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James Dunn Chosen to Lead Baptist Joint Committee

WASHINGTON (BP)--James M. Dunn, for the past 12 years director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was elected unanimously as executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The 48-year-old Texas native will assume the top post of the Washington-based organization Jan. 1, 1981.

Dunn's election followed the unanimous recommendation of a 10-person search committee charged with finding a successor to James E. Wood Jr., who left the Washington position June 1 to return to the faculty of Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Responding to his election, Dunn promised an "aggressive, broad-based" approach to government relations by the Baptist Joint Committee, an agency supported jointly by eight U.S. Baptist conventions and conferences.

He declared his first priority as "faithfulness to religious liberty and church-state separation" and said that the current church-state scene is characterized by a "blurring of the lines" among church people confused over present developments and by growing government intervention in church affairs.

Before assuming the directorship of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Dunn was an associate director of the same ethical and moral concerns agency, a Baptist Student Union director and instructor of Bible at West Texas State University, and pastor and associate pastor of three Texas Baptist churches.

James H. Landes, executive director of the Texas Baptist executive board, paid tribute to the new Baptist Joint Committee chief, declaring, "James Dunn has made unique and outstanding contributions in applied Christianity." Landes specifically cited Dunn's attention to religious liberty, world hunger, aging and family life.

Dunn, a Fort Worth native, earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Wesleyan College, B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. from the University of London. He currently serves as a trustee of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In addition, Dunn is a member of the Advisory Council of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, national board member of Bread for the World, and on the governing board of the Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy.

Dunn has co-authored or contributed to four books and written for a number of journals and periodicals. He is a correspondent for Sojourners magazine and has been a guest editorial writer for the Dallas Times-Herald.

Phil Strickland, Dunn's associate in Texas, has been named interim director of the BGCT Christian Life Commission.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

Allen, Others Issue Warning
Against 'Christian Right'

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Former Southern Baptist Convention president Jimmy Allen led an interfaith panel in issuing a warning against the partisan politics of the "Christian Right."

While affirming the right of all Americans, including the Christian Right, to involvement in the political process, the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders protested the partisan activities of such groups as Moral Majority and Christian Voice during a news conference held at the National Press Club. They also criticized labeling political positions as "Christian" or "unchristian" and attempts to build a "Christian republic."

Allen, now president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, described the new right as a "very complex constellation of people," who are not new, "because many of them have been around for a long time in the political right and have found a new place to work in the religious electronic world."

Contending that persons on the extreme right and left have both the right and responsibility to hold and share points of view in "the marketplace of ideas," Allen said they do not have a right to "label their political solutions as the Christian answer and reject as unchristian those who address the problem's solution in another way."

Charles V. Bergstrom, executive director of the Office of Governmental Affairs Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., agreed, calling such an approach "arrogant."

Right leaning religious organizations such as The Roundtable, headed by Southern Baptists E.E. McAteer and James Robison, Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Christian Voice have garnered heavy attention in the political arena this year.

Although Falwell and Moral Majority claim to be non-partisan, the Lynchburg, Va., television preacher has publicly announced he plans to vote for Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan. Christian Voice is more overtly partisan in its endorsement of the Republican nominee through its "Christians for Reagan" organization.

Decrying such activity, Allen said the principle of separation of church and state was never meant to "produce a bloc vote for a particular candidate or party in the name of religion." He said such an attempt "damages the churches by creating a political test for religious fellowship," and "damages the state by producing a religious test for public office."

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George G. Higgins, a Catholic priest and until Sept. 1 a long-time public affairs specialist for the U.S. Catholic Conference, was also critical of the Christian Right's "highly partisan approach" which he described as "strangely selective and extremely simplistic."

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee expressed concern over efforts by the new right to establish a "Christian republic."

Pointing to the writings of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and James Madison, Tanenbaum challenged the assertion of some new right spokesmen that the nation's founders envisioned such a Christian nation.

Tanenbaum further commended the writings of the nation's founders to Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith and "others who share his views about uniformity of conscience and religion."

The Jewish leader said Smith's comment in August that God does not hear the prayer of a Jew "is not only religiously presumptuous and morally offensive; it is dangerous to the future of our democratic pluralistic society."

"He is saying," Tanenbaum added, "not only that the Jewish people have been living a religious lie for 4,000 years across 30 civilizations; he is also saying that because they are religiously invalid there is no place for them in presidential inaugurations or political conventions and ultimately there is no place for them in democratic America."

Despite the attention given right-leaning religious groups, their impact on the American political scene this year remains uncertain, Allen said.

"I think it's impossible to know until Nov. 4 how many people are going to listen to that trumpet," said Allen. He predicted the number of new right followers is "not nearly as many as those sweeping figures" being touted by Falwell and others.

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Twin Funnels Stir Up
Trucker Chapel Trailer

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
10/7/80

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (BP)—When the "Kansas Tornado" and "Little Breeze" blew into Oklahoma City last spring, they did more than kick up some Oklahoma dust.

