

Associated Baptist Press

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Wake Forest town board denies seminary's rezoning request

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- An opportunity for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to sell 45 acres of wooded property contiguous to the Wake Forest, N.C., campus to a shopping center developer hit a snag March 21, when a town board denied a rezoning request by a vote of 4-1.

Town board members who voted against the rezoning claimed seminary President Paige Patterson tried to strong-arm them in the days leading up to the meeting by threatening to work in the seminary community against their re-election. Patterson responded that board members were playing politics by going public with his lobbying efforts.

"If by political strong-arming they mean telling the truth to the people, then I'm guilty," Patterson told the Raleigh News & Observer.

Patterson urged the town board to clear the way for the construction of a shopping center he said would bring \$2 million a year in tax revenue and hundreds of new jobs to the town.

Downtown merchants opposed the rezoning, saying the competition would put them out of business.

Trustees of the seminary voted in January to proceed with the sale of about 45 acres of the more than 300 acres of undeveloped property owned by the school to an Atlanta-based developer.

Seminary officials would not disclose the sale price, but the Raleigh newspaper reported it would total about \$7 million.

Among members of the town board voting against the rezoning request was Rodney Byard, a former administrator at the seminary who quit in 1987 after the school's president resigned to protest efforts by trustees to make the seminary more conservative.

Richmond seminary plans to buy permanent facility

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Trustees of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond voted to enter negotiations to purchase a permanent building and approved the hiring of two new faculty members in a meeting March 20-21.

Currently the seminary leases two buildings from the Richmond-based Presbyterian School of Christian Education. The trustees named a team to negotiate the purchase of Watts Hall, the largest building on the campus.

The 40,000 square-foot building is currently used as a dormitory. It would be renovated to house the seminary's offices, all classrooms and a chapel.

The purchase would "catapult BTSR to a new level," seminary President Tom Graves told trustees. "Investment in a permanent facility demonstrates our firm commitment to continue to provide quality theological education for the next generation of Baptist leaders," he said.

In other business, the board approved the hiring of two new faculty members.

William Rogers, a professor and former dean at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been offered a position as the Richmond seminary's first professor of Christian education. Rogers, 56, has taught at the seminary in Louisville, Ky., since 1984.

Sandra Hack Polaski, 30, will join the Richmond seminary faculty in the fall of 1996 as assistant professor of New Testament. A graduate of Furman University and Vanderbilt Divinity School, she is a candidate for a doctor of philosophy degree at Duke University.

During the 1995-96 academic year, she will teach at Furman in Greenville, S.C., substituting for a professor on sabbatical leave.

Trustees adopted a \$1.8 million budget for 1995-96 and voted to launch a doctor of ministry degree program in 1996 or 1997.

New trustees elected to the board are Ken Hall, a commercial contractor and member of Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., and Linda Watts, pastor's wife at New Hope Baptist Church in Hickory, N.C. She is a shareholder and director of Goody's Pharmaceuticals.

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-- By Beth McMahon and Bob Allen

Texas WMU leader notes 'ambiguities' in SBC restructuring proposal

DALLAS (ABP) -- A plan to streamline the structure of the Southern Baptist Convention contains "ambiguities" related to the role of Woman's Missionary Union, a Texas WMU leader says.

"There are some good proposals in terms of streamlining Southern Baptist work, but there are a lot of ambiguities in the document," Joy Fenner told the Texas WMU executive board at a meeting March 21-23 near Dallas.

Fenner, executive director of the Texas WMU, was joined by the state WMU president, Mary Humphries

of Fort Worth, and the president of the national WMU organization, Carolyn Miller of Huntsville, Ala., to respond to questions about the proposal.

If approved by messengers at two consecutive annual national conventions, the plan proposed by a blue-ribbon program and structure study committee would reduce from 19 to 12 the number of SBC agencies, consolidate three entities into an Atlanta-based North American Mission Board, and remove from WMU its program assignment to promote offerings for home and foreign missions.

Fenner noted that the proposal by the seven-member, all-Anglo, all-male study committee was approved by the SBC Executive Committee after only 45 minutes of deliberation.

While WMU is directly addressed only in a footnote, the committee report transfers to the two Southern Baptist mission boards primary responsibility for promoting the offerings that raise roughly half of their annual budgets. It assigns "women's ministries" to the Baptist Sunday School Board and "missions education" to the North American Mission Board.

Members of the study committee said WMU was not included in the report because it desired to remain an auxiliary independent of convention control. The current presidents of the two Southern Baptist mission boards said they intend to continue to work closely with WMU.

"Our accountability is to a higher authority than the Executive Committee of the SBC," Fenner said.

WMU's task is to develop the leadership potential of women in missions involvement and missions education. The auxiliary will continue its work out of a sense of calling, Fenner said.

