



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 11, 1979

79-208

Radio-TV Commission Elects
Jimmy Allen As President

By Renee Wash

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, Texas, immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been elected president of the Radio and Television Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Since 1968, Allen, who hopes to begin his new duties Jan. 15, 1980, has been pastor of the 9,500-member First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, the sixth largest SBC church.

Fred Isaacs of Cosby, Tenn., chairman of the Radio and Television Commission's trustees, announced Allen's appointment Tuesday, Dec. 11, at a news conference held at the commission after a called meeting of the agency's full board of trustees. Isaacs headed the search committee which submitted Allen's name for consideration by the board.

Trustees pledged their full support to the 52-year-old Allen, who was elected unanimously to succeed Paul M. Stevens, commission president for 26 years, who was forced by trustees to retire last February. They made Stevens' retirement effective Oct. 31 but relieved him immediately as chief administrative officer. Harold E. Martin, executive vice president, who has since left to take a teaching post, and Charles P. Roden, a long-time commission employee, have served as interim chief administrators during the search for a new president.

Isaacs said Allen will receive a basic salary of \$45,000 per year, plus a 10 percent annuity contribution of \$4,500 and \$9,600 in housing allowance.

Isaacs called Allen, who has had a broad background in local, state and national affairs, "one of the more effective and powerful Christian workers in this generation."

In his opening remarks, Allen urged the denomination to utilize the radio and television in Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC plan to confront everyone in the world with the Christian message by the year 2000. He also expressed interest in developing deeper relationships with other Southern Baptist agencies and working closely with local churches and noted the commission's established rapport with radio and television networks.

"When we have doubled our mission personnel at home and abroad, doubled our financial support and our number of congregations, we will still have not been used of God to touch every person with his message unless we utilize to the fullest extent the medium of mass communication," Allen said, who pledged the commission's full commitment to Bold Mission Thrust.

He also expressed a desire for a continued close working relationship with the denomination's mission and education agencies, saying he viewed the commission as a "resource tool and servant of total fellowship of Southern Baptists."

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"We have 35,400 congregations of (Southern Baptist) Christians across the nation," said Allen, who has served as pastor of four Southern Baptist churches. "Each of these represents potential avenues of communication, counseling and intensifying the sharing of the gospel."

A priority of the commission will be to increase assistance to churches already using radio and television, said Allen, who has been involved in innovative uses of television during his ministry in San Antonio.

He said Christians must also discover new ways to spread the gospel through radio and television. To do this, he said, the commission will not only continue to nurture its existing "excellent relationship with national television and radio networks" but will also "explore ways and means of accelerating a more direct prime time witness through television."

"The commission's reputation for technical excellence is established and must be maintained," he continued. "The equipment is the finest in the nation. I think our people (Southern Baptists) are ready for prime time."

Although noting that he's "in grief" over leaving the pastorate, Allen said he is excited about the challenge of exploring the limitless possibilities of spreading God's word through the broadcast media. It is "a plow I must put my hand to," he said, adding that "God's leadership" caused him to rethink an initial reaction to refuse the opportunity.

"There are challenges to be met, risks to be taken, new technologies to utilize, a spiritual energy to be invested, resources to be discovered, that the world may know that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father," he added. "I am eager to join the talented people of this agency and help make this happen."

In his 12 years at First Baptist Church, San Antonio, he led his church in a program of evangelism and social ministry, which included baptisms ranging from 225 to 558 a year, a street ministry, counseling service, hunger program, a free medical clinic, three Spanish language missions, and extensive work in refugee resettlement. In 1979, the church has baptized 417 persons.

Allen has had an unusual combination of backgrounds in ministry and media. For four years, he hosted a youth discussion and music program on KMOL-TV, San Antonio, and appeared regularly to present the "Moral Side of the News" as a segment of KSAT-TV, which also broadcasts the church's Sunday morning worship service. He also has written a weekly column for the San Antonio Express News for 11 years.

In his duties as SBC president, Allen was featured several times on national television and distinguished himself as an advocate of Bold Mission Thrust and Mission Service Corps. He was the driving force behind a gigantic Bold Mission Thrust Rally at the Astrodome in Houston during the 1979 SBC meeting which was seen around the country via satellite transmission.

He was a consultant to President Jimmy Carter at the Camp David domestic summit conference in 1979 and successfully negotiated with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and other Israeli leaders on the subject of freedom of religion in Israel.

Active in many leadership roles, he has served as national president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, president of Texas Baptists, a member of the SBC Executive Committee, and as a member of the boards of a number of other SBC and Texas Baptist agencies.

Before becoming pastor in San Antonio in 1968, he served for seven years as the executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission of The Baptist General Convention of Texas, nine years as a pastor, two years as director of Royal Ambassador work for Texas Baptists and several years as a youth evangelist and student pastor.

He has also served on the Planning Conference for the White House Conference on Civil Rights, as a special non-governmental observer at the United Nations for the SBC Christian Life Commission, as a member of the Advisory Commission on Crime and Narcotics for the state of Texas, and as president of San Antonio's Community Welfare Council.

A graduate of Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas, Allen also earned bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and holds honorary doctorates from the University of Richmond (Va.) and Howard Payne.

He is married to the former Wanda Massey of Brownwood, Texas, and has three sons.

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Renee Wash is press director for the SBC Radio and Television Commission.

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Radio and Television Commission.