Ken and LaDonna ("Winnie") Wynn, a retired trucking couple from northwest Kansas, came to Oklahoma's sprawling capital with a vision for sharing the gospel's good news with a world that rides on 18 wheels.

Known to dozens of trucking friends by their colorful CB "handles," the Wynns are full-time Baptist volunteers in a 24-hour, non-stop ministry to truckers who travel Interstate 40 through the heart of Oklahoma.

The Wynns staff a small prayer chapel on the parking lot of Jerry Brown's Truckstop. The chapel is the product of a cooperative relationship between Capital Baptist Association and Transport for Christ, an interdenominational, Christian fellowship for members of the trucking industry who are seldom touched by the routine programs of a local church.

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"There are 168,000 people involved in trucking in Oklahoma, and most of them are in Oklahoma City," explains trucker Fred Wright. Standing on the gravel parking lot in front of the 12- by 40-foot, white chapel, he gestures for emphasis toward a row of idling trucks. "If this was a military base," he continues, "there would be a chaplain here. But who ever heard of a chaplain for truckers?"

A small, wiry man in his 50s, Wright is a former Southern Baptist pastor who considers trucking to be his God-called ministry. Deeply burdened about the spiritual needs of truckers, he shared his concern with Ed Onley, Capital Baptist Association's director of church community ministries. After a year of prayer and a series of events both men describe as miraculous, a site was located and sufficient donations secured to make the down payment on a portable building.

Baptist layman Jerry Brown, owner of the truckstop, provided space for the chapel and offered to pay utility bills.

It was the Wynns who breathed life into the empty building. After volunteering for the new ministry, they borrowed money to purchase a 7- by 14-foot camper which they parked next to the chapel in the dust and noise of the busy truckstop.

"Truckers are a unique breed of people," says Winnie, a grandmother with a tough, weather-beaten appearance softened by a quick smile and compassionate eyes. "They may seem pretty tough on the surface, but deep down, most of them have hearts that are softer than most folks."

They also have problems, ranging from loneliness and depression to financial crises. But the most frequent and painful problems the Wynns encounter are family-related. Trucking, especially long-distance hauling, is a tremendous burden on the family, and many truckers' homes crumble beneath the intense pressure.

Thanks to the chapel, these truckers have a place to worship, pray or talk that is easily accessible and available at any hour.

In the first six months of operation, more than 1,300 persons signed the "guest list" Winnie keeps in a tattered spiral notebook. Many of them, she says, were Christian drivers hungry for a few minutes of fellowship with another believer.

But the Wynns are aware that for every trucker who ventures across the dusty parking lot to the chapel, there are 20 others who don't even look that direction.

Yet they have no illusions about the nature of their ministry. "We're just planting the seeds or watering seeds that have already been planted," says Ken. "We know we may not get to see the harvest. But on the other hand, I can't imagine a more exciting mission field than right here."

Ervin Hasteys Guiding Hand
Moves Evangelism to 'New Day'

By Mike Livingston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Ervin Hasteys likes to help other people realize their dreams.

That's probably because most of the people he's worked with during the last 25 years were national Baptist leaders who shared his own dreams for evangelizing their countries.

As a missionary to Mexico and Panama he helped nationals plan special projects in evangelism and church growth while earning for himself the reputation of being a quiet, effective leader.

If he's not the take-charge type it's because he doesn't see taking charge as the successful route in mission planning. He's a soft-spoken goal setter and goal reacher. Hasteys' idea of mission planning is to begin by asking others, "What do you want to do?" and "How can I help you achieve it?"

So at a time when the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board wants to emphasize that its No. 1 priority is evangelism and church growth, the board is turning to Ervin Hasteys.

As part of what he calls "a new day in mission planning," Hasteys has been named the board's consultant for evangelism and church growth. In that role he will train four regional consultants in strategic areas around the world. They will work with national leaders and missionaries on the field in long-range planning for Baptist missions.

Two of the consultants have been named--Farrell E. Runyan in Africa and William L. Wagner in Europe and the Middle East. All four are expected to be on the field by Jan. 1.

Hasteys is excited about the departure from the tried-and-tested. The regional consultants, he said, will mean that evangelism planning will be taken out of Richmond to where it should be done--on the field. "There's just no way we can plan in Richmond what needs to be done in Thailand or in any other part of the world," Hasteys adds.

Lewis Myers, under whom Hasteys will be working, agrees. "The concept represents some of the most exciting kinds of things Southern Baptists have been involved in in 20 years," he says. "It is a shoring up of the communication channels."

He emphasized Hasteys is not to be a consultant helping organizations of missionaries conduct evangelism crusades. Instead, he is to be a consultant to the evangelism and church growth processes of the missions.

Hasteys has expressed concern that not everything being done in the religious arena today contributes to evangelizing the lost and establishing New Testament churches. "We feel that the organization we are setting up will help accomplish this to an extent never seen before," he said. "We are not out to corner the market on world evangelism, but we do know that big crusades have got to be related to the church."

He said evangelism can't really be effective unless it brings people into church life in some kind of fellowship where they can really learn what it means to be a Christian.