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**Patterson elected president
of Southwestern Seminary**

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Pledging he would not "clean house" but would build a faculty committed to Southern Baptist Convention guidelines, Paige Patterson was elected president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary June 24.

Patterson, who with retired Houston judge Paul Pressler was the co-architect of the SBC's decade-long fundamentalist takeover, was elected unanimously in a called meeting of seminary trustees. All 33 board members who were present voted to elect Patterson.

Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., for almost 11 years, will assume the Southwestern presidency Aug. 1. His wife, Dorothy, also was elected a professor at Southwestern.

Denny Autry, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lindale, Texas and chairman of the 10-member search committee that recommended Patterson, said the 60-year-old native Texan was the only candidate the panel interviewed.

"We received a number of recommendations from the Southern Baptist family," Autry said. "We could have taken two approaches, one interviewing each individual candidate or [first] determining which candidate we felt most comfortable with and moving to the end result. We prayed over all the recommendations, and Dr. Patterson came to the top."

Both Patterson and Autry emphasized that the two parties made no contact, either formal or informal, before the search committee had its initial conversation with Patterson on May 15.

Even after that contact, Patterson said, "My position has been that I was president of Southeastern Seminary. In my wildest imaginations I never dreamed I would be standing here today."

Patterson added that he was so happy with his circumstances at Southeastern that he initially had no interest in moving to his hometown of Fort Worth. Patterson was born there while his late father, former Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Director T. A. Patterson, was working on his doctoral dissertation at Southwestern.

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Patterson held that position, he said, "until crossing the Atlantic a couple of weeks ago and I felt God decisively spoke to my heart. Until then no decision whatever [had been made] on my part."

Patterson said he will notify Southeastern Seminary of his resignation, effective July 31.

He will succeed Ken Hemphill, who resigned to lead a new SBC initiative called "Empowering Kingdom Growth." Hemphill had been president since 1994, when he succeeded Russell Dilday. Dilday was fired by trustees for opposing the new direction of the SBC.

Although Hemphill and seminary spokesmen deny it, numerous sources have told the Texas Baptist Standard and other news outlets that Hemphill was forced out of the presidency. According to those sources, some seminary trustees and SBC leaders were unhappy with the Southwestern's declining enrollment and Hemphill's alleged failure to clear out faculty not fully sympathetic with SBC leadership.

Asked if he would "clean house" at Southwestern, as has been speculated, Patterson cited his experience in North Carolina.

"When we went to Southeastern, there were rumors we would dismiss faculty," he said. "I never found it be a satisfactory way to handle the situation. We knew there were faculty members who were not sympathetic with the turn in direction of the convention, but I found them to be reasonable, and we were able to work with them. Most did eventually leave, but it was never necessary to fire them."

He said he could not imagine a circumstance when he would "come in and clean house. That does not fit my style of operation. I would prefer to motivate on a higher level."

However, he acknowledged there will be faculty turnover. "There are always retirements; churches hire faculty because they can pay more; and sometimes the grass seems greener someplace else and people leave. I would anticipate that will happen here."

Patterson said new faculty "must operate within the guidelines of the SBC which have been given to us and adopted by the six seminaries. They must be people who can sign their agreement with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000."

Asked if he would permit a woman to teach in the seminary's School of Theology, Patterson said he would not do anything in the School of Theology that he wouldn't want churches to imitate.

"I believe there are ample numbers of men out there," he said. "I will build the theology faculty around them."

Asked if that was a "no" to women teaching theology, Patterson said, "Well, I didn't say it that way, but it tells you the direction I am headed."

Pressed further, he said women could teach in areas of Christian education and church music, particularly if they were teaching women and children.

"My concern," he said, "is that the New Testament is crystal clear that pastors are to be men. That is not a question of the equality of essence but the assignment of roles that God gives...."

As we build the School of Theology, where we primarily train future pastors, it is only appropriate -- if we are going to stay with the biblical pattern -- that we use only men in that capacity."

Among those welcoming Patterson to his new assignment was Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The SBTC was started by fundamentalist Texas Baptists who opposed the more moderate-leaning leadership of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

As to the kind of relationship Patterson would seek for Southwestern with the BGCT, Patterson said the answer "is easy. I fully intend to have a wonderful relationship with anybody, regardless of affiliation, who maintains the absolute lordship of Christ, the inerrancy of God's word and the mission of winning men and women to Christ."

Miles Seaborn, retired pastor of Birchman Baptist Church in Fort Worth and a highly influential figure among Southwestern trustees, told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram: "A lot of people say Paige is mean-spirited, but I've been in a lot of meetings, and I've never heard him to be unkind. He's just very precise with what the Scripture says about an issue."

But former Southwestern President Dilday told the Fort Worth paper he was not pleased to hear of Patterson's election.

"It's the final stroke in Patterson's plan to capture and radically alter the great school," Dilday said. "Already, Southwestern bears little resemblance to the institution that undergirded Baptist churches and ministries around the world for 90 years. Paige's election will complete that tragic metamorphosis, and the Southwestern we knew no longer exists."

