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Allen As SBC Leader:
Strong, Sure, Constant

By David Wilkinson

EDITOR'S NOTE: David Wilkinson, staff writer for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, was assigned by the commission to travel for one week with Jimmy Allen, to observe, witness and feel with him, bringing back an intimate observation of the man as preacher, minister and leader.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jimmy Allen leans back in his chair, pushes his black-framed glasses up above his eyebrows and closes his eyes.

Across the room, one of the committee members nudges the person next to him and whispers something about the president of the Southern Baptist Convention taking a doze.

Maybe Allen is catching a few winks and maybe he isn't--more than likely, he's thinking hard or simply recharging his mental batteries. But there is not a soul who knows him who would dare accuse the pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Antonio, and the elected head of the world's largest Protestant denomination, of sleeping on the job.

Propelled by a brilliant mind, a keen sense of the mystical moving of God in his life, and a seemingly inexhaustible flow of energy, Allen somehow thrives on days that often begin at 5:30 a.m. and end after midnight.

Being busy, however, is only one small ingredient in the complex formula that constitutes Jimmy Allen.

A man blessed with tremendous intellectual insight, Allen has the ability to grasp complex issues and apply the gospel to them effectively. He literally exudes ideas, and he possesses both the salesmanship and the practical know-how necessary to make those ideas work within the given system, be it church, denominational, or governmental.

As a leader, Allen is driven by an extreme intensity that never allows him fully to shift into neutral, even in casual situations. While he would not see it as competing, nor the drive to succeed, it is nevertheless of the same stuff that sends athletes to the Pro Bowl and businessmen to the highest corporate executive level.

As a pulpiteer, Allen has the extraordinary ability to package multi-tiered sermons that communicate to persons in every intellectual, economic and spiritual strata represented in the congregation. With an animated, rapid-fire delivery, he preaches messages of practical hope to a hurting, confused world.

He possesses a Southern Baptist-style charisma that enables him to capture audiences, but Allen refuses to be a manipulator. Even when tears come to his eyes during a sermon, they are a personal expression of genuine concern rather than a manipulative, emotional tool.

It is in the pulpit, in fact, that he perhaps comes closest to being the real Jimmy Allen. "What he says is in harmony with what he is," says one church member and friend. "What you see in the pulpit is the real Jimmy Allen."

As a pastor, Allen understands himself in reality to be only as good as his staff--and fortunately in the case of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, the staff is exceptionally competent. Limited both by his own heavy schedule weighted with numerous outside speaking engagements, meetings and other activities, and the enormous size of the church itself (9,000 members), Allen has few remaining hours for the pastor's work of counseling, visiting and administering the many church programs.

Yet he somehow manages to squeeze a remarkable number of pastoral functions into those limited hours, and a caring attitude comes through in his preaching and personality that tends to make up for his absences. And rarely does he fall to the ministerial temptation of taking credit for what his staff does.

"I asked the Father for excellence," Allen says of the staff, "and He has given us that." He sees his own role as that of an "equipper," giving each staff member the freedom to carry out his or her ideas within the context of the overall needs of the church.

Allen enjoys a similar kind of freedom with his church members. He is not expected to do and to be everything at once, and he is not faulted for combining the roles of pastor and preacher with social activist.

Allen has always been involved with issues, but what separates him from many pastors who are equally committed to the cause of applied Christianity is his ability to use effectively forums other than the pulpit to address a moral concern.

When he does speak to an issue from the pulpit, his knowledge of the facts and his solid stand on Bible truth allow him to do so effectively. While his listeners may not agree with him on a particular moral issue, they have confidence in knowing that he studies the situation thoroughly and gets his facts straight before expressing an opinion.

Allen says he has no formula for deciding which issues to address, explaining that God opens the doors of opportunity "and I just respond to them."

When he responds, he usually pulls out all the stops, seldom considering the possibility of failure. "If I had worried about gathering up turf for the future," he says, "I would have stopped preaching the gospel a long time ago."

He preached the gospel in the 1950s and 1960s, courageously fighting racial segregation in Texas. While it was not Memphis or Birmingham, pressure was still high, and Allen garnered many enemies. Some still haven't forgiven him.

Because he is a social activist, Allen is always open to criticism. Liberals argue that his approach to social concerns has softened since he left his position as director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission for the pastorate, while conservatives say he ought to "stick to the Bible more," instead of espousing controversial views on social issues.

On the other hand, rarely can either side make a defensible case against him. Although an activist, his theology is basically conservative, and the evangelism-social ministry combination at his church is hard to knock.

