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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Penn-Jersey's Bush Named  
BMT Promotion Coordinator

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Ellis M. Bush has been named Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust promotion coordinator.

Bush has been executive director-treasurer of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey since 1978. He will assume his new post Nov. 10.

Bold Mission Thrust is Southern Baptists' campaign to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person on earth by the year 2000. The program is being implemented through a variety of projects. For example, current Bold Mission Thrust emphases are to make new Christian converts, develop the faith of Christians and start new churches.

Bush is to be the "denominational entrepreneur" needed to make the campaign work, said Reginald M. McDonough, executive vice president of the convention's Executive Committee and Bold Mission Thrust planning coordinator, with whom Bush will work.

"We feel we have found a person who has experience in church, state convention and Southern Baptist life who understands the processes of planning and promotion to be the entrepreneur that is needed," McDonough said. "The last 13 years of Bold Mission Thrust will require Southern Baptists to redouble our effort and commitment to Bold Mission Thrust and get persons involved at every level."

Bush will work with state convention and denominational agency staff members to develop a coordinated promotion plan for Bold Mission Thrust. He also will be the chief interpreter of that plan to state convention and agency groups.

The formation of Bush's new job follows a detailed study of the convention's coordinated promotion planning policies and procedures and signals a change in focus, McDonough said: "Previously, the denominational promotion package was put together by agencies and offered to state conventions. Now we envision joint development by state conventions and agencies."

"The process has included states for the first time," noted Dan C. Stringer, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention. He said the position of state conventions in carrying out Bold Mission Thrust will be strengthened by the relationship of Bush to state conventions through the Bold Mission Thrust Advisory Committee.

Bush will chair the 10-member advisory committee, which includes two state convention executive directors and seven SBC agency staff members.

Both SBC agencies and state conventions will benefit from Bush's work, said William R. O'Brien, executive vice president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board. "This opens a more effective flow of communication between agencies and states," O'Brien explained. "It allows us to be affected by the input of the states, while at the same time it gives the states more ownership of the program."

Bush will be the chief salesman of the Bold Mission Thrust "product"—specific programs and activities that churches and other Southern Baptist groups can conduct to help them reach their Bold Mission Thrust goals, McDonough said. Bush will lead in helping churches understand and implement denominational programs.

He will work out of Nashville, Tenn., and will be employed by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. However, his position will function as a service to the denomination, not a function of the board, noted James D. Williams, associate to the president, office of planning, at the Sunday School Board.

Bush has drawn high marks from observers of his previous work.

"The search committee looked for a person who could embody the dreams of Bold Mission Thrust, who has seasoned experience in the local church, association, state convention and SBC programs in coordinated promotion. Ellis Bush is that man," Williams said.

"Ellis has experienced every dimension of life within our denomination.... His own gifts, education, experience and commitment, combined with an understanding of missions and the demands of Bold Mission Thrust, uniquely equip him for this significant responsibility," O'Brien added.

Bush, 57, is a native of Alabama and has been pastor of churches in Alabama, Kentucky and Indiana. He was on the staff of the Sunday School Board, 1956-65, and worked for the Alabama Baptist State Convention as Sunday school department director, 1965-69 and as church development division director, 1969-75. Prior to joining the Penn-South Jersey convention, he was executive minister at First Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., 1975-78.

He is a graduate of Sanford University in Birmingham, Ala., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

His wife is the former Juanita Holmes of Troy, Ala. They have three daughters and a son.

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RIVC Trustees Revamp  
Development, Syndication

By Dan Martin

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Revamped plans to raise funds for the ACTS network through new development programs and a revised approach to syndication have been approved by trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

During their September meeting, trustees heard plans to de-emphasize capital campaigns in favor of fund-raising dinners and direct-mail efforts and to shift the emphasis of the syndication effort from attempting to sell programs already produced for ACTS to producing two versions of the country music show "Country Crossroads"—one for sale to television stations and the other to be shown on ACTS—and packaging "classic movies" for sale to TV stations.

