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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 18, 1984

84-61

Trustee Action Guarantees  
ACTS Operation For First YearRTUC  
(C)-N

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A funding strategy to guarantee the first year of operation of the American Christian Television System has been set in motion by trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

The trustees authorized the commission staff to negotiate a line of credit up to \$4.3 million to meet the immediate needs of starting the TV network, which will begin May 15 delivering family Christian entertainment programs to American homes daily through television stations and cable TV systems.

Also at the meeting, trustees approved the purchase of \$2.3 million worth of programs for the network and elected as chairman John E. Roberts, editor of the Baptist Courier, newsjournal of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The line of credit, which will pay for equipment, production of programs and operating expenses for the network, will be repaid with money already pledged to the commission over the next three years and other resources brought in by the commission's development program.

The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention has allocated \$2 million over the next five years for the commission's capital needs, but Commission President Jimmy R. Allen explained the equipment is needed now.

"We have put together the start-up money for our first year of broadcasting," Allen said of the trustee action. "This gives us the working capital we need for the next year of production and \$1.7 million for immediate capital needs."

The equipment to be purchased will improve and enlarge the commission's studio and editing facilities, plus provide a mobile camera unit for videotaping on location. The capital needs funding will also enlarge the commission's mail center, tripling its capacity to keep up with the increased mail response expected from ACTS.

Allen said supporters have already pledged \$2.8 million of the start-up money to the network. "We're going to raise the whole \$4.3 million," he said. "There is about \$2 million we still have to enlist."

"Once on the air, ACTS will produce its own revenue and pay for itself," Allen said. "The challenge has been to provide the product, in the form of a TV network, to let us get started. We have solved our cash flow problem with this line of credit."

The trustees initially considered borrowing only \$3.2 million, but Fred Roach, president of Centennial Homes, Dallas, suggested they seek the full amount needed. "I'm not against borrowing \$4.3 million if we have to do it to get the job done," he said.

The trustees also approved a revaluation of the commission's assets, now placed at \$14 million by its auditors. The new figure shows a \$3.7 million increase in program inventory, reflecting the market value of TV programs the commission has in stock but which it had never counted as assets. The revaluation will help the commission secure the \$4.3 million credit line, trustees were told.

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The commission will purchase \$2.3 million worth of religious and alternative programs, all less than 10 years old, from Exclusive International Pictures Inc. of Vincennes, Ind. The total includes \$1.8 million for unlimited use of 400 religious programs (including dramatic series, cartoons and feature films) for 10 years. The alternative package will cost \$500,000 for unlimited use of 1,250 programs for six years.

Most of these are 30-minute episodes of comedy and drama series, including "The Melting Pot," a cooking program starring Orson Bean, and "The Bill Cosby Show."

The commission will make monthly payments for the programs. Bob Taylor, vice president of production for the Radio and Television Commission, said the purchase will give ACTS dramatic programming it could not afford to produce itself.

"This acquired programming will not be a dominant element on the network, but will be supportive of our own original programs," Taylor said. "We will not load prime time with this, but I can sprinkle it in instead of repeating our basic programs several times a day. "We have known all along we would have to acquire some programs to give us the variety we need to appeal to cable TV operators and program directors."

In his president's report to trustees, Allen said ACTS hopes to be reaching seven million homes by fall. Low-power TV stations in Tyler, Texas, Anchorage, Alaska, and Paragould, Ark., will be ready for broadcasting by June 12, he said. Stations in Brownwood, Texas, and Honolulu, the only other low-power channels licensed so far, will be ready Oct. 1.

Allen reported the official launch ceremony for ACTS, scheduled for June 12 at the Southern Baptist Convention, will include a live satellite feed from the Anchorage station. Parts of the convention will be carried on ACTS and Baptist TelNet, the Sunday School Board's telecommunications network, to churches.

Other Baptist agencies are involved in producing programs for ACTS, Allen said. The Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board will bring missionaries in to appear on "Life Today," a daily live talk show hosted by Allen. The boards will coordinate the appearances with their study curricula.

Allen reported April 12 pledges and gifts will soon top \$2 million from 43 dinner rallies sponsored by the commission. A series of private luncheons with potential contributors will follow the dinner meetings to seek additional support for ACTS.