Others who are disgruntled with Allen see him as a personal kingdom builder, adept at climbing the ladder of success to the top of the denominational VIP list. Even his friends sometimes wonder whether he really needs a private plane, owned and voluntarily piloted by a retired business executive, to whisk him about the country for his numerous speaking engagements.

Allen obviously operates with a massive ego. Yet it is difficult to see any personal kingdom-building in opposing racism, supporting the Panama Canal treaties or initiating a program in his church that puts food in 150 empty stomachs every day--no questions asked. And while he sometimes goes out of his way to influence the "right" people to help a cause, he also will sacrifice time and sleep to encourage a down-and-outer who calls him at home at midnight.

Another portion of anti-Allen sentiment can be tied to the anti-Texas and anti-big church prejudice that still exists in some Southern Baptist circles. Although he never expresses it, Allen is well aware of this feeling, and he will go around persons and denominational protocol if necessary to transform an idea into action.

This no-holds-barred element of the Allen style tends to rub some fellow pastors and denominational leaders the wrong way. Viewing him as a ramrod rather than a co-worker, they sometimes misunderstand his motives and misread his tactics.

For his main support, Allen turns to the congregation he has led for 10 years. The large downtown church has not only given him a base for his issues-oriented style of social action and a working laboratory for his convictions about social ministry, but it also has provided a ministry of support to Allen himself that he never minimizes.

It has been in the San Antonio pastorate, he says, that he has best learned the true meaning of the "family of faith," and experienced the value of a "life support system." The church has supported him through painful family crises, with the emotional problems encountered by his wife and the rebellion of sons who had difficulties coping with the drug-laden 60s during their teenage years.

"I discovered that God works through weaknesses," Allen says. "I hadn't realized that until we came to San Antonio. I thought you had to be an Iron man."

Allen also turns often to a close circle of friends scattered across several states for strategy advice, support or just for a listening ear off which to bounce an idea. It is these late-night telephone conversations that keep him going sometimes.

But even more important are the early morning hours Allen spends alone with his Bible and his "Spiritual Journey Notebook." It is in those quiet moments that he wrestles with the toughest decisions and finds strength for a demanding lifestyle filled with never-ending challenges.

And it is in those moments, perhaps, that the key ingredient in the formula of Jimmy Allen can be found.

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Indian Religion Resolution
Passes Senate; House Next

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--Native American religious practices would receive more government protection under a resolution passed by the U. S. Senate.

Introduced by Sen. James Abourezk (D.-S.D.), the resolution calls for evaluation of policies and procedures of any federal agencies affecting Native American religious practices and changes in those policies where necessary to protect the religious freedom of Native Americans.

Native American leaders testified recently before the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, of which Abourezk is chairman, that government officials have interfered in religious practices in many cases and have failed to protect the privacy of ceremonies in others.

Indians often have been denied access to sacred sites, according to the report on the resolution filed by the select committee. Lands now controlled by the federal or state governments are often placed off limits to Indians, despite the fact that they have sacred significance to the Indians. "To deny access to (these sites) is analogous to preventing a non-Indian from entering his church or temple," the report said.

The report also said federal officials have confiscated harmless items such as pin leaves or turkey feathers because of ignorance that they were not forbidden by any law. In other instances ceremonies which require isolation have been interrupted because government officials have failed to enforce privacy.

The resolution must be voted on in the House of Representatives before being sent to the president as an advisory measure. It does not have the force of law.

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Baptist Basketball
Has Banner Year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--1978 was a banner year for Baptist basketball.

Grand Canyon College won it all in the NAIA national tournament; the Wayland Baptist Flying Queens, ranked No. 1 through much of the season, finished fourth in the AIAW women's nationals; and Wake Forest, ranked as high as 13th during the season just missed beating NCAA finalist Duke in the finals of the Atlantic Coast Conference post-season tournament.

Ouachita Baptist University won a share of the Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference to earn a trip to the nationals in Kansas City where they beat Eastern Montana before falling to Southern Missouri. Cumberland College also made the NAIA national tournament but lost in the first round to Grand Canyon.

Garnering the highest honors, Grand Canyon in Phoenix, Ariz., finished with a 30-3 season record, and won their second national title. The first came in 1975 behind the scoring and rebounding of Bayard Forrest, now with the professional Phoenix Suns.

Antelope coach Ben Lindsey accumulated his 252-115 career record at the school--enrollment 1,200-- over 13 years with an annual basketball budget of under \$20,000 including salary, equipment and travel. His recruiting budget was \$300 total this year.

