

# SBC seminaries show similarities, diversity regarding female profs

BY GARY LEDBETTER  
Editor

GRAPEVINE—In January, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary made the news with an earlier decision to deny tenure to a Hebrew language instructor, Sheri Klouda. Discussion in the Klouda case centered on Southwestern's practice of appointing only "pastor-qualified" professors to teach biblical studies and theology students.

A Feb. 5 story in the TEXAN quoted David Allen, Southwestern's academic dean, and Van McClain, chairman of the seminary trustee board. Chairman McClain spoke of Southwestern's desire "to have only men teaching who are qualified to be pastors or who have been pastors in the disciplines of theology, biblical studies, homiletics, and pastoral ministries."

McClain described the desire to be in keeping with the SBC's confession of faith, which limits the role of pastor to men.

In early February the TEXAN asked the leadership of the five other SBC seminaries about their procedures and policies regarding the appointment of biblical studies professors.

Midwestern Seminary, Southern Seminary, New Orleans Seminary, and Southeastern Seminary granted interviews with the seminary presidents. Golden Gate Seminary responded to questions by e-mail.

The seminaries, each with its own trustee governing board, differ slightly in policy and practice. None, however, has women teaching theology or pastoral ministries courses.

The following are the questions the TEXAN asked and the responses by the seminaries' presidents or spokesmen.

★TEXAN: Describe your seminary's practice regarding female professors and biblical studies classes.

**DANNY AKIN (Southeastern president):** This is a point that is raised in a lot of venues, not just seminaries, but in the mission field. For example, I recently had the question proposed before me—Is it appropriate for a woman to share the gospel and evangelize a man? My response was, it would be inappropriate if she didn't. Then the question comes, "we don't believe women



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should ever under any circumstances teach a man theology." My response was how do you share the gospel and not convey and teach theology? The answer is you do.

The gospel is by its very nature a theological proposition and issue; therefore, the very sharing of the gospel, you are teaching theology. You are teaching the Bible. That's just unavoidable. Moving to us—though we do not have an "official" policy, and we don't. But as the president and with my dean, David Nelson and I think with the consensus for the most part if not unanimously with our faculty, we have identified certain positions that closely parallel the office of the pastor, the elder, the overseer, that we would only look to call and hire men for those particular areas.

Those areas include preaching, pastoral ministries, theology, and biblical studies. I could not imagine that we would hire a woman to sit in one of those professional positions as an instructor over men.

**CHUCK KELLEY (New Orleans president):** We do not have guidelines, but we would follow the Baptist Faith and Message statement and I think in my conversations with other seminary presidents and I think I read my board properly in saying there are definitely areas in which we would not have a woman teach. Biblical studies and theology are two of those areas. Preaching would be a third area. However, I do want to have a women's study position that would have a female theologian and biblical scholar teaching as part of our women's studies program. That's one of my dreams one day.



Chuck Kelley

**ALBERT MOHLER (Southern president):** During the transition of Southern Seminary, when we were seeking to bring our hiring policies completely in line with what we believed were the rightful expectations of Southern Baptists, we did this before there was a 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

It was clear where Southern Baptists stood on this. Furthermore, we believed it was right in accordance with biblical teaching that the faculty members who would model the pastorate in the teaching of disciplines specifically for pastors would be qualified by Scripture to be pastors.

This was not just an abstract theory. This also was what was advised to us in terms of the necessity of specifying which teaching positions must in all cases be qualified in this manner. So we defined all teaching positions in the school of theology as of necessity to be pastor-qualified.

**PHIL ROBERTS (Midwestern president):** We don't have a written policy but we do have the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, which specifies that pastors should be men. We'd be very hesitant about women teaching theological subjects for that reason.



Al Mohler



Phil Roberts

**JEFF JONES (Golden Gate communications director):** The seminary does not have a restriction of gender in its faculty hiring policy. The seminary currently has four female faculty members teaching in the areas of education and intercultural communication.

★TEXAN: Would this practice include disciplines like church history and biblical languages?

**AKIN:** I wouldn't [draw the line there]. I don't see a problem with a woman teaching French, German, Latin, Cantonese, Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic.

**MOHLER:** I don't believe there is any such thing as a mere language study when it comes to the biblical languages and the biblical text. I would argue that the teaching of biblical languages, when it comes to interpreting and translating the biblical text, inevitably comes down to matters of exegesis and theology as well as mere language.

**ROBERTS:** We'd have to take that on a

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case-by-case basis in some areas.

