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**Hemphill's departure could signal further shift at Southwestern**  
**By Mark Wingfield**  
**Associated Baptist Press - www.abpnews.com**  
**April 17, 2003**  
**Volume: 03-36-3541**

**MAY 06 2003**

**WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) – Could Paige Patterson be the next president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary?**

Since the abrupt "early retirement" announcement of seminary president Ken Hemphill April 8, speculation has run rampant in both Texas and North Carolina that Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, might return home to Texas to do for Southwestern, the Southern Baptist Convention's largest seminary, what he has done for Southeastern.

Such speculation is so strong that one of Southeastern's trustees asked Patterson about it during the seminary's board meeting in Wake Forest, N.C., April 14.

Patterson's cautious response won't quell many rumors: "I have not been approached by anyone on the [search] committee at all about it." He later added: "I would be the most surprised man in the world, from several aspects, if that should happen."

Southwestern's presidential search committee had been appointed just one week earlier, when Hemphill announced he was moving to a newly created position in Nashville as national strategist for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth initiative.

Patterson, perhaps the SBC's highest-profile conservative, was considered by many to be too controversial to lead Southwestern after former president Russell Dilday was fired by conservatives in 1994. Hemphill was seen as a more palatable choice by trustees widely criticized for firing Dilday.

But conservatives reportedly have been dissatisfied with the pace of changes at the seminary. By most insider accounts, Hemphill was pressured to leave Southwestern by a small group of SBC leaders. According to a story that will appear in the April 21 issue of the Baptist Standard of Texas, those leaders reportedly helped broker a deal to allow Hemphill to stay until he could find another position or one could be created for him.

In announcing Hemphill's newly created Nashville job, Southwestern said April 8 he would be "jointly employed" by the SBC Executive Committee and LifeWay Christian Resources. However, seminary trustee chairman David Allen confirmed April 16 that Hemphill's salary will be paid by Southwestern for a year after he leaves the seminary.

The most conservative segment of Southwestern's trustees has criticized Hemphill for not cleaning house at Southwestern and for allowing too much leeway for non-fundamentalist faculty members to stay on. Sources in both Fort Worth and North Carolina said Hemphill was called to a meeting a few years ago in North Carolina in which he was told either to resign or be fired.

Those accounts correspond loosely with Patterson's comments to his trustees April 14. He said Hemphill shared with him about three years ago that he was considering a career change because, in Patterson's words, "he still had a heart for the pastorate." Patterson further explained that Hemphill contacted him and some other friends several weeks ago to let them know he could be available.

Shortly afterward, SBC Executive Committee president Morris Chapman invited Hemphill to become the national strategist for Empowering Kingdom Growth, a new initiative intended to promote church health and growth.

Lorin Cranford, a former professor at Southwestern who now lives in North Carolina, told the Baptist Standard about a half dozen sources closely related to the seminary have confirmed that Hemphill had been to a meeting a few years ago in which he was given ultimatums to find another post, fire David Crutchley as dean of the School of Theology and hire Craig Blaising as provost and executive vice president.

Hemphill removed Crutchley as dean in December 2001. Blaising arrived shortly thereafter and was given sweeping powers by the trustees.

Cranford's account was corroborated by several Fort Worth sources who cannot be named because of their current relation to the seminary and fears of reprisal.

Allen, the seminary's new trustee chairman, flatly denied assertions that Hemphill's departure was coerced, however. "That's patently false," he said in an interview. "I was on the board when he was brought in ... and I served on the board while he has been president. I can tell you unequivocally that he was not forced out."

For his part, Hemphill has kept a low profile and downplayed talk of his departure being forced, even though those close to him report he and his wife, Paula, have been deeply hurt by the ordeal.

The day he announced he was leaving, talk of "God's will" permeated the statements of both Hemphill and seminary trustees. "For several years, we have been praying about our gifts, about how we could best advance the kingdom of God," Hemphill tearfully told students, faculty and staff in a packed chapel service.

He later told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram the move to Nashville was "a simple call of God on my life" and that he has "no animosity toward anybody – Dr. Blaising, the trustees or anybody."

Blaising likewise told the Star-Telegram it is "simply not true" that he was brought in to get rid of unwanted faculty.

