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Southwestern Seminary adds diverse members to faculty

By Marv Knox

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Expanding what President Ken Hemphill called the "globalization" of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, trustees March 7-8 elected a dean from South Africa, as well as a Cuban-American professor and a Korean-American administrator.

David Crutchley, 45, who joined the faculty of the Southern Baptist seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, last fall after 14 years at Cape Town Baptist Theological College in South Africa, was elected dean of the School of Theology. He succeeds Tommy Lea, who died last July.

Esther Diaz-Bolet becomes the first Cuban-American woman elected to the seminary faculty. She will be an assistant professor of administration.

Jong-hwan (Jonathan) Kim, a former chaplain in the Korea Air Command, was elected associate director of the seminary's undergraduate and Lay Theological Education programs.

The elections will strengthen Southwestern's focus on missions and evangelism from a worldwide perspective, Hemphill predicted.

Crutchley stood out among other candidates for the top theology job because of his "vision for building a world-class faculty," Hemphill said, adding, "He knows scholars literally from around the world."

Crutchley grew up in Rhodesia, the country now known as Zimbabwe. His parents, who now live in Cape Town, South Africa, became "Baptists by conviction" under the influence of Southern Baptist missionaries. "A missions motif runs through my family," he noted.

He is married to the former Mary Carol Fray, whose parents, Bud and Jane Fray, were Southern Baptist missionaries to Rhodesia. Her father also taught missions at Southwestern for several years.

Because of missionaries' influence, Crutchley came to the United States for his education. He earned a bachelor's degree at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, and after receiving two law degrees in Rhodesia, he returned to the States to earn master's and doctor's degrees at Southwestern.

He was a Southern Baptist missionary to South Africa, where he spent 14 years on the faculty of the Cape Town school, serving as a professor and later as acting president. He became an associate professor of New Testament at Southwestern last fall.

As theology dean, Crutchley said he wants to help ministerial students "connect head and heart." He intends to lead them in a "pursuit of academic excellence together with spiritual vitality."

He also intends to be an "advocate for the faculty," he said. "I see the opportunity to teach at Southwestern as a troth, a covenant of trust," he added, noting he affirms academic freedom guided by responsibility.

"Southwestern stands for certain principles," and faculty will be expected to teach in accordance with them, he said.

Of his own theological position, he said: "I'm a theological conservative, obviously, or I wouldn't be teaching here. I stand by the authority of God's word. ... The Bible is the charter for my life, the reference point for my life."

Crutchley also stressed the importance of evangelism and missions, the role of Christ in the life of a Christian believer and Christian ethics.

Southwestern students also must be taught that Christianity applies to individual lives in practical ways, he affirmed. "Faith must be relevant," he said. "The vertical dimension must be connected to the horizontal. Jesus rolled up his sleeves and connected to people and their lives," and ministers also must have that ability.

Crutchley and his family attend Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. As a seminary student, he was a member of Birchman Baptist Church in Fort Worth, where Miles Seaborn, the seminary's trustee chairman, was pastor.

Diaz-Bolet, 49, has been an adjunct professor at Southwestern since 1993. She also is a corporate-services instructor for Tarrant County Junior College in the Fort Worth area and minister of adults and adult Sunday-school leaders' training coordinator at Templo Bautista Emanuel in Fort Worth.

Kim, 36, is minister of education at Korean First Baptist Church in Dallas. He has been an assistant professor of adult education, academic counselor and associate registrar at Dallas Baptist University, an instructor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Los Angeles branch and a staff member of churches in Los Angeles and Fort Worth.

Trustees also elected four other faculty members. They are:

-- William Michael McGuire, 48, as associate professor of psychology and counseling. McGuire has been professor of psychology and counseling at Criswell College in Dallas since 1998 and also has taught at Dallas Baptist University.

-- Tim Pierce, 31, as instructor of Old Testament. He is a teaching fellow at Southwestern and also pastor of Olin Baptist Church in Hico, Texas. He has been on church staffs in Arizona, Texas and Oklahoma.

-- Dana Wicker, 43, and Jim Wicker, 45, the first married couple to be elected to the seminary faculty on the same day.

Dana Wicker will be an assistant professor of psychology and counseling. She has been a guest professor at the seminary, a women's-ministry adviser, a vocational counselor and a social worker.

Jim Wicker is an adjunct teacher at Dallas Baptist University. He has been pastor and staff member at several Baptist churches.

Trustees also re-elected their officers to one-year terms: chairman Seaborn, retired pastor of Birchman Baptist Church in Fort Worth; vice chairman Michael Dean, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth; and secretary Matthew McKellar, pastor of Sylvania Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas.

Supreme Court again refuses challenge to Good Friday holiday

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Supreme Court said March 6 it will not hear an Indiana man's challenge to the governor's designation of Good Friday as a state holiday.

Earlier this year, the nation's high court refused to hear a similar challenge to a Maryland law that closes public schools on Good Friday.

Upholding a federal magistrate's decision to dismiss the Indiana case, a three-judge panel of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the Indiana holiday choice does not violate the Constitution.

Good Friday has been a legal holiday in Indiana since 1941. Russell Bridenbaugh, a taxpayer from Bloomington, Ind., sued Gov. Frank O'Bannon for making Good Friday one of the state's 12 holidays in a non-election year.

Bridenbaugh said the holiday amounted to a "law respecting an establishment of religion," specifically Christianity.

But the appeals court, in a 2-1 decision, disagreed.

"Indiana does not celebrate the religious aspects of Good Friday; for Indiana, the holiday has absolutely no religious significance," the appeals-court panel said. "To Indiana, Good Friday is nothing but a Friday falling in the middle of the long vacationless spring -- a day which employees should take off to rejuvenate."

The holiday contrasts "sharply with other legal holidays such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day," the panel said, "where the government not only gives the day off, but endorses Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophies and principles."

The judges also said Indiana had secular reasons to choose Good Friday as a holiday, such as the fact that more than 30 percent of Indiana schools are closed on that day, making it a "logical" choice.

"While there may be few secular aspects surrounding Good Friday, there are many secular aspects to Easter -- the Easter bunny, Easter baskets, jelly beans, dyed eggs, and Easter-egg hunts," the panel said. "And Indiana has intrinsically tied the Good Friday holiday to the now-secularized Easter holiday, making it a 'movable feast day.'"

A dissenting judge said the case should have gone to trial and argued that some Christians commemorate Holy Friday on a different date and therefore leaves Indiana promoting one religion over another.

"Good Friday does not have the relevant attributes of Sundays, Christmas and Thanksgiving," the dissenting opinion stated. "It is a day of solemn religious observance, and nothing else, for believing Christians, and no one else. Unitarians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists -- there is nothing in Good Friday for them, as there is in the other holidays we have mentioned despite the Christian origins of those holidays."

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