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Embattled Missouri convention cuts staff by 20 percent
By
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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) – At least 22 Missouri Baptist Convention employees have lost their jobs as a result of the convention's current economic woes.

In a letter to pastors and other leaders, David Clippard, convention executive director, said a budget shortfall in 2002 forced the convention to reduce its workforce by "just over" 20 percent in mid-January.

The Missouri convention has been in turmoil for more than a year, in part because of differences between moderates and conservatives. The former executive director, Jim Hill, resigned and five convention agencies decided to elect their own boards, which historically had been appointed by the convention.

The state convention finished 2002 almost 16 percent below its original \$19.2 million budget for the year. The convention's executive board in December authorized new executive Clippard "to do whatever is necessary to adjust staff to bring the convention into financial stability." At the same meeting, however, the board added two associate executive director positions. In his letter to leaders, Clippard said a lack of reserve funds compounded the convention's economic condition. "In normal times, our convention's reserves (savings accounts) are sufficient for us to draw against to weather the storm. During the last five or so years, those reserves were spent," he wrote.

Clippard has declined to confirm the number or names of employees terminated. In his letter, he said the staff had been warned in September about the possibility of cuts. Some staffers were notified as early as mid-December that they would lose their jobs.

Clippard's letter noted that severance had been granted to the employees released, but he declined to disclose information about the severance packages to the Word & Way. He wrote that a law firm "coached us through [the reduction] process so that we were absolutely above board, fair and absolutely consistent in our dealings with our entire staff."

The executive director noted that the reductions cut across age, gender and tenure lines.

- By Word & Way staff



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Former Hardin-Simmons president Lanny Hall will lead Howard Payne

By

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BROWNWOOD, Texas (ABP) – Lanny Hall, chancellor and former president of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, was named president of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, Feb. 3.

Hall returns to the university where he began his administrative career in higher education. He served as executive vice president and chief academic officer at Howard Payne from 1986-89.

"Howard Payne has a rich heritage and a very bright future," said Hall, who will begin his service as the Baptist school's 18th president March 1. "I look forward to great experiences as we seek to help students realize their dreams and continue to provide quality higher education in a nurturing, unapologetically Christian environment."

Hall's 32-year career in education and government includes service as a public school teacher, congressional aide, businessman, state representative, state agency executive, and university professor, vice president, president and chancellor. Hall served as president of Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, from 1989-1991.

Hall said he has "missed the challenges that come with being a university president" since leaving that role at Hardin-Simmons in 2001. He was named chancellor of the West Texas school after a 10-year tenure as president. During his administration, the Baptist university's endowment grew from \$31 million to \$75 million, five new campus buildings were added, and five other facilities renovated. Hardin-Simmons increased undergraduate and graduate enrollment and added six new graduate programs.

At Howard Payne, Hall succeeds Russell Dilday, who has served as interim president of the 112-year-old school in Central Texas since August 2002.

Hall earned the PhD in educational administration from the University of Texas in 1985 and master's and bachelor's degrees from North Texas State University. He and his wife, Carol, have two grown children.



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Volunteer chaplains minister outside NASA Space Center**By Ken Camp****Associated Baptist Press - www.abpnews.com****February 4, 2003****Volume: 03-12-3439**

HOUSTON (ABP) – Flowers, flags and photos serve as a makeshift memorial at the entrance to the Johnson Space Center. And five victim-relief chaplains offer comfort and hope to the NASA employees, local residents and visitors from around the country who come to honor the Columbia space shuttle crew.

The volunteer chaplains set up their mobile unit about 50 feet from the entrance of the Space Center before dawn on Feb. 4, providing what Gene Grounds, executive director of Victim Relief Ministries, called a "ministry of presence." Victim Relief Ministries is an interdenominational volunteer program launched by Texas Baptist Men.

"We'll be setting up a prayer station in a tent where people can come in out of the wind and weather to pray," said Grounds. The morning temperature Feb. 4 was 48 degrees with a 30 mph wind blowing. The volunteer chaplains also planned to offer candles to visitors "as a symbol of light and hope in a tragic situation," he added.

Grounds noticed the need for a victim-relief presence at the Space Center as he passed its front gate in the days following the Feb. 1 Columbia crash. "I had seen large groups and small groups gathering there, praying at the gate, and there was no ministry of any type present to minister to those grieving people," Grounds said. "I felt that we needed to be there as representatives of the faith community."

Chaplains approached individuals who were standing at the gate weeping. "I'd just put my arm around them, let them know they're loved and tell them, 'I'll pray for you,'" said volunteer Mike Brittain. "We're just trying to touch the people and let them know we are here for them."

Brittain recalled visiting with one NASA employee who described the emotional turmoil her teenage daughter was experiencing after the shuttle crash. "What do I tell her? What can I do?" she asked the volunteer chaplain.

The victim-relief mobile unit was moved to Houston from the Nacogdoches County Expo Center, which served as the staging area for search teams scouring East Texas for space shuttle debris. The chaplains held a worship service for the law officers and other searchers Sunday evening in the Expo Center rodeo arena. At the request of the American Red Cross, Texas Baptist Men provided emergency food service for search teams in East Texas, serving more than 3,100 meals in the first two days.



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