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McCartney To Become RTVC Executive VP

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Richard T. McCartney, editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger since 1979, has been named executive vice-president and chief operating officer of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and the ACTS network, effective Jan. 15, 1987.

McCartney will be responsible for the daily operation of the RTVC, replacing Luke Williams, who retired. McCartney also will assume the added responsibilities of being chief operating officer, which have been carried out on an interim basis by Jim Edwards, senior vice president for financial services.

"I am looking forward to becoming a part of the vital mission work of the Radio and Television Commission and the ACTS network," McCartney said. "The potential for reaching the people of our nation with the gospel makes this agency a partner with all other Southern Baptists in carrying out the great commission.

Jimmy Allen, president of Radio and Television Commission, said, "Dick McCartney will greatly strengthen the Radio and Television Commission and the ACTS network. He has demonstrated leadership in denominational life, his technical expertise in communications and media and his successful ownership of his own business enterprise uniquely equip him to become the chief operating officer of Southern Baptist telecommunications agency."

Allen added McCartney "impressed all of us because of the fact he has had to and met the bottom line in his own business enterprise. We face that kind of challenge and believe his skills will be invaluable."

The RTVC and ACTS network have been working to stabilize the financial situation after heavy expenses and debt were required to launch the network.

McCartney, who began his career in radio in 1945, has come full circle.

After 12 years in radio and television announcing, news, sales and management, he became director of public relations for Oklahoma Baptists in 1958. In 1962 he assumed a similar position for Texas Baptists. From 1968-76 McCartney was president of Arthur Davenport Associates, a public relations firm in Oklahoma City, before forming his own public relations consulting firm, McCartney and Associates.

In 1977 he returned to the Texas convention as public relations director before being elected Messenger editor in December 1979.

When McCartney, 59, became Messenger editor circulation was 89,000. With the help of emphasizing special church page additions, circulation has increased to the current 118,000 and peaked at nearly 121,000. The Messenger has the third highest circulation of any publication in Oklahoma and ranks fifth among the 37 state Baptist newsjournals.

In the absence of a moral concerns department at the BGCO, McCartney took the lead in Oklahoma Baptists' battles in pari-mutuel gambling and liquor by the drink in the past few years.

William G. Tanner, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma said: "Dick McCartney and I have been friends for a long time. In talking with him about this decision I understand the challenge and opportunity in front of him. Certainly I regret to see him leave Oklahoma, but I definitely feel our loss is a positive gain for the Radio and Television Commission. He is not only an outstanding editor; he is also an excellent administrator."

BJCPA Asks Court To Uphold
Churches' Employment Exemption

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)—Siding with the Mormon Church and the Reagan administration in a key church-state test, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has asked the Supreme Court to uphold a congressional exemption in the Civil Rights Act that allows churches to decide for themselves whom to employ in any position.

The high court agreed last November to review a U.S. district court decision that sided with seven employees of Mormon Church-owned businesses fired after they failed to meet requirements that would have qualified them for the privileged church status of "temple recommends." The term refers to a relationship within the Mormon Church that qualifies members to participate in secret rites conducted only in Mormon temples.

The lower court decision held unconstitutional a provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1972 exempting churches from a ban on religious discrimination in employment. The 1972 provision amended the original ban on religious bias in hiring practices adopted by Congress in 1964, when the first Civil Rights Act was enacted.

Under the 1964 law, religious employers could restrict employment to "individuals of a particular religion to perform work connected with ... (their) religious activities." But in 1972, when it rewrote and extended the law, Congress deleted the single word "religious" from the exemption in an effort to prevent governmental entanglement with churches in deciding which of their activities were "religious."

In a brief filed Jan. 5, the Baptist Joint Committee urged the Supreme Court to side with Congress and reject the district court's finding. James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist public affairs agency, said the case "offers an excellent illustration of the inextricable relationship of church-state separation and the free exercise of religion.

"Those who would denigrate the separation of church and state need to remember that separation is the principal guarantor of religious liberty, that it is none of the business of government to define, prescribe, supervise or regulate the mission and purpose of the church."

The Baptist Joint Committee brief, one of several expected from the nation's religious community siding with the Mormon Church, also puts the agency on the same side with the Reagan administration. The Justice Department joined the Mormon Church last fall in asking the high court to review the lower decision.

Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas, who wrote the agency's brief, defended the 1972 amendment as consistent with the high court's three-part test to determine the constitutionality of laws or governmental policies when measured against the First Amendment's prohibition of an establishment of religion. The test, first adopted by the court in 1973, holds that in order to pass constitutional muster under the establishment clause, a statute must have a secular purpose, must have a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and must not foster an excessive entanglement between church and state.

Although the U.S. District Court for Utah found the 1972 amendment did not violate the secular purpose prong of the test, it struck down the amendment for violating the primary effect and entanglement requirements.

In his brief, Thomas wrote that the history surrounding the 1972 amendment "clearly demonstrates that a legitimate secular purpose existed for its adoption," namely, "to avoid governmental interference and entanglement with religion." He added whereas the original Civil Rights Act "had put the government in the untenable position of examining and evaluating the beliefs and practices of religious organizations for the purpose of determining which of their activities were 'religious,'" the 1972 amendment amounted to an admission of error.

"It took Congress eight years to recognize that government was wholly incompetent to make such determinations and that any attempt to define the church's religious mission was constitutionally problematic," Thomas stated.

On the question of the amendment's primary effect, Thomas urged the high court to reject the lower tribunal's finding. He cited previous Supreme Court decisions in arguing that "not every law that confers an 'indirect,' 'incidental,' or 'remote' benefit upon religion is unconstitutional."

Thomas also pointed to other statutes upheld by the court that confer exemptions for religious organizations, including those giving property tax exemptions to churches and exemptions from military service to conscientious objectors.