Carter, Jackson Mark
Human Rights Anniversary

Baptist Press
12/11/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--The 31st anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations was observed here, with President Jimmy Carter calling again for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and of four pending international treaties.

On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, U.S. Senator Henry M. Jackson, D-Wash., made an impassioned plea for universal religious liberty in a speech on the Senate floor.

Carter's presidential proclamation noting adoption of the Universal Declaration on Dec. 10, 1948, called attention to the stalled Equal Rights Amendment, which still lacks three state legislatures' approval before becoming the 27th Amendment to the Constitution.

Adoption of the controversial measure would make "the Bill of Rights a living reality for every person in the United States," he declared.

Noting that while "almost every country" has adopted the Universal Declaration, the president charged that "in too much of the world its promise is mocked." He cited as examples arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, summary executions and torture, unexplained disappearances, and acts of genocide.

"Fundamental human liberties are continually threatened by the silencing of political dissenters, by discrimination based on race, religion, ethnic origin and sex, by violations of the freedoms of assembly, association, expression and movement, and by the suppression of trade unions," he said.

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Carter renewed his challenge to the Senate to ratify the Genocide Convention, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the American Convention on Human Rights.

Sen. Jackson's speech made note of the release last spring of Soviet dissident Baptist pastor Georgi Vins and his family but pointed also to many others still imprisoned for their religious beliefs.

"I wish to take the occasion of this anniversary to say a special word on behalf of the countless Christian believers of all denominations who have been suffering for their convictions under tyrannical modern regimes," the Washington lawmaker said.

He cited specifically Baptists, Russian Orthodox, and Pentecostals recently imprisoned in the Soviet Union and charged that other Iron Curtain nations such as Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria are also actively persecuting Christians.

"The bright promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has not been realized," Jackson declared. "Abuses of human rights form a sad, continuing chronicle of injustice, stupidity, and suffering. If the United States government and its people do not stand up for human rights, there is little prospect that nations whose governments are based on the denial of key rights will make even a minimal effort to comply with internationally recognized standards, including the right to religious freedom."

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California Sabbatarian
Wins High Court Test

Baptist Press
12/11/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--A divided U.S. Supreme Court announced it will not hear a First Amendment challenge to a provision of California's constitution forbidding employment discrimination on the basis of religion.

The Ducor Union School District had asked the high court to decide if the non-discrimination provision of the state constitution amounted to an establishment of religion in violation of the federal Constitution's ban.

Three high court justices, William J. Brennan Jr., Harry A. Blackmun, and John Paul Stevens, indicated they had voted to schedule the case for oral argument. But four justices must agree to hear a case before it can be scheduled.

The California case involves a long struggle by public school teacher Thomas E. Byars to force the school district to provide him with non-paid leave to observe certain holidays of his religion, the Worldwide Church of God.

The controversial sect, headed by Herbert W. Armstrong, requires worship on Saturdays and designates at least 13 days during the calendar year as religious holidays to be observed by practicing church members.

Byars, who converted to the Worldwide Church in 1971, began to request leaves of absence to observe the holidays. For the next two school years, the school district permitted him two days off for the observances.

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When he began taking unauthorized leave for some of the other days, however, the school district stiffened and began procedures to dismiss him. The school board's reasoning was that allowing Byars the 10 days off would violate the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

Byars has countered throughout his long legal effort that the school district's denial deprives him of his First Amendment guarantee of free exercise of religion.

Although lower California courts had ruled against him, the California Supreme Court last May held that Byars' rights had been violated and that the provision against religious discrimination in the California constitution does not contradict the First Amendment.

In written briefs filed with the nation's high court, the school district argued that under the California Supreme Court ruling Byars has been "relieved of contractual and statutory obligations...to perform teaching duties by claiming this religious exemption."

The effect of the ruling, the argument continued, "is to require a governmental entity... to give preference to a particular, identifiable religion...which seeks and receives unprecedented prerogatives to practice its religion."

Byars, likewise invoking the First Amendment, argued that if the school district had its way, school boards across the country would be authorized to fire all teachers of minority religions, thereby attaining "an unlimited right to practice rank religious discrimination."

"Perhaps even more ominously," the argument concluded, "all school districts in the United States would be compelled to refuse all religious absences, and hence the only persons who would be permitted to teach in the public schools...would be those who do not have any sincere religious beliefs."

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A Stalled Car, A Church,
A New Man in Jesus Christ

Baptist Press
12/11/79

MEXICO CITY (BP)--A stalled car in Mexico City's traffic is enough to scare anyone to death. But it saved Jorge Alvarez.

Alcohol had just about taken the life out of Jorge. His drinking addiction enraged one of his sons enough to race through their home, tear a crucifix off the wall and hang a bottle of wine in its place. "There," he said, "that's your god."

Still, he went on until one Saturday--the day before Easter--his car stalled in front of Gethsemane Baptist Church. The pastor's son approached Jorge telling him a mechanic was inside the church. "Just leave your car there and come on in and watch this movie," he said. "After it's over the mechanic will come out and fix your car."

In an instant, as he crossed the threshold, Jorge sensed a different atmosphere--the people enjoying an afternoon meeting. Everything overwhelmed him. He was invited to return for Easter breakfast and worship. He became a believer. Since then the Lord has taken away his drinking problem.

And as he left Gethsemane that Saturday, Jorge Alvarez started his car in no time. He couldn't find a thing wrong with it.

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(BP)

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

