president and approved the Landrum P. Leavell II Chair of New Testament. They also named Leavell president emeritus.

-- Heard a report from Leavell. In his comments, Leavell noted that the new SBC Cooperative Program budget includes an increase in the percentage of the unified budget that goes to the denomination's seminaries. "The increase is not great, ... but it does signify an end to the downward trend in gifts" from the convention, he said.

Leavell also told trustees the seminary's baccalaureate program currently enrolls about 400 students. "This is meeting needs," he said. "I've talked to these students and they tell me they never would have gone back to college for their degree. But they are able to do that through this program."

-- Re-elected officers for the new year without opposition. They are: Chairman Ed Johnson of Florida, Vice Chairman Morris Anderson of Tennessee and Secretary-treasurer Glynn Rhinehart of Louisiana.

## State paper editors raise questions about SBC reorganization plan

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- What shape should the Southern Baptist Convention take in the next century? Editors of the Baptist state newspapers found much to like and a few things to dislike in the reorganization plan being promoted by SBC leaders.

Most of the editors agreed the 150-year-old denomination -- American's largest Protestant body -- needs a downsized structure to operate effectively in the future. But, in recent editorials, editors objected to some specifics -- particularly changes in the traditional role of the SBC's women's auxiliary, Woman's Missionary Union.

Opinions on the monumental plan -- which was unveiled in February by a special study group and easily approved by the SBC Executive Committee -- vary widely in the SBC. Depending on who's talking, quipped Virginia editor Michael Clingenpeel, the plan "either was handed down from a mountain on tablets of stone or bubbled up from the caverns of hell."

Most editors are supportive of the committee's proposed mission statement -- the first for the denomination. "It places the church, not the denomination, at the center of our common relationship," said Marv Knox, editor of the Western Recorder of Kentucky. "It offers us a simple statement of why we exist and something by which to judge our spending and planning," added Gary Ledbetter, editor of the Indiana Baptist.

High marks also go to the streamlined bureaucracy proposed by the committee. "It will reduce costs by trimming the number of denominational agencies by more than a third," wrote Glenn Brown, editor of the Baptist Messenger of Oklahoma. That point was echoed by several editors. "The work of the convention will be much easier for the masses of Baptists to understand because [the agencies] are consolidated into five areas," Brown said.

Laid-off agency employees are only a minor concern, wrote Ledbetter of Indiana. "The proposed changes will take three-to-five years to complete. Between normal attrition and three years' notice, very few people will be out on the street."

The streamlining fits not only the country's mood for change and downsizing, but also the cultural trend of decreasing denominational loyalty, wrote Lynn Clayton, editor of the Baptist Message of Louisiana. "The new structure will have the added advantage of being easier to learn for a membership increasingly disinterested in denominational minutiae," added Michael Clingenpeel, editor of the Religious Herald of Virginia.

"But," Clayton warned, "if the proposed restructuring takes a significant amount of time, energy and money [to implement], it could have a draining effect on the denomination's work during these crucial years."

Several editors worried that the plan is too centralized, placing too much power in the hands of the SBC Executive Committee and other agencies that absorbed new duties.

"What will such radical proposals do to arrest a growing concern on the part of some that the SBC Executive Committee is exercising more power than ever was intended ... ?" asked Presnall Wood of the Baptist Standard of Texas. "Why is the SBC Executive Committee upgraded rather than downsized?"

R.G. Puckett of the Biblical Recorder of North Carolina said such consolidation of power is not Baptist. "True Baptists operate with an upside-down pyramid -- the church is on top, not the denomination -- but the crowd in Nashville has turned it right-side up," he said. "That may be efficiency but it isn't Baptist anymore!"

But William Neal of the Christian Index of Georgia disagreed, noting agency trustees -- not the Executive Committee -- will continue to wield most of the power and will continue to be elected by SBC messengers.

Ledbetter of Indiana said the plan, which still leaves 12 agencies functioning in nine states, "is not really very centralized geographically or administratively. It is more centralized than is the current plan. Or maybe it's just

more efficient."

Puckett and others saw parts of the plan -- particularly the handling of WMU -- as evidence of a political agenda pursued by the conservative-controlled Executive Committee. "Nearly everything that has happened in the SBC in the past 15 years has been political," wrote Puckett. "What has happened to the SBC isn't a 'conservative resurgence' but rather a 'demolition derby'... ."

Ledbetter countered that the report from the blue-ribbon Program and Structure Study Committee "is free of any obvious political motives. We should receive the report at face value, without questioning the motives or makeup or methods of the committee."

The specific recommendation most often criticized by editors concerned Woman's Missionary Union. The study committee opted to reassign promotion of the two annual SBC mission offerings from WMU to the mission boards they benefit. Likewise, WMU's traditional role of missions education would be transferred to the mission boards, while the Sunday School Board would be asked to start a women's ministry that some say would compete with WMU.

Lindsay Bergstrom, interim editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, called the treatment of WMU "a glaring weakness" that "essentially cut(s) the heart out of what WMU has been about for more than 100 years." WMU was "shunted to a sidetrack ... while the SBC train moved on," opined Guy Henderson of the Baptist Record of Mississippi.

"These shifts seem designed to break the back of WMU," wrote Knox of Kentucky, "by removing its lifeblood tasks and creating an organization that will compete with WMU for the time and attention of women."

The committee said giving ministry assignments to WMU would be inappropriate since the SBC does not appoint WMU directors and has no authority over the women's auxiliary. But Knox and others saw the WMU proposal as payback for WMU's 1993 decision to remain an auxiliary and work with non-SBC groups like the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"Protests to the contrary," Knox wrote, "this is thinly veiled retribution for WMU's refusal to let the new SBC power structure select its board of directors. The study committee said to WMU what the SBC said to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship: 'If we can't control you, we don't want to relate to you.'"

John Roberts of the Baptist Courier of South Carolina said "SBC political powers are frustrated by an inability to gain control of WMU and therefore will assign their work to others." Puckett of North Carolina agreed, suggesting "WMU was 'surgically removed' from the loop because they would not let themselves be controlled by the SBC." The proposal is "a punitive slap at WMU" for choosing to remain an auxiliary, said Trennis Henderson of Arkansas.

Several editors, such as Roberts of South Carolina, said the changes will "not likely help and certainly could hurt" fund-raising for the SBC's two annual offerings for missions, which raised \$2 billion in the past 100 years under WMU leadership. Weakening the WMU-SBC partnership "could toll a death knell for Southern Baptist missions," warned Bergstrom.

The study committee said the mission boards are still free to enlist WMU help in promoting the offerings, and their presidents said they will do just that. But some editors found little assurance there. "Their eventual successors might or might not feel the same way," noted Bill Webb of the Illinois Baptist.

"While there is much talk about how the relationship between WMU and the SBC doesn't have to be different," wrote Bergstrom, "there is no written acknowledgement of WMU's contribution to SBC missions or how that relationship will be defined in the future."

None of the editors came to the defense of the committee's treatment of WMU.

Deleting or merging seven SBC agencies was seen by the editors as a bold and perhaps necessary downsizing. However, several questioned the wisdom of abolishing the Historical Commission and assigning its archival duties to the seminary presidents and its teaching duties to the Sunday School Board.

"Look for much revision in history to make the facts more palatable to fundamentalist control," warned Puckett of North Carolina. The study of history also could suffer, he said. "Too many know too little already about who we are and from whence we came."

Assigning the teaching task to the Sunday School Board is "dubious" considering the board's track record, wrote Knox of Kentucky. "When the board celebrated its 100th anniversary, trustees killed a professional, scholarly centennial history project because it did not put a public relations spin on recent controversy."

Knox also worried that deleting the Southern Baptist Foundation, which manages investment funds for Baptist institutions, places the agency's reputation for "sound management and trustworthiness" at risk. The Foundation's duties are slated to be transferred to the Executive Committee, which Knox warned "has shown a propensity for making political, rather than principled, decisions."

But eliminating the Historical Commission and the other targeted agencies will focus more money and attention on missions, said Ledbetter of Indiana, and the remaining agencies can pick up the slack "at least as well as fits the needs of our denomination."

The study committee's plan to merge the Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission into a new agency focused on a broadened stateside missions agenda was cautiously welcomed by the editors. But one radical departure proposed is likely to generate more discussion -- the plan to ask stronger state conventions to fund home mission work in their states while focusing national funding on weaker, new-work states.

"Will these proposals lead state Baptist conventions to be less cooperative with the Southern Baptist Convention, resulting in states by necessity keeping more of the mission dollar to do mission work?" asked Wood of Texas.

"This recommendation is designed to generate more money to assist new-work states," explained Clingenpeel of Virginia. "But the old-line states, already strapped for funds, are not likely to accept the bill without a fight." Those states likely will reduce the amount of money they send to the SBC, creating "more competition and less cooperation" between state and national causes.

Several editors criticized the process which produced the committee's report. Virginia's Clingenpeel noted the study was conducted by "seven white males from large churches, hardly representative of the SBC's diversity" -- a point echoed by the Arkansas and Mississippi editors.

Others noted the study was not authorized by the SBC, was "rushed" through the Executive Committee, and did not incorporate input from trustees of the affected agencies. "These trustees point out that they ... are responsible to the SBC for the work committed to the various entities," said Bob Terry of the Word & Way of Missouri.

But Ledbetter of Indiana pointed out the proposed changes are no more radical than is common among secular businesses, and that Southern Baptists will have two years to consider their impact.

Virtually all the editors were willing to trust Southern Baptists to reach the proper conclusions about the plan, and they encouraged readers to study the proposals carefully. Few were willing to endorse the study committee's plea to accept the package without modification.

"The committee may have put too much at one time on the plate for most Southern Baptists," said Wood of Texas. "Obvious amendments and adjustments are needed," said Henderson of Mississippi. The committee should abandon its "all-or-nothing" approach, advised Knox of Kentucky, and allow SBC messengers to consider the plan "piece by piece."

The task at hand is too big and too important to be handled any other way, several said.

Concluded Webb of Illinois, "Only by fine-tuning at every stage and maintaining open and honest communication can the SBC adequately prepare for ministry in the next century."

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