RIVC President Jimmy R. Allen told Baptist Press the revamping was necessary because previous efforts did not produce enough revenue and costs were "unacceptably high."

According to figures released in August, previous development efforts, which featured four city-wide campaigns, produced \$1.9 million in pledges and actual revenues of \$922,000, at a cost of \$1.2 million, giving the development effort a current cash deficit of \$297,000.

Syndication, in which the RIVC attempted to sell five ACTS shows to commercial TV stations, has resulted in sales of \$88,000, well below the 1985-86 budgeted projection of \$216,000.

"We have been in the process of learning how to conduct capital campaigns, but the cost has been unacceptably high so far," Allen said, adding ACTS "launched into difficult territory" when it began the fund-raising efforts.

"We do not have constituencies such as seminaries, colleges and other institutions have, with their built-in loyalty factor," he said. "We have found these capital campaigns are expensive and laborious ways to go. We spent too much to get the funds we obtained."

Allen told trustees the new development plan, designed for the commission by Resource Development Inc., of Springfield, Mo., will emphasize "telemissions dinners" and direct-mail appeals, as well as cultivation of potential major donors which are surfaced through the dinners, mail campaigns, listener inquiries on both radio and television and referrals.

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"We know how to do dinners," Allen told trustees. Information provided the trustees indicated the dinners are expected to produce \$240,000 in revenues this year, against a cost of \$170,000. In addition to pledges and cash, Allen said, the dinners also have produced major donors and others who are giving regularly to the network.

"We are trying to build a development plan which is workable for us," he said. He emphasized ACTS will keep its promise not to solicit money from viewers with on-air pleas, but will depend on the fund-raising and syndication efforts to provide funds above the nearly \$5 million per year provided by the Southern Baptist Convention's unified program of support, the Cooperative Program.

Allen told trustees: "We are learning as we go, dropping some things and picking up some other things. That is part of the process. We are in a creative process where we know we will have to 'blue sky' some, try some things. We will have some things that won't work until we find the things that will work."

During his president's report, Allen introduced trustees to a young Fort Worth woman who had been saved from suicide and made a profession of faith through watching an ACTS program. (See related story.)

"We tend to get wrapped up in numbers—how many see ACTS, how many are able to access the network. But we are not really as much interested in demographics as we are in dynamics. One person trusting Christ as Savior is worth it all, and God is doing that in hundreds and thousands of lives through ACTS," he said.

Allen asked the trustees to help Southern Baptists have patience. "I think we need to pray for our constituency to have patience with the process. You (trustees) need to help them (Southern Baptists) understand that we are not doing crazy things. We are doing new things. Sometimes they are going to work and sometimes they are not going to work.

"We are on stream with ACTS and doing the major things: sharing the good news of God, strengthening families and helping churches access their neighborhoods. Our problem now is that we have got to help people be patient."

Allen also said: "Institutions have a hard time having faith. Individuals have a difficult time having faith, but it is easier to have faith as an individual than as an institution. Institutions are built to organize for their own ongoingness of ministry and they usually move in very gradual steps, safely carrying the trust that we got from yesterday into tomorrow. We seldom risk the life of an institution; institutions just don't die on crosses very well.

"This institution, because of your vision...has made a commitment of faith that says we will risk our very existence in order for Southern Bptists and the churches of America to have access to the families of this country."

He added: "We will risk our very existence as an institution. You (trustees) have said that. I have said that. My fellow institutional leaders have a hard time understanding that. I sometimes have a hard time understanding that, but God has led us to say that this is important, and the fact that many of our folks have not figured it out is just another part of the picture.

"You can't be impatient with them, can't get to fussing with them.... You just go on and demonstrate it until they catch the vision...."

Although one trustee—John Peper of Glen Burnie, Md.—described the financial situation of the network as being "a rubber band really stretched," officials of the commission did not promise either the revamped development effort or the new approach to syndication will work.

