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NEWS

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Shared Governance Key to Southeastern Trustees Meeting

Wake Forest, NC - "Shared governance" was the predominate theme of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's semi-annual trustees meeting, October 16, 1990. The meeting was held off-campus in order to avoid distractions and to provide a relaxed environment. The North Carolina Conference Center at Fort Caswell, near Wilmington, offered participants a very comfortable and casual setting in which to conduct business.

For the first time in Southeastern's history, faculty members were invited to officially observe the workings of the Board of Trustees in session. Dr. Furman Hewitt, professor of Christian Ethics, and Dr. Michael Hawn, professor of Church Music, were elected by the faculty to be the eyewitnesses for this session.

The meeting contained feelings of unanimity and unity. Communication flowed easily, openly and honestly. Motions were passed with little or no opposition. Due to the significant role of "shared governance," trustees worked their motions in such a way as to allow faculty input on issues that would affect them.

Hawn, an elected spectator, noted that "we are all novices in the issue of shared governance. It takes practice. I saw the trustees, I think very sincerely, struggle when motions came to the floor to frame them in such a way that there could be faculty input on those motions that affected them."

Roger Ellsworth, newly elected Chairman of the Trustees, commented on the tone of the meeting, "I think the new spirit of cooperation between faculty and trustees will continue and increase. I think the trust level is coming back."

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Southeastern's largest class of new trustees came on board for the meetings at Ft. Caswell. They were accepted and incorporated into the group quite smoothly. When asked to give his impression of the board of trustees and the seminary in general, Clarence Brock, new trustee and pastor of Coventry Baptist Church in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, stated that, "in many ways it looks healthier than I expected and the congeniality of the Board was much greater than I anticipated."

One matter of business that had a profound effect on the meeting was that of establishing a Statement of Mission. As a "coming together point", the Statement of Mission will require input from every sector of the Southeastern community. The Statement will be developed in the context of "shared governance".

Dr. Robert Cooley, president of Gordon-Conwell Seminary and ATS facilitator, commented that a Statement of Mission is foundational to and more detailed than a Statement of Purpose. Along those lines, Roger Ellsworth continued, "A Statement of Mission comprehends several things. It takes into account biblical, theological, ecclesiastical, social, and even economical issues. It makes a statement including and comprehending these things from which one can derive a Statement of Purpose." It is believed that this action will make Southeastern unique as the only Southern Baptist Seminary having a Statement of Mission.

Trustee officers were elected in a spirit of unity, each being elected to his post without opposition. The new officers are: Chairman - Roger Ellsworth, pastor from Benton, Illinois; Vice Chairman - Jack May, pastor from Memphis, Tennessee; Secretary - Wendell Page, pastor from Lee's Summit, Missouri; and Treasurer - Cecil Rhodes, physician from Wilson, North Carolina.

In other business, trustees passed a number of motions and resolutions concerning the seminary. Some of the more significant motions and resolutions included:

1. Trustees recommissioned the Task Force on faculty selection in order to develop a process for conducting a "special" faculty search. A process which would allow the school to pursue an acclaimed leader in a particular field.
2. Trustees adopted a motion which instructed the president to establish a Statement of Missions using the principle of shared governance.

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3. Trustees passed a motion for the faculty and administration to develop guidelines for the use of tape recorders in classrooms. These guidelines will be presented for adoption at the trustee meeting in the Spring of 1991.
4. Trustees passed a motion for the president and the dean of the faculty to formulate a student performed teaching effectiveness evaluation process for all classes.
5. Trustees passed a motion instructing the president to investigate students' reports that they are being required to use feminine terminology for God in classroom discussions and required papers. (Some trustees feel such a practice would be in violation of the Seminary's Articles of Faith.)
6. Trustees adopted a motion to announce their wholehearted support for the Cooperative Program.
7. Trustees adopted a pro-life resolution for the Board of Trustees, stating that they believed in the right to and sanctity of life, where the only exception for abortion given was in the case of clear danger to the mother's life.

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