★TEXAN: Are there cases where otherwise qualified men might be rejected because they are not qualified to pastor for some reason?

**AKIN:** Yes. We, for example, as of this moment have no divorcees on our faculty. I realize there are differences of opinion on this and I respect those differences of opinion. Would I think it exceptional that I would have a divorced person on our faculty? Yes. It is conceivable someone who was divorced prior to their conversion and who has demonstrated over many, many years the expectations of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, that they are indeed a mature, godly man who would meet all those expectations. Could I see myself considering such a person for a teaching position? Yes, I could.

**KELLEY:** Probably so. We are looking for churchmen. Many of our faculty members are interim pastors in addition to their ministry here. This is one of the things I've had to learn. I really learned one of the significant roles a seminary plays in a region of its location is the provision of leadership for local churches such as interim pastors. And so I like to have people who are able to help churches because I know the needs are so great.

**ROBERTS:** We do expect our faculty members to have a kind of pastoral role in the lives of our students. I couldn't see us hiring someone to teach biblical studies classes who is not qualified for the pastorate.

★TEXAN: What do you say to those who object that passages like 1 Timothy 2:9-14 apply to churches rather than to parachurch ministries such as seminaries?

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## DO YOU HAVE PEACE WITH GOD?

### THE PROBLEM—SEPARATION FROM GOD

**Romans 3:23:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

This means everyone since Adam and Eve inherited a bent toward sin. One needs only to look at a room full of preschoolers to see that sin is our natural tendency.

### THE RESULT—SPIRITUAL DEATH

**Romans 6:23:** "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God is holy and just, which means he cannot tolerate sin except through just punishment—death and eternal judgment.

### GOD'S SOLUTION—HIS DEATH IN OUR PLACE

**Romans 5:8:** "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This is what John the Baptist alluded to when he said of Christ, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Jesus—God in the flesh—was the only acceptable sacrifice for our sinful condition.

### YOUR SALVATION—BY FAITH

**Romans 10:9:** "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and

believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Faith—believing from the heart—is the medium of exchange that God requires.

**Romans 10:13:** Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

**Romans 5:1:** Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Jesus, I agree that I'm a sinner and I need you to save me from eternal judgment. I believe that you are God's Son, that you died in my place and conquered death on my behalf through your bodily resurrection. I repent of my sin and cast myself on your mercy, asking you to come in and make me a new creation—give me a new heart and new desires. Thank you for saving me. Amen.

Welcome to God's family. We wish to help you grow in your new walk with Jesus Christ. We invite you to call us at 817-552-2500 for help and information.

## CHINA

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you start with "There is a God who created you and loves you ... I'm not a monkey and there is a God," Herbert said.

Twenty years ago, Southern Baptist church groups rarely traveled to China on short-term mission trips. Today, however, "The IMB is saying, 'Please, send those five to 10 people and help us make significant progress among the Chinese people,'" Herbert said.

To that end, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is planning a "Heart for China" workshop March 5-9 for pastors and church leaders interested in doing short-term, church-based ministry in China. The workshop will be at the church where Herbert is pastor—Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Greenville.

Through a partnership with the SBTC and the International Mission Board, SBTC church groups may travel there for short-term work in English language instruction, prayer walking, sports outreach, encouragement ministry, and street ministry.

Herbert said since 2003 he has taken around 100 Texans with him to China with fruitful results, mostly from English language instruction and sports outreach.

"Of those, a good percentage have gone back," Herbert said. "Before we return to the U.S., they are saying, 'OK, now next year we'll do this or that.'"

The Chinese people are eager to learn English from Americans, "which often

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**—Greenville pastor Kevin Herbert on Texans who travel for short-term work in China**

leads to more relational dialogue," Herbert said.

Also, the Chinese are very interested in athletics. "Basketball is huge," he said. "Outside of soccer, basketball is it. Yao Ming [Houston Rockets] is well known. Michael Jordan is huge."

With the 2008 Summer Olympic Games planned for Beijing, news coverage of China will escalate.

"That's good for me because that promotes the work even more," Herbert said. In a 10-day to two-week period, "you can have an impact."

This year Herbert is overseeing three trips to China. He said his vision is to gather "enough people in Texas to put together a network of churches working in China and begin to do some coordinated work there."

If a church decided it wanted to enter a Communist country, "How would you do that? Why would you do that? Could you



Greenville pastor Kevin Herbert with some Chinese students.

do that?"