However, in the 1986-87 budget, approved by trustees during the September meeting, development efforts are expected to produce \$1.9 million against costs of \$1.1 million.

The budget also projects syndication efforts to produce \$475,000 in revenues from sale of the inventory of current family programs, packages of "classic" family movies and the revised "Country Crossroads." Costs to syndicate the shows are estimated to be \$461,000.

Trustees appointed immediate past Chairman T.W. Terral of Baton Rouge, La., and Fred Roach, chairman of the finance committee and a Dallas homebuilder, to work with Bob Taylor, vice president of production services, and other commission staffers in monitoring the progress of the syndication effort.

During the business session, Terral commented the commission has been getting along on borrowed money, a situation eased somewhat by a \$10 million loan from the Central Bank of Walnut Creek, Calif., which pays off about \$8.7 million in indebtedness and will provide about \$1 million in new money.

"When we spend that \$1 million, there will be no more money we can borrow," Terral said. "Syndication and development is going to have to make up that \$1 million plus per year we have been borrowing."

During the meeting, trustees expressed concern that salaries, equipment and facilities had been neglected while all attention was focussed on the launch and continuation of ACTS.

Trustee Jimmy Waters of Macon, Ga., chairman of the program services committee, said that group had spent a "great deal of time" discussing the needs of the commission and had "vital concerns about the welfare of the people and of finding money to continue production."

Walter Garrett of Cincinnati noted the entire staff had been cut back and salaries had been frozen nearly a year ago. He urged trustees to be "quite sensitive to the working conditions and benefits of the people who remain."

Russell Capps of Raleigh, N.C., commended the commission's employees as a "dedicated staff doing everything they can to make it (ACTS) work with what they've got."

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Suicidal Stephanie  
'Is Joy of ACTS'

Baptist Press  
9/12/86

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—With tears in his eyes, Jimmy R. Allen introduced Stephanie to trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission during their September meeting.

"One of the joys of ministering in radio and television is the joy of the end product," said Allen, commission president. "It is the joy of what God is doing in people's lives."

In a soft, low voice Stephanie told trustees of her encounter with God through ACTS: "Two months ago, I was suicidal. I had already tried (to commit suicide) and I figured the third time it would work."

She related how she had been working with severely and profoundly retarded children but was off work because of an injured back. "I wasn't working, and my work was my life, so I just thought, 'There's no reason to live.'"

"I had the pills in my hand and I decided that I would turn on the TV and watch music or something," she said, explaining that in Fort Worth, Texas, the computerized cable system usually comes on at Channel 6, the weather channel.

"But this time, it came on at ACTS (Channel 47). They were showing 'The Word of Life' with Joel Gregory preaching, and he was talking about suicide and how your life is worth something. It really touched me. I took those pills and right then flushed them all down the commode. Then I came back and sat down. I must have cried for hours," Stephanie said.

The following Sunday, she went to Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, where Gregory is pastor. There, she made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and was baptized into the fellowship of the church.

Soon, Stephanie showed up at the RIVC offices in Fort Worth and volunteered her services.

"They gave me back my life and my self worth," she said. "I wasn't doing anything and I decided to come as a volunteer for ACTS."

Southland Helps Fund  
Pro-Lottery Campaigns

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southland Corporation, which earlier this year won praise from religious groups for its decision to pull Playboy and Penthouse magazines from the shelves of its 7-Eleven stores, may now be pushing its luck with those same groups by supporting lottery campaigns in two southern states.

In telephone interviews with Baptist Press, Southland officials acknowledged the Dallas-based company has contributed more than \$140,000 to pro-lottery efforts in Florida and Texas.

Jim Willett, assistant manager for media relations, verified campaign disclosure statements which show Southland has channeled \$100,100 into Florida's EXCEL—"Excellence Campaign: An Education Lottery." The EXCEL political action committee has spearheaded a successful petition drive to put a lottery referendum on the November ballot.