However, that contradicts the published statements of former trustee chairman Miles Seaborn, a retired Fort Worth pastor and one of the most influential voices on the board in the last decade. In the December 2001 issue of the Southern Baptist Texan, a conservative newspaper, Seaborn predicted Blaising would help fill the faculty with his kind of conservatives.

"We've been working toward this ever since the firing of Dr. Dilday," he said, referencing the 1994 trustee ouster of president Russell Dilday. "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 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."

When asked April 8 his reaction to Hemphill's departure, Seaborn declined comment except to say, "This is God's will."

Terms of Hemphill's financial compensation from the seminary were not disclosed. Trustees met in executive session April 8 to iron out those details.

However, sources close to the seminary have said Hemphill was given a deal similar to that offered other faculty members who have quietly left the seminary in recent years. Under this precedent, Hemphill, 54, could remain on the seminary payroll as a faculty member on sabbatical for one more year. That would bring the total of his age and years of service to 65. According to the faculty handbook, that is the point at which a seminary employee may retire with full benefits. Those benefits include health insurance for life and a Christmas bonus.

Trustee chairman Allen, a professor at Criswell College in Dallas and pastor of MacArthur Boulevard Baptist Church in Irving, confirmed Hemphill will be paid by the seminary through July 31, 2004, when his retirement goes into effect.

Paige Patterson has topped the list of rumored successors to Hemphill for several years. The native Texan is considered one of two masterminds behind the fundamentalist movement to control the SBC. He is a former president of Criswell College in Dallas and has led Southeastern Seminary into an era of rebuilding and renewed influence.

Another often-mentioned possibility for the Southwestern presidency is Richard Land, also a native Texan, who currently heads the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

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- With additional reporting by Marv Knox.



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**News service directors approve adding staff**  
**By Robert Marus**  
**Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)**  
**April 17, 2003**  
**Volume: 03-36-3542**

ARLINGTON, Va. (ABP) -- Associated Baptist Press' board of directors were thankful for positive news during their spring meeting April 10-12. Meeting just across the Potomac River from Washington, ABP directors approved filling two staff positions and bestowed awards to a member of Congress and a Baptist state convention.

At their last meeting in November, directors eliminated the position of news editor held by Bob Allen as a budget-cutting move. Another position became vacant last month when Philip Poole left his position as executive director for another job.

While neither of those positions will be filled immediately, directors approved plans to fill two other staff positions.

A full-time development director will be hired to focus on the organization's upcoming fund-raising campaign, "Dateline: Tomorrow." Executive Editor Greg Warner, who also serves as news editor, said the development position likely will be filled by a contract worker initially.

A part-time position of development associate already has been filled by Franceen Cornelius, a former ABP employee.

In November ABP directors adopted a \$528,000 budget for 2003 -- about \$100,000 less than was spent last year. The directors heard April 10 that ABP's income for the first quarter of 2003 was nearly 20 percent over budget and expenses were 15 percent below budget.

"After a very difficult 2002 financially, we are off to a much better start this year," said Warner. "We have stabilized our income while cutting expenses. And we've done that while actually increasing our news production. If the rest of the year looks like the last three months, we should be fine."

Directors learned that, despite being short-staffed, the organization increased its news production slightly in the first three months of 2003. The news service produced 115 stories during that period -- an increase of 12 percent over the 103 stories the service produced in the same period last year.

Directors also authorized the continued publication of FaithWorks, a Christian lifestyle magazine oriented toward a young-adult audience, which ABP has published since 1999. Due to budget-cutting concerns, the magazine's future had been in doubt since the directors' November meeting. At that meeting, directors moved the magazine's publishing schedule from bimonthly to quarterly and promised to review its future at this meeting. FaithWorks will continue being published on a quarterly basis while ABP seeks a publishing partner to help with marketing.

In other action, the organization presented its annual Religious Freedom Award to U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas), and its annual Founders Award to the Baptist General Association of Virginia. Both awards were conferred in an April 10 banquet at the Arlington, Va., offices of the Freedom Forum.

The board's next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 11-13 in Oklahoma City.



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**Valentine says Christians have left ethics behind**

**By Marv Knox**

**Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)**

**April 17, 2003**

**Volume: 03-36-3543**

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) – America desperately needs to recover a sense of virtues and values, Foy Valentine said recently during the T.B. Maston Christian Ethics Lectures at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology.