Yet his squad, led by Nate Stokes, Detroit, Mich., hailed from Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Indianapolis, Las Vegas, Virginia, California and even Ibanan, Nigeria. The powers of long distance calling and convincing arguments are clearly evident.

Lindsey's small college champions were good enough during the season to win six of the eight games they played against NCAA division I and II schools.

In the national tournament, where they've been five of the past six years, the Antelopes set two tourney records. They won the longest collegiate playoff game in history, a five overtime marathon where they beat Central State of Ohio in the third game of the five-game series. Willie Polk, 6-5 junior from Indianapolis, set an NAIA tournament record by hitting 20 consecutive free throws over the last three games. He finished with 23 of 24 for the tournament.

Wayland's Flying Queens won state and regional titles but lost in the nationals to Maryland 90-85, and to Montclair State 90-88 in overtime.

Kathy Harston, a 5-10 sophomore playmaker from South Lake, Texas, was named to the prestigious Kodak All-America team. Three other members, Jill Rankin, Marie Kocurek and Breana Caldwell played in the Hanes All-America game in Greensboro, N. C.

Rankin played in the Kodak All-America game in Philadelphia; Kocurek was nominated for the Wade Trophy, representative of the best woman college basketball player and coach Dean Weese has been nominated for coach of the year.

The Flying Queens, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, will go as emissaries to Taiwan in May where they will play exhibition games against local teams.

After finishing in the middle of the league during season play, Wake Forest fought its way through the post-season tournament in the powerful Atlantic Coast Conference before losing in the finals to Duke. Ron Griffin led the ACC in scoring and rebounding and was named to the all-conference first team.

Alabama Exec Says
Skip 1981 Convention

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptists should skip their 1981 annual convention, scheduled for June 9-11 in Los Angeles, says George Bagley executive secretary-treasurer of the Alabama State Convention.

Bagley said in an open letter to state Baptist newspaper editors that the "millions of dollars" spent on a convention could better be used establishing churches in the far west and northwest as part of Bold Mission Thrust.

He wants to use the money normally spent sending pastors and church staff to the convention to send them and staff members of "every state convention and every Southern Baptist Convention agency" into "needy areas for two weeks to establish new churches and to confront the people with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Bagley would have voters at the 1980 convention adopt a two-year budget and assign to the SBC Executive Committee responsibility to handle needs that would arise in 1981.

Bold Mission Thrust is the SBC goal to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in the world by the year 2000 and to every person in the United States in the next two years.

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Baptists Urged To
Avoid 'Clergy Hierarchy'

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
4/7/78

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Baptists around the world are in danger of building a "clergy hierarchy" which creates a false division between the "minister in the pulpit and the minister in the pew," Glendon McCullough told 1,000 persons at the Second World Conference of Baptist Men.

"The minister in the pulpit (pastor) has too often had all the spiritual responsibility, while the minister in the pew (layperson) has passed the plate, paid the bills, packed the pews, held the ropes and patched the roof," declared McCullough, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Tenn.

"The minister in the pew must have a 'hands-on' experience, rather than a spectator aloofness," he said. "Every Christian must work at discipleship. Everyone must 'be one in the Lord,' sharing the spiritual as well as the housekeeping chores that go along with the main event."

"Oneness" of spirit must be a hallmark of the world's 46.2 million member Baptist community in reaching out to the needs of the world, despite the differences that exist across custom and culture, McCullough told the men from 43 countries.

"All of us, like a rainbow, must make up God's promise to earth," he declared. "When we're one in the Lord, the Lord's people will know we are Christians by our love."

He challenged each participant to "use what God gave you" to perform ministries to the spiritual and physical needs of mankind. "It makes no difference who you are or who I am; it's who God is that makes the difference," he said. "When we're one in the Lord, we'll change the world as the Lord wants us to."

He illustrated his concept of oneness in God by recounting President Jimmy Carter's recent visit to Liberia.

"On Monday of this week," he said, "presidents of two great nations walked and talked together. One was the president of the nation of Liberia (William R. Tolbert) a son of former slaves; the other was the president of the United States of America, a descendant of former slave owners. There's no difference now. Both of these Baptist Christians have a faith that makes them one."

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Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon and Sunday School teacher is a former trustee of the Brotherhood Commission which McCullough heads. Tolbert, who serves as a Baptist pastor simultaneously with his presidential duties, is president of the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention and former president of the Baptist World Alliance.