In Texas, Southland President Jere W. Thompson sent a telegram to state legislators urging them to put the lottery issue on the November ballot. The measure, however, failed to pass the Texas House during the special session called by Gov. Mark White.

Leaders of the coalition Texans for the Lottery declined to release information about contributions, but Bill Fisher, legislative adviser for Southland, said the company had contributed "about \$40,000 to this point."

Fisher said the money was given for lobbying efforts during the state legislature's special session. He said he expects the pro-lottery coalition to be more involved during the legislature's regular session, "and that we will spend more then."

In Florida, contributions from Southland and Circle K, another convenience store chain, provided more than 30 percent of EXCEL's budget. Lottery-related businesses, led by G-Tech of Providence, R.I., and Scientific Games of Atlanta, accounted for more than half of EXCEL's income.

Florida is considered a critical state by strategists on both sides of the lottery issue since it would offer the gambling industry a toehold in the South which stubbornly has resisted the lottery push.

Willett acknowledged Southland's 7-Eleven stores stand to profit as potential ticket outlets if a lottery is approved. He said 7-Eleven stores already serve as ticket outlets in 17 of the 23 states, plus the District of Columbia, which now have state-run lotteries.

In addition to the customary 5 percent commission on every dollar of lottery tickets sold, 7-Elevens would benefit from increased "store traffic" as ticket buyers also pick up groceries and other items.

According to Fisher, Southland owns and operates about 1,800 stores in Florida and Texas. The 7-Eleven chain has been a financial bright spot for Southland, which reported operating losses of nearly \$90 million for the first quarter of 1986.

Despite the potential financial dividends, Willett stressed benefits for public education through lottery proceeds is the "primary reason" for Southland's involvement in the lottery campaign in Florida.

"Florida has a long history of close association with our company," he said. "An issue close to the hearts of Floridians is education, and we see the lottery as the most viable alternative to funding education in Florida."

Education Commissioner Ralph Turlington, a Southern Baptist who has led the EXCEL campaign, and other lottery proponents claim a lottery will add \$300 million in annual revenue for education.

Critics point out \$300 million represents only a fraction of the state's \$5 billion education budget and lottery publicity would make legislators and taxpayers less receptive to requests for more state and local tax money for schools.

Citing polls in both states indicating widespread public support for a lottery, Willett dismissed the possibility that Southland's lottery support could backfire with religious groups.

"We're simply aligning ourselves with the majority of the customers and the people in those neighborhoods where we do business," he said.

But gambling opponent Larry Braidfoot of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission disagreed.

"Having gained some favorable publicity, Southland is positioning itself to take advantage of a more financially lucrative activity through the sale of lottery tickets in two states blanketed with 7-Eleven stores," said Braidfoot. The commission's general counsel and director of Christian citizenship also coordinates the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, an organization composed of anti-gambling leaders from 19 states.

Braidfoot pointed out many of the same religious groups which applauded Southland for its decision to discontinue sales of sexually explicit magazines also have been leaders in campaigns against the lottery and other gambling initiatives.

Southland officials decided last April to pull Playboy and Penthouse from its sales racks after monitoring reports of the Attorney General's Taskforce on Pornography which cited ties between pornography and sexual violence and crime. Company spokesman Doug Reed added, however, "weakening support of the sale of adult magazines" also was a factor.

Playboy's circulation reportedly has declined by about 1.5 million in the last five years and Penthouse's circulation has dropped by more than 1 million.

Willett said Southland officials have reviewed studies cited by opponents of the lottery, but he claimed most of those studies "lacked documentation." The criticism that lotteries are in effect a regressive form of taxation is a "much debated" issue, he said.

Willett claimed studies show "the purchase of lottery tickets generally correlates with income level, that is, people in higher income brackets generally purchase a higher number of tickets while people in lower income brackets purchase fewer tickets."

"That assertion," countered Braidfoot, "is outrageous. I don't know of any study, including those done by the gambling industry, which would support such a claim."