"Most American churches are alienated from any moral standards and almost utterly without any substantive commitment to reject wrong rather than do right," claimed Valentine, retired executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Christian ethics, "the business of determining who Christian believers ought to become and what Christian believers ought to do in this world," has a long history but has grown into disfavor, he said, insisting it still defines faith and life.

"Christian ethics has to do with believing and behaving. Christian ethics understands that humanity's supreme good is to know and do the will of God," he said.

"Christian ethics is concerned with keeping faith and works joined together in vital union. Christian ethics is everlastingly engaged in mortal combat with Christianity's gravest heresy – the separation of religion and life, ... the sundering of church and the world."

Although Christians have been taught Jesus' command to love God with their whole hearts and their neighbors as themselves, "we keep wallowing in scandal," Valentine observed.

In addition to high-profile corporate failures, such as Enron, WorldCom and Arthur Andersen, "we keep sliding down the slippery slope of the pedophile priests and crime-coddling bishops; ... reeling under the devastating blows of terrorism, violence, wars and rumors of wars, adultery, child abuse and greed; we keep tolerating perverted justice, bought elections and the shameless rejection of campaign financing [reform] in the political arena."

Rather than addressing such moral ills, the church turns in upon itself, he declared.

"We turn our attention interminably to building bigger barns, bigger temples, bigger cathedrals and bigger staffs; to good, safe uncontroversial matters like measuring the temple, counting the commandments, naming the apostles and mounting new crusades to talk about the Bible, talk about family, talk about spirituality, talk about evangelism or talk about missions."

Several factors account for the "sorry plight of Christian ethics today," Valentine said. They include:

- "Ethics is nearly always controversial, and any time institutionalism confronts controversy, the establishment nearly always prefers to run like a scalded dog. Bishops and administrators and CEOs very seldom welcome ethics-focused boat-rockers, status quo-disturbing prophets."
- "Theologians, philosophers of religion, religion writers and CEO-style pastors are nearly always more comfortable in safe cubicles or secluded studies with unlisted telephones, far behind the dust and heat of frontline fighting where a body can get hurt."
- Christians who intend to interpret religion for popular culture tend to argue fine points of theology, instead of helping people deal with the "excruciatingly hard work of Christian ethics as it has to do with war, peace with justice, abortion, male chauvinism, violence, terrorism, racism, dysfunctional families, systematic poverty, slum housing, citizenship, public affairs, vouchers, church-state separation, alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, gambling, pornography, television programming, corporate greed, world hunger and the like."
- Contemporary church music, which influences worshippers, "is generally as free of ethics as a frog is of feathers."

— "Preaching from today's pulpits mostly eschews ethics like the plague, pussyfoots around prophethood and recoils from relevance as if it were a coiled rattlesnake."

Calling for a return to virtues and values, Valentine said: "We need this in the pulpits and the churches and most particularly from pastors who will take seriously the call to be upright and live beyond the shadow of any doubt and demonstrate it makes a difference to have been with Jesus."

Virtues are personal qualities, such as purity, strength, valor, courage, uprightness of heart, integrity of soul and virility of spirit, Valentine said. Values are social qualities, "the irreducible minimum by which folks ought to live."

Together, they comprise "ultimate seriousness" that undergirds both culture and religion, he said. Christians must give attention to this "if integrity is to be recovered and if civilization is to be preserved."

Fortunately, despite the current outlook, Christian ethics is not in danger of annihilation, he said. Throughout Christ's church, "vigorous and formidable proponents, defenders and champions" still take up the cause of ethics.

"The people of God need to discipline ourselves to preach, teach and write ethics so as to communicate the full gospel that reaches out with relevance to a needy world," Valentine urged. "The people of God need to embrace the insight that church is not steeples and stained glass but God's kind of folks doing God's kinds of things in this world here and now.

"The people of God need to demonstrate daily that, by the grace of God, changed people can change the world."



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**CORRECTION:**

**By ABP staff**

**Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)**

**April 17, 2003**

**Volume: 03-36-3544**

Please replace the third paragraph of the story "Defending church-state separation worth the risk, congressman says," released April 15, to read:

John Upton, executive director of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, accepted an ABP Founders Award that same evening for the BGAV's longstanding support of the independent news service.

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