

Southeastern's 2nd president, Olin T. Binkley, dies at age 91

(Source: Baptist Press, Aug 27, 1999, by Lee Weeks)

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Olin Trivette Binkley, the second president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, died in the early morning hours of Aug. 27 en route from Hillside Nursing Center, Wake Forest, N.C., to a local hospital. He was 91. Binkley served as president of Southeastern from 1963-74. Under Binkley's presidency, the school grew physically and academically. Four outdated buildings were removed and 13 new buildings were constructed and paid for during his 11-year administration. The seminary's Binkley Chapel, located in the center of campus, is named in his honor.

Binkley also guided the seminary through a revision and expansion of its academic curriculum. The bachelor of divinity degree was changed to the master of divinity, and the master of religious education and the doctor of ministry degrees were added, bringing the total number of degree programs to seven. And, before retiring in 1974, Binkley inaugurated the school's annual alumni giving program.

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "It is incredible to think what he accomplished between 1963 and 1974.

"The real legacy of Dr. Olin T. Binkley is to be found in the genuine and Christlike demeanor of a true saint of God," Patterson said. "The seminary will miss him profoundly and heaven this day is richer still." L. Russ Bush III, academic vice president and dean of the faculty at Southeastern, said Binkley was well-respected throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Dr. Binkley is remembered for his careful attention to the well-being of the seminary faculty," Bush said. "His tone and manner during the years of his presidency and thereafter encouraged academic excellence and pastoral concern. In my years here at Southeastern, I never heard anyone who knew him say anything but warm words of appreciation. He was a leader in Southern Baptist life who gave his

heart and mind to theological education and to gospel witness.” James H. Blackmore, professor emeritus of associate of divinity studies during Binkley’s tenure, said, “He’s been a Christian giant in our state and in our nation. Even in his illness, it was a blessing to visit him.”

Born Aug. 4, 1908, in Harmony, N.C., the son of a pastor, Binkley earned a bachelor of arts degree from Wake Forest College in 1928, where he returned as a member of Southeastern Seminary’s faculty shortly after the founding of the theological institution on the college campus in 1951.

Binkley earned the Th.B. degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; the B.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University; as well as honorary doctoral degrees from Wake Forest College, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Campbell University, Buies Creek, N.C.

Before becoming president of Southeastern, Binkley served as professor of ethics and academic dean at the Wake Forest, N.C., school where he began his tenure in 1952.

Before coming to Southeastern, Binkley taught at Southern Seminary as professor of ethics and sociology from 1944-52. He served as professor of religion and chairman of the department of religion at Wake Forest College from 1938-44.

Binkley served as associate pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, New Haven, Conn., from 1931-33, and pastor of University Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, N.C., from 1933-38.

Binkley served as president of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada from 1964-66 and was a member of its executive committee from 1966-72.

Among the many boards and agencies on which Binkley served was the board of trustees for the Baptist Children’s Home of North Carolina from 1961-74 and 1981 to 1984.

Binkley, who has been listed in “Who’s Who in America” since 1952, wrote four books, including “Frontiers for Christian Youth,” “The

Churches and the Social Conscience” and “How to Study the Bible.” Binkley is survived by his wife of 66 years, Pauline M. Eichmann; two daughters, Pauline Binkley Cheek and Janet Binkley Erwin; and five grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Funeral services are scheduled for Aug. 31 at 4 p.m. at Wake Forest Baptist Church, Wake Forest, N.C. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Baptist Children’s Home of North Carolina in Thomasville or Wake Forest Baptist Church.