In addition to the election of Roberts as chairman, the trustees chose T.W. Terral, pastor of Lanier Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La., first vice chairman; Jack B. Johnson, executive director of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, second vice chairman, and J. Clark Hensley, retired executive director of the Christian Action Committee for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, recording secretary.

The trustees honored five members who are rotating off the board: George H. Davis, director of missions for the East Central Illinois Baptist Association; Frederick W. Isaacs Jr., businessman from Cosby, Tenn.; N.B. Langford, pastor of First Baptist Church, Panama City, Fla.; Stewart R. McChesney Jr., pastor of Ward Road Baptist Church, Arvada, Colo., and Tommy Joe Payne, consultant from Greenville, N.C.

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

*W.V. Paper  
(C)-F*

16-Member Church's  
Food Ministry Far-Flung

By Jack C. Walls

Baptist Press  
4/18/84

ROCK CAVE, W.Va. (BP)--On a single Monday in March, 74 West Virginia families received over two tons of food through the efforts of the 16-member congregation of New Covenant Baptist Chapel, Rock Cave.

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The pastor of the small congregation, Clyde McCants, said eight new members have since joined the chapel, seven a direct result of the food ministry. The two-year-old chapel has doubled in size since the McCants arrived on the field three months ago.

The two tons of food came from the Mountaineer Food Bank located at Gassaway, W.Va., about 40 miles away. The punch, butter, cheese, biscuit mix, oats, honey and fish were separated for the 74 families and loaded into cars and trucks within two hours.

"We deliver it to them because many of the people are either too sick or too old to come after it," said Frank Brubaker Jr., director of the food ministry.

The Mountaineer Food Bank is a non-profit organization funded by private donations and grants. Executive Director Eileen Welly said they receive food from several sources, including Second Harvest (a national food bank), government commodities, retailers, wholesalers and growers. The chapel pays ten cents per pound for the food they distribute, except for government commodities, which are free.

"This is the most exciting thing that has happened to me in my life," the six-foot, seven-inch pastor said, who says he came because of "a miracle of God."

Due to personal problems McCants felt it necessary to resign as pastor of a congregation in South Carolina. He had an interest in mission work and applied with the Home Mission Board for assignment. However, nothing developed, and he became discouraged and decided to leave the ministry and enlist in the Army.

When he arrived at the recruiting office in Aiken, S.C., he found it locked and everyone out for lunch. To kill time he walked around the city and found himself in front of Milbrook Baptist Church.

On an impulse he went in and shared his background and call to mission work with the pastor and leaders. They told him they were sponsoring a mission in West Virginia which was looking for a pastor.

"I came within an inch of leaving the ministry, and God opened up a door to the greatest experience of my life at Rock Cave," McCants said. "These people accept and love me, and I have come to love them. Winning souls and distributing food are the highlights of my ministry."

Brubaker, a ruddy, bearded mountain man, came to West Virginia several years ago from Maryland. He and his family were one of the original families in the chapel and have held the small mission together through some difficult times, but he is optimistic about the future.

The chapel, with the help of Milbrook Baptist Church, has purchased property and has aligned itself with an association which will assist in constructing a building in the near future.

The food ministry has made the chapel known to the area and is reaching new people. Brubaker, who says he is an "eternal optimist," said they will outgrow the new building in a short time.

Linda Robinson is typical of those ministered to by the food distribution. She accepted Christ and was one of five baptized recently. She has multiple sclerosis and cannot attend services at the chapel, so she asked if a weekday Bible study could be started in her home. It now meets every Tuesday evening and McCants said her living room is full of people each time he has come to lead the study.

Welly said the food bank opened in January 1982 with her as the only staff member, with 20 distributor agencies. In only two years it takes six staff members to handle the 240 agencies now distributing. They do no advertising; she said word gets around.

"We have families who are without the basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter in our area, and we must meet these needs as Jesus did during his ministry. The Scripture tells us of Jesus' compassion for the poor and needy, when he fed the 5,000 and 3,000 in other accounts. It is the job of the church and not the government," said McCants.

"We must feed the body and save the soul. It is a ministry according to the Bible," he concluded.

