

Row Hits Lay Studies In Theology

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AUSTIN, Texas—Mass resignations over the weekend at the sometimes controversial Christian Faith and Life Community in Austin were termed Sunday a strictly "internal problem."

Glen E. Lewis, Austin businessman and chairman of the community's board, told The Dallas News that the board accepted the resignations of seven of the 12-member teaching staff "with regret."

In a special session Friday night, the board also reaffirmed its faith in the community's executive director and founder, the Rev. W. Jack Lewis, a Presbyterian U.S. minister.

"During the past year," Lewis said, "it became clear alterations in the program and the staff would be necessary this spring."

The resignations at the interdenominational institution appeared to stem from how its work should be carried out and not over its policies. Lewis described it as a breakdown in internal communication over lines of authority.

The community can best be described as a lay theological academy. Such institutions are numerous in Europe and primarily aim at filling the gap between the churches and non-churchgoers.

The 10-year-old Austin institution, however, aims at being an arm of all churches rather than a competitor.

In addition to its college program, under which students live at the community's center and take courses at the University of Texas, the institution has weekend courses for laymen and seminars for ministers.

The college students have often bought on controversial publicity as they became involved in sit-ins and picketing for integration. The institution neither encourages nor discourages the students in such outside activities.

Lewis said the staff has included members of the Presbyterian, U.S., American Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian and Southern Baptist churches.

He said the board includes Austin businessmen, housewives, teachers, clergy and professional men.

Staff members who resigned were Joseph W. Mathews, Joseph L. Pierce, Joseph A. Slicker, David McCleskey, Donald R. Warren, Thurston Barnett and William R. Cozart.