The workshop will address such questions and more, Herbert said. He hopes to build a core of leaders who can also help lead Texas churches to the work there.

"China is just an overwhelming number of people. Basically the whole of the country is unreached. We're nowhere close to saturating the country," he said, adding that churches may also adopt Chinese cities or people groups to pray for.

The conference registration is \$25 and four lunches are an additional \$26. A lodging rate of \$316 for four nights is available through the LaQuinta in Greenville (903-

454-3700).

Registration is available by e-mailing Kevin Herbert at [herbkjh714@aol.com](mailto:herbkjh714@aol.com). Registration must include name, church name, contact number, e-mail, and experience, if any, in China ministry.

Mail registration checks (\$51 for registration and lunches) to Ridgecrest Baptist Church, 6801 Wesley Drive, Greenville 75402.

For more information on the SBTC's work in China, contact Tiffany Smith at 877-953-7282 or e-mail her at [tsmith@sb-texas.com](mailto:tsmith@sb-texas.com). ■

## SBC SEMINARIES

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**AKIN:** I understand their argument and though I appreciate it, I would simply think for us, we've determined that the parallel between the office of the pastor and those particular positions of instruction is close enough that it is a guideline worth following.

**KELLEY:** Well, I think its primary application is obviously local church. I do think

it's harder to be ironclad over its application outside of the local church. I think you have to allow a little more freedom of interpretation. But I think Southern Baptists have historically looked at that very strongly and very consistently in relationship to the church. I think they have been very consistent in the matter of preparation of ministers in theological education. There is no tradition of women teaching theology or biblical studies to men in our seminar-

ies. Any exceptions would stand out in being exceptions and not a rule to the succession of people coming in.

**MOHLER:** Well, I would say specifically that interpretation [of applying to local churches] is more or less correct. But we are an institution that serves the local church, and in particular through the training of pastors. And it would be illogical for us to believe that the order in an institution that would serve the church in training of pastors should reverse that biblical logic.

**ROBERTS:** I can understand their concern. We'd rather err on the side of caution.

**★TEXAN: Does your seminary grant tenure?**

**AKIN:** We do not have tenure, but we do have election to faculty. It's almost like tenure but it's not. That was changed during Dr. Patterson's administration when he was here.

**KELLEY:** Yes.

**MOHLER:** Yes.

**ROBERTS:** We do not. Midwestern uses teaching contracts. Our last tenured professor retired this past year.

**JONES (Golden Gate):** Yes.

**★TEXAN: Briefly describe the process for electing a tenured professor (election to faculty in the case of Southeastern).**

**AKIN:** It is a shared governance function where the administration, faculty, and trustees together make that determination and ultimately the election is a trustee determination. In essence it follows a process identical to a process that would be followed where a school was granting tenure to someone. If the dean and the president do not wish to carry a person to the trustees for the purpose of being considered, it never gets to the trustees.

**KELLEY:** It is very simple. It's spelled in our faculty manual. Basically, after a person has taught a certain length of time they become eligible for tenure consideration. We are obligated to consider them for

tenure at the time they become eligible. If we choose not to grant tenure to the professor—and it has happened—we explain to them why we are not going to be recommending them for tenure, and they have an opportunity in a year's time to correct whatever the problems might be.

You do this whole general evaluation at several different levels. If there is a consensus that a person is granted tenure, he is presented to the trustees and the trustees make the ultimate decision. If the staff does not feel like the person is ready for tenure, that recommendation is not made.

In our process, a person would have a year to correct whatever deficiencies were pointed out to them. And at the end of that year, they would be evaluated again and if they had not had a suitable change or improvement or whatever, then they would be granted up to a year of employment but expected to leave sometime within that next year and seek other employment. All of this is automatic. Every professor knows this coming in that if they get to the point of their life they are eligible for tenure, they are not granted tenure, then they are going to have to leave the institution.

**MOHLER:** It begins with the president declaring a tenured position. Then it moves to the faculty through its search committee process making a recommendation; receiving approval from the dean and then the president has the opportunity to interview the candidate and make the decision whether or not to present the candidate for election of tenure to the board of trustees.

**ROBERTS:** The president and VP for academic affairs conduct the search. Our faculty gives input regarding a candidate's qualifications to teach in an area. Based on the recommendation of seminary administration, the trustees have final approval.

**JONES:** All faculty candidates are approved by our SBC-appointed trustees after being recommended by the president and vice president for academic affairs. ■