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(Jack Walls is editor of the West Virginia Southern Baptist.)

(Photo available upon request from the West Virginia Southern Baptist)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Christian social ministries experts and pastors shared ideas on how churches can meet the growing needs of poor Americans at a symposium sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. This is the third article in a five-part series on their suggestions.

Churches Responding To Poor  
Americans' Need For Shelter

By Janice Trusty

Baptist Press  
4/18/84

ATLANTA (BP)--Daily newspapers report the horror stories: an evicted Chicago factory worker and his wife freeze to death in their car. A homeless Colorado man loses both feet due to overexposure.

The numbers are staggering. Nationwide, the United States Mayors Conference estimated there were two million homeless Americans last year.

After reading such accounts, one Baptist woman demanded, "Where are our missionaries?"

"They're right here," responded Paul Adkins, Christian social ministries director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, pointing to scores of laypersons, associations and churches who are sheltering the homeless.

Calvary Baptist Church, eight blocks from the nation's capital in Washington, became aware of lives being lost due to exposure when a death occurred within a block of the church.

In June 1982, the church joined several neighboring churches to open the Cooperative Urban Ministry Center. Every month, the center gives shelter to more than 1,500 people.

Many of those helped have jobs, but earn salaries so low they cannot afford rent; others who are jobless simply wander the streets.

Through the center, Calvary has placed more than 200 in jobs. Others receive shelter, food, clothing and counseling services.

"I was ready to beg," admitted Harry, a 30-year-old carpenter from Pennsylvania. "Now, if I got a job tomorrow I'd get an apartment, bring my family here and give what I could to help the church carry on this shelter."

Throughout the nation, other groups are discovering and meeting the needs of the homeless.

In Columbia, S.C., the Metro and Lexington Baptist Associations initiated a shelter adoption program. Throughout the year, area churches channel funds and volunteers into the city's seven emergency centers. More than 90 Southern Baptist churches have participated.

Each church adopts a shelter for a month. "During that month, we ask that church to raise money," explained Brenda Forlines, former CSM director for the associations. "We also ask for them to have one-to-one contact with residents." Through the program, church members have discovered "these people are human beings in need," Forlines said.

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Atlanta's Morningside Baptist Church has also opened its doors to homeless men. "These guys have nothing," explained Pastor Spurgeon Hays. "They have no bathrooms. They have nowhere to rest. To keep warm, they must keep walking."

It was a tough decision for the upper-class congregation to allow homeless people into their church. "People have a tendency to look beyond things that make them uncomfortable," Hays explained. "But here was a need at our very door. Homeless people cannot be ignored. Not if we are Christians."

Once the congregation became involved, preconceived images disappeared. "The term 'street people' usually evokes mental pictures of winos, derelicts," said Hays. "But that isn't a true assessment. Today's economy plays a great hand in putting people never before out of work on the street."

"We have no way of knowing just how many churches across the country are involved in ministries with the homeless," reported Adkins. "It could be that a lot of those out there in such ministries would qualify for hunger relief funds from the HMB."

(Adkins requested such churches to contact him at the Home Mission Board, 1350 Spring St. NW, Atlanta GA 30367.)

Advice to churches wishing to start or enhance their shelter ministries includes the following:

--If your church lacks space for emergency shelter, adopt a shelter, providing food, clothing and other necessary items.

--Use the church gym or family life center for emergency shelter.

--Keep a list of free hotel rooms available on an emergency basis.

--Have available a list of low-rent rooms and apartments.

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Veteran Newscaster  
To Anchor ACTS

Baptist Press  
4/18/84

RTX  
(C) - N

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The American Christian Television System has hired a veteran television newsman for both its on-air news and a program featuring "people and events making the world a better place."

Charles Ely, former newscaster for NBC-affiliate, KXAS-TV in Fort Worth, Texas, and a freelance and contract television producer, will be responsible for a two-minute newscast each night on the network being launched May 15 by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

The program will have secular news but Ely says he will be attentive to events involving such things as developments in medicine and mortgage financing for homes.

He will be co-host and reporter for "Our World," a 30-minute program planned for once a week. The news magazine format will concentrate on "involved" Christians with the intent of leading others to become involved.

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