The BWA Men's Department sponsored the Second World Conference of Baptist Men at the Indiana Convention Exposition Center in Indianapolis.

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Cuban Baptists Increase
Despite Restrictions

By Roy Jennings

Baptist Press
4/7/78

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--The number of Baptists in Cuba is growing since the people quit thinking about going to the United States, four Cuban pastors and one layman said.

Cuban Baptists, although they do face restrictions, worship without interference from the government and are permitted to evangelize in their homes, reported the men who are attending the Second World Conference of Baptist Men in Indianapolis.

The Cuban Baptists said they see little need for missionaries from other countries and that Cuban pastors and laymen can evangelize other Cubans more effectively.

Three of the men represent churches affiliated with the Western Convention of Cuba, which has about 175 churches and preaching points and about 7,000 members. They are Heberto Matos, seminary professor and convention president; Leoncio Veguilla, pastor and seminary professor; and Luciano Marquez, a Havannah pastor and convention vice secretary general. Roy Acosta Garcia, pastor and seminary director and Reinaldo Ramáirez Fernandez, director of Baptist men for the convention, represent the Eastern Convention of Cuba which has about 6,500 members.

The men said Baptist laymen are playing major roles in spreading Christianity among the Cuban people. With a shortage of ordained preachers, more than 500 laymen have volunteered to help share their Christian faith in the churches and preaching points, the visitors said.

Since a new Cuban constitution was adopted two years ago, they said freedom to worship and evangelize has increased. While Baptist men can meet as frequently as they like in their churches and homes they still cannot preach in the city parks. The government's position, as the men explained it, is that people interested in religion should go to the churches to get it.

The Cuban delegates said Baptist work declined for several years after the Castro regime came to power because the preachers and lay people went to the United States in a steady stream.

In recent years, Baptist work stabilized then began to grow because the people now see Cuba as their permanent home, they said.

Describing relations between the United States and Cuba as improving, the men said they felt relations would be even better if the government showed more mutual respect.

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Home Missionary Reaches
Inner City Gangs, Teens

By Phil Royce

MURFREESBORO, N.C. (BP)--Among the gang members and school dropouts in a Philadelphia inner city neighborhood where 150,000 people are crowded into a five block square area, toils Gaynor Yancey, Christian social worker.

Miss Yancey, a Southern Baptist home missionary, asked students at Chowan College where she spoke during its annual Missions Emphasis Week, to pretend they live in her Philadelphia neighborhood.

"You could expect to be a dropout, not in junior or senior high school, but elementary school," she told them. "There is no family unit. You wouldn't know where your food is coming from each day. Your younger brothers and sisters would look upon you as a father or mother image. So you'd drop out of school to work and provide for them.

"Of course, your own needs would be neglected. You would long for someone to show an int rest in you. You would probably join a gang to find the acceptance you're missing at home. If you were junior high age, you would be a member of a small gang. If you were high school age, you'd be a member of a large gang. You would fight other gangs, with knives and broken bottles."

Miss Yancey said they would also have the "smell of poverty," with lice in their hair and they would wear "dirty, filthy clothes."

Miss Yancey ministers to these and other residents through a weekday ministries program sponsored by Frankford Avenue Baptist Church.

"Through the program we are trying to show youth and other residents that the church cares for them," she explained. "They don't have to join the church to belong."

A Sesame Street program is included for pre-school children, and children's club for grades 1-6. "The young people meet every Monday night," she said. "If you were one of the Philadelphia youth, you might accept Christ as Savior as a result of coming to the programs. But your parents might stop you from being baptized and order you to stay away."

Miss Yancey said that if members of her audience were adults living in the neighborhood, they would probably be alcoholic. If they were senior citizens, their home would be their prison. They would fear going outside, as other elderly persons have been robbed, beaten, and murdered. She said the church is also reaching out to these people.

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Phil Royce is the director of college relations at Chowan College.

Fund Partially Helps
Fill Shattered Dream

Baptist Press

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Ten-year-old David Finley had his mind made up to go to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and study for the ministry--before he was killed in 1976 while riding his bicycle.

Now his dream may be partially realized through the David Finley Endowment Fund which was established by the seminary's trustees in a recent meeting.

The fund, made possible by an initial gift of \$5,300 from David's parents, the James L. Finleys of Chesapeake, Va., will provide one scholarship per semester to students preparing for the ministry. "The fund," says Finley, pastor of Indian River Baptist Church, "will help some young person studying for the ministry to achieve what David was denied."

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