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Bush announces religious-hiring policy as congressmen renew opposition

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The White House has made explicit President Bush's intention to ensure that religious groups receiving government funding be allowed to discriminate in hiring on the basis of religion.

But Bush is already facing renewed congressional opposition to a policy that critics say will "roll back the clock" on civil rights.

In a June 24 speech in Texas, Bush's deputy for faith-based charities announced the publication of a White House position paper on the subject of hiring issues for religious charities receiving public funding.

Called "Protecting the Civil Rights and Religious Liberty of Faith-Based Organizations: Why Religious Hiring Rights Must Be Preserved," the document lays out the administration's intention to ensure the right of religious organizations to hire only those who practice their own faith -- even if the organization receives government funding to perform social services.

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Religious organizations such as churches have had an explicit right to discriminate in hiring on the basis of religion since they were given a special exemption to do so in Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. But the law has been more convoluted as regards whether organizations give up that right in order to receive public funding.

"President Bush believes that -- regardless of whether government funds are involved -- faith-based groups should retain their fundamental civil rights, including their Title VII right to take their faith into account when they make employment decisions," the document says.

Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, told reporters in a conference call following his speech that Bush believes this is necessary for such religious organizations to be effective in their mission. "President Bush has said from the beginning that the faith-based initiative is about results. He believes that America is served best when the most qualified providers are eligible to compete" for social-service contracts without having to meet the government's non-discrimination standards in hiring, Towey told reporters.

The principle of non-discrimination in government-funded programs has a long history. Since 1941, when President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order that banned racial and religious discrimination in hiring for companies receiving defense contracts, many subsequent federal orders and laws have similarly banned hiring discrimination for contractors.

However, in 1996 Congress passed, and then-President Bill Clinton signed, federal "welfare reform" legislation that allowed the provision of federal social-service funds to heavily religious agencies. The bill allowed those agencies to retain their religious restrictions in hiring.

But as the White House document pointed out, and Towey reiterated, the differences between those so-called "charitable-choice" programs and other federal programs means a hodge-podge of differing standards on hiring discrimination depending on which federal program a faith-based organization was applying to for funds

"Some groups have been deterred from providing services because of this thicket in the law... and the poor are the losers in this situation," Towey said.

Since Bush took office, the White House has repeatedly attempted to expand the government's ability to fund social services through deeply religious providers. However, the efforts have bogged down in Congress, mainly because of the controversial nature of the employment-discrimination issue. Many civil-rights advocates say allowing religious discrimination in federal contracts will "roll back the clock," and many church-state separationists say funding organizations that hire on the basis of religion violates the First Amendment's ban on state support for religion.

Bush attempted to do an end-run around Congress by enacting much of his faith-based initiative by administrative fiat last winter. He signed an executive order Dec. 12 that instructed government agencies to give "equal treatment" to faith-based providers in granting social-service contracts, and explicitly allowed those contractors to discriminate in hiring on the basis of religion.

However, executive orders can always be overturned by future presidents, and do not supersede congressional legislation that explicitly outlaws religious discrimination for providers using funds from certain federal programs. Bush's congressional allies have made several

recent attempts to remove the non-discrimination clauses from legislation reauthorizing individual federal social-service programs, such as Head Start.

But some in Congress are fighting back. On June 25 -- the 62nd anniversary of Roosevelt's executive order -- Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) announced he was introducing a bill in the House to repeal the portion of Bush's executive order that allowed religious discrimination with federal dollars.

"This rollback on civil-rights protections is unwarranted and unnecessary," Scott said in a press conference announcing the bill. "Many faith-based organizations have sponsored federal programs for decades without discriminating with federal dollars," he added, alluding to religious social-service providers such as Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services that have long received federal funding while complying with federal and state anti-discrimination laws.

The White House's Towey has repeatedly argued that such concerns about discrimination are unwarranted. "I defy anyone to show a trend of problems since welfare-to-work was passed in 1996 on the religious-hiring, charitable-choice question. But the fact is there is no record of it," Towey said in the June 24 conference.

However, Scott argued, such problems are not apparent because even though Clinton signed the legislation authorizing "charitable choice," his administration did not enforce the practice of giving federal funds to deeply religious groups that qualified for civil-rights exceptions. "When President Clinton signed these bills, he said his interpretation denied funding of pervasively sectarian organizations," Scott said.

The bill, which had not yet been assigned a number or referred to a House committee by press time, may face an uphill battle. Previous attempts by Scott and his allies in the House to force a debate and vote on amendments outlawing religious discrimination in federal social-service programs have been thwarted by the powerful House Rules Committee, which is dominated by Republicans. That committee sets the terms for debate on bills coming to the House floor. "Our question is whether the Rules Committee will even allow us to have a 20-minute debate on the floor of the House on an issue that Jefferson and Madison debated for 10 years in the Virginia legislature," said Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas), another frequent Bush critic on church-state issues.

But Scott said the increasing attention the press is paying to the issue provides the bill's proponents new leverage with House leaders, because he believes public opinion is on his side on this issue. "The more you discuss it, the more the idea of employment discrimination starts smelling," he said.