These and other exemptions provided religious organizations under federal and local laws, he argued further, "are essential to the institutional separation of church and state." Because it strengthened church-state separation, Thomas added, Congress' 1972 amendment "is not only lawful, it is laudable."

Thomas also argued the amendment does not violate the high court's ban on excessive entanglement. "Congress merely has adopted a hands-off policy that allows religious organizations to discriminate on the basis of religion in their employment," he said. "Far from creating excessive entanglement, the 1972 amendment resolved the entanglement problems that had existed under the original Act."

Noting the fired Mormon workers' successful district court challenge to the 1972 amendment was based on the claim that none of them performed "religious" duties for the church, Thomas pointed to Baptist doctrine that everything a church does is related to Christ's great commission to make disciples and help them grow in the faith. "Any attempt by the state to force Baptist agencies to hire non-Christians or even non-Baptists diminishes our corporate witness and hampers this evangelistic task," he insisted.

The high court is expected to hear arguments in the case during its current term and decide the dispute sometime next spring or early summer.

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Southern Baptists Provide
Abortion Alternatives

By David Wilkinson

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COLUMBUS, Ga. (BP)—When Edgewood Baptist Church opened a crisis pregnancy center in 1981, they knew very little about the challenge before them.

They learned in a hurry.

The first person to walk through the center's door was a young mother of two preschoolers. She was poor, pregnant and without hope. Earlier she had been left to fend for herself when her husband was violently killed. Now the man she had been living with had abandoned her after learning she was pregnant. Barely able to feed the two children she now had, abortion seemed the only alternative.

However, after talking with a counselor, the woman readily decided against abortion. For the next three months, Edgewood church members provided emotional and spiritual support and assisted with food and clothing for the children.

The woman committed her life to Christ and became a member of the church. She later volunteered her services at the center and has become one of its most effective counselors. She gave birth to twins, one of whom died due to lung complications. But the names she gave them were a testimony to her new lease on life: Faith and Hope.

Since that initial visit, more than 12,000 women, ranging in age from 11 to 58, have sought help at the center. Inspired by the center's dramatic impact, the church has launched a variety of related ministries, including a self-supporting adoption agency. A training program based on Edgewood's experience has been used in the last two years to help establish similar programs in 30 Baptist churches in seven states.

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While Edgewood is unique in many ways, it is not alone. Across the Southern Baptist Convention, churches and individuals are responding to the issue of abortion through education, social action and ministry. In addition to speaking out against society's callous attitude toward abortion, more and more Southern Baptists are speaking for the sanctity of human life through active involvement in providing alternatives to abortion.

Some examples:

--Oklahoma in 1986 became the first Baptist state convention to open an alternative to abortion counseling clinic. The initial crisis pregnancy center in Tulsa has been followed by centers in three other communities, along with crisis pregnancy hotlines in six locations statewide.

--The Missouri Baptist Children's Home sponsors a Biological Parents Program to assist women in exploring and planning alternatives faced during an "untimely pregnancy." The program assists with medical services and expenses and provides counseling, parenting classes, legal assistance in placing a child for adoption and other services. The Coleman Group Home in Bridgeton provides a place to live for up to eight women during pregnancy. A toll-free, alternatives-to-abortion hotline also is available.

--Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes last year opened an "alternative home" for women with problem pregnancies.

--In New Orleans, the Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center has been reaching out in love to unwed mothers for more than five decades. Affiliated with the Home Mission Board, Sellers each year ministers to 80 to 100 pregnant, unmarried women from all walks of life.

--In Mississippi, a multi-faceted educational program called Redeem-a-Child is being coordinated by the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. Approved by the state convention, the program deals with the problem of abortion, but is concerned about "more than just abortion," says CAC Executive Director Paul Jones. Other issues include incest, child sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual misinformation, youth marriage, suicide and runaway or abducted children.

--Southern Baptist Convention agencies are developing strategies and resources to help Southern Baptists confront the abortion crisis.

Following up on a resolution adopted at the 1984 meeting of the SBC, the Home Mission Board convened a special committee to deal with alternatives to abortion. The HMB appointed Oklahoma City physician Fred Loper as a medical consultant to help the board to assist associations and churches in ministries related to abortion.

The Christian Life Commission in 1986 introduced eight new resources related to sanctity of human life concerns. The CLC also has promoted the observance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, set on the 1987 denominational calendar for January 18.

While action is taking place on many fronts, the development of crisis pregnancy centers has attracted the most interest.

Lowell Milburn, special care ministries director for the Oklahoma convention, encourages churches and associations to investigate the possibility of starting crisis pregnancy center and hotline services. "It's an opportunity to reach people in a time of need," he says.

Like the Edgewood program, the Oklahoma centers offer a free pregnancy test. While the woman waits for the results, she views a slide show about fetal development. The presentation also includes some explanation of the abortion process. A volunteer counselor discusses with the woman the available alternatives to abortion. More than 100 volunteers have been trained to counsel callers and drop-in visitors.

The Oklahoma centers are modeled largely after the program at Edgewood which has pioneered the crisis pregnancy center ministry among Southern Baptist churches. Edgewood's center operates with a full-time director (the only paid position) and about 40 volunteers.

In 1986 about 4,000 women received counseling at the center, says associate pastor Andy Merritt, the guiding force behind the church's pro-life ministries.

Three out of every four women who come to the clinic are unwed. More than 80 percent of the women decide to reject abortion. Merritt believes the presence of the clinic also has contributed to a reduction in the abortion rate in Columbus in recent years.

He also points out 40 percent of the girls who receive the free pregnancy test are not pregnant. Many of them are open to counseling about a Christian approach to moral values and lifestyles.

The crisis pregnancy center has never drawