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Southwestern's theology dean 'reassigned' after two years

By Mark Wingfield

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's theology dean has been "reassigned" less than two years after his election to the post.

Seminary President Ken Hemphill told faculty of the School of Theology Nov. 29 that he intends to move Dean David Crutchley to a newly created position of dean of globalization.

Crutchley indicated he has not decided whether to accept the appointment. Should he decline the new post, he would remain on the faculty.

A news release from the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said Crutchley would serve as theology dean until Dec. 31. He will then "return to the classroom while he prays about God's direction for his next stage of ministry."

While Hemphill did not discuss reasons for the reassignment, some trustees reportedly have grown impatient with the amount of time it is taking to replace moderate holdovers from the previous president's administration with a more staunchly conservative theology faculty.

A South African native, Crutchley joined the Southwestern faculty in 1999 after 14 years of teaching at Cape Town Baptist Theological College in South Africa. He was elected dean in March 2000, succeeding Tommy Lea, who died of cancer.

Crutchley's election followed an eight-month search. At the time, Hemphill lauded him as the best possible candidate because of his "vision for building a world-class faculty."

That task became complicated, however, after trustees tightened theological requirements for teachers. Crutchley spent much of his two-year tenure bringing the current faculty in line with a trustee requirement that all elected and adjunct faculty affirm the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" doctrinal statement.

Two faculty members resigned rather than sign the faith statement, which is narrower than a 1963 version that previously guided hiring of faculty. Others reportedly moved up their retirement plans or took other teaching positions over disagreement with revisions in the statement.

An unidentified number of adjunct faculty members are no longer eligible to teach under the new rules.

The seminary reportedly began the fall semester with up to 15 vacancies on the School of Theology's full-time faculty.

This has been a matter of concern to fundamentalist leaders on the seminary trustee board like Miles Seaborn of Fort Worth, former board chairman.

Seaborn was quoted in the December issue of the Southern Baptist Texan, magazine of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, as predicting the recent election of Craig Blaising as the seminary's provost and executive vice president would help fill the faculty with the kind of conservatives desired by trustees.

"We've been working toward this ever since the firing of Dr. Dilday," he said, referencing the seminary's last moderate president, Russell Dilday, whom trustees terminated in 1994.

"It was a very tragic, traumatic event for all of us that were involved in it, but it's also been a process," Seaborn said. "There have been folks that got deeply entrenched here at the seminary that are moderates. Some of them have gotten so uncomfortable that they've left and are irritated, but others have kind of hunkered down and gone underground."

Seaborn said dealing with this situation would be Blaising's "biggest challenge."

"I've talked to him about how to deal with those situations, because they've got to be dealt with," Seaborn said.

Crutchley is described as an advocate for the faculty. He used those exact words to describe his role at the time of his election in March 2000. Current and former faculty members commonly use the phrase to describe their relationship with him. For critical trustees, however, the term might connote a lack of enthusiasm for implementing the board's agenda for change.

In announcing his decision to reassign Crutchley, Hemphill did not identify any concerns about the way the dean had handled his responsibilities over the last 21 months.

The reassignment "is a decision that I believe is in the best interest of the seminary," Hemphill said. "The critical issue for me is to ensure that our personnel are in the position that maximizes their greatest strengths and passion. I believe this new position will best utilize David's missions background, gifts and passion."

In response to Hemphill's announcement to the faculty, Crutchley read a brief statement in which he spoke of his "heavy heart" over the matter and acknowledged that "my days as dean of the School of Theology have come to an end."

He explained that he has "not found peace with this reassignment."

"This has been a rich experience, and I mourn the lost opportunity of what might have been in the years to come," he said.

According to a seminary news release, the dean of globalization will oversee the World Missions Center, coordinate relationships with international institutions, mobilize seminary faculty to consider global missions opportunities and serve as a liaison between the seminary and Baptist missions agencies.

Incoming Provost Blaising said Hemphill's decision regarding Crutchley "is independent of my election as provost."

"It is the president's responsibility, as it will be mine as provost, to evaluate administrative personnel with respect to their gifts and strengths," Blaising said. "The president believes Dr. Crutchley, with his international experience, is uniquely qualified for leadership as dean of globalization and in addition to his excellence in classroom teaching would be most effective in this new position."

Blaising said he does not anticipate a long search for a new dean of the theology school, "but finding the right person is more important than the length of the search process."

Blaising said he remains positive about Southwestern's future. "I believe there are exciting days ahead for Southwestern."

Bush touts religious diversity, faith-based initiative in remarks

By Bob Allen

ORLANDO, Fla. (ABP) -- President Bush renewed his call for respect for America's religious diversity and touted his plan to provide federal funds to faith-based programs Dec. 4 in Orlando, Fla.

Meeting with about 4,000 displaced tourism workers in the first town hall meeting of his presidency, the main thrust of Bush's prepared remarks was promoting his economic stimulus package now before Congress.

"There's nothing that hurts me more than to know as we head into the holiday season that some of our citizens and some of their families hurt because they've been laid off as a result of 9/11," he said.

But in an hour-long session that included several questions from the audience, Bush touched on a wide range of subjects including education, the use of military tribunals in the war on terrorism and the need for charitable giving.

Responding to a question by a pastor, Bush encouraged local clergy planning an upcoming prayer summit to make an effort to include people of all faiths in the gathering.

"It sends such a strong signal," he said. "It reminds people of the greatness of America. The evil people we fight, they don't believe in religious freedom. They want it their way or no way. And if you're not their way, they'll treat you harshly. That's why, by the way, when we liberated cities throughout Afghanistan, people lined the roads and cheered out of joy and happiness.

"Secondly, you need to pray for the good Lord to protect America, provide a shield over our country, to prevent us from harm."

In touting his faith-based initiative that passed the House of Representatives and now goes to the Senate, the president said: "Governments shouldn't worry about faith. We ought to welcome faith."

However, Bush said, in funding religious programs that help those in need, "It's not a particular faith I'm talking about."

"I'm talking about the Muslim faith, I'm talking about Judaism, and I'm talking about Christianity," he said. "No, the faith doesn't have a lock on a certain religion. I'm talking about people who have heard a call."

Bush said the government shouldn't fear programs that are based on faith, but should fear "government embracing religion."

"We fear state religion," he said. "That's not what we're for. . . Government will never say, 'This is the religion.' We're a free society for religion. But government can embrace programs started because of faith and religion, and encourage those programs to foster in neighborhoods all across America.

"I'm passionate on the subject because I understand the power of faith in people's lives and I understand what it can mean."

Bush said one of the positive outcomes of the events of Sept. 11 is a reassessment by many Americans about what is truly important.

"This is an unbelievably great country we live in," he said. "The values of America are so strong, the people are so real, and so good. And 9/11 has brought out, in many instances, the best in America. Part of that is the individual -- the decisions individual families make about setting new priorities in their lives. A lot of it has to do with helping people in need.

"I'll never forget the story of people in a Midwestern city, when they heard me on TV talk about how distressed I was that [Muslim] women of cover would not leave their homes, for fear of some other American treating them harshly, and then Jewish citizens and Christians alike, getting on the phone, and saying, we want to help you. We want to take you to the neighborhood store. This isn't the America we know.

"No, the country -- this country is a fabulous country. They thought they hurt us, the evil ones. They have made us stronger, more real, and a better land."

Bush reminded the crowd of his visit to a mosque right after the attacks. "I went to a mosque to send the signal that the war against terror had nothing to do with the Muslim faith. It has everything to do with evil, evil people."

"What you can do to help America beyond the economy, is to remind people that regardless of our religious beliefs, we're all, first and foremost, Americans."

Asked about recent terrorist attacks in Israel, Bush said, "First of all, Israel has got no better friend than the United States, as far as I'm concerned."

He blamed violence on elements in the Middle East who are willing to use terror to derail any efforts toward peace and urged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to "respond forcefully to rout out those who killed."

"We cannot let a few prevent the many from achieving a dream which is lasting peace in the Middle East," Bush said. "I hope that happens. I hope it happens for the sake of Israel. I hope it happens for the sake of the Palestinians, who suffer because of the lack of job opportunity, and killing, and war. I hope it happens. But first things first: we must rid the world of terror. "

Details of the president's economic plan include an economic security package that expands unemployment insurance benefits for those who have been laid off as a result of terrorist attacks and provides money for things such as child care, health insurance or transportation to a community college to enable them to learn a new skill.

Bush also called for tax cuts to stimulate the economy and pledged to protect America from further attacks.

"My job is to provide security for the American people," Bush said. "My job is to make sure that we use the assets at our disposal to ferret out those who might hurt America and to bring them to justice."

Responding to a question by a third grader about what he thought upon first hearing of terrorist attacks Sept. 11, Bush said he initially didn't know what to think, because he grew up at a time in America where he never thought about being under attack.

"And I started thinking hard in that very brief period of time about what it meant to be under attack," Bush said. "I knew that when I got all of the facts that we were under attack, there would be hell to pay for attacking America."

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