"The missions purpose of WMU is biblically based. That takes preeminence over any committee or convention," she said.

The Texas WMU executive board also adopted a \$5 million goal for the 1995 Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions. The goal allocates more than \$2 million for new mission church assistance and other programs related to new congregations, plus another \$1.7 million for mission projects to language and cultural groups and associational-based ministries.

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-- By Ken Camp

'John the Baptist' still evangelizing

By Pam Parry

McLEAN, Va. (ABP) -- Traumatized by mortar fire, the young Marine huddled outside a military hospital, his body trembling, clenched into a fetal position. "John the Baptist" took his hand and began to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

The trembling continued.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

In a moment, the Marine composed himself enough to join the chaplain: "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

As they finished the Lord's Prayer, the soldier began to relax and the shaking subsided.

The most effective antidote for shell shock is the Lord's Prayer, says Chaplain John Craven of McLean, Va., who lived that dramatic scene numerous times during seven combat campaigns spanning more than 30 years of

military service. Now retired from active duty, Craven, 79, is chaplain at Vinson Hall Navy-Marine Corps Officers Retirement Residence in McLean, Va.

Craven, a Southern Baptist, is thought to have seen more combat than any living chaplain. He participated in four campaigns during World War II, including the one at Iwo Jima, and three during the Korean War.

On the 50th anniversary of the Iwo Jima campaign, Craven reflected on his participation in the historic battle. Craven, known affectionately as John the Baptist by the Fourth Marine Division, ministered to hundreds of wounded, dying and scared men.

"I tried to visit the troops as often as I could to encourage them, talk to them," he said. For the most part the chaplain's role was helping to tend to the wounded, he added.

Often, all that Craven could do for the wounded was to take some moistened gauze and wipe the volcanic ashes from their eyes. The doctors also leaned heavily on the chaplains to work with the psychological casualties or the men suffering from what they termed shell shock, he said.

Craven, a member of McLean Baptist Church, also baptized four men during his five weeks at Iwo Jima. Those men accepted Christ on the boat before they landed. To witness such new birth amid the death and devastation of the attack was miraculous, he recalls.

Five decades later, he returned to that island in the Pacific to participate in the dedication of a monument to the casualties on both sides. The Japanese and American veterans sat on opposite sides of the monument. After leading a prayer, Craven and a former Japanese captain who had become a Buddhist priest embraced, setting an example for the men.

Later, Craven wrote: "Before leaving the beach and the spot where our command post had been, I photographed a small, green plant with a small, red bloom. To me, it represented the hopes and dreams for peace rising out of the blood-soaked sands of Iwo Jima."

Highly decorated, Craven was awarded the Bronze Star for his participation in the campaign at Saipan in 1944. The accompanying citation read: "He moved from battalion to battalion through heavy enemy artillery fire to attend to the spiritual needs of the wounded and dying and to administer first aid to the casualties of the regiment. By his unselfish actions, cool courage and zealous devotion to duty, he contributed inestimably to the morale of the entire regiment."

Craven's military career began in 1933, when he enlisted in the Marine Corps, fresh out of high school. While stationed at Pearl Harbor aboard the USS New Mexico, Craven felt God's call May 16, 1935, to the gospel ministry.

In pursuit of that call, he left the Marines to attend Southwest Baptist College (now University) in Bolivar, Mo. After two years, the Chaffee, Mo., native transferred to William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo.

His calling became defined during a Missouri Baptist Student Convention in Columbia. Craven responded to the invitation. Taking the hand of then-state student director W.O. Vaught, he committed himself to becoming a Navy chaplain.

He continued to prepare for this ministry by attending Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., while serving as pastor of small churches in Missouri. He had applied for doctoral studies when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, precipitating his return to active duty.

He saw action in the Marshall Islands and at Tinian during World War II. He also participated in the Inchon Invasion and later ministered in the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War.

During his last five years in the military, Craven was the chaplain of the Marine Corps from 1968 to 1973.

Upon returning to civilian life, Craven served as interim pastor for one year in Okinawa, replacing an SBC missionary who was on furlough.

Returning to the states, he directed Christian ministries for the Norfolk Baptist Association in Virginia Beach, Va., for 15 years before moving to Vinson Hall.

Craven has been endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for more than five decades. He refuses to retire from the gospel ministry and remains active in his ministry to the residents at Vinson Hall.

"Missions is the center of everything that we have done," said Craven, who was ordained nearly 60 years ago by First Baptist Church of Chaffee, Mo.

"My philosophy of life is that a meaningful call to service is the key to everything else, and that it all falls in line from there," he said. "If we respond to the call and know where we are going and the area where we need to serve, that can be the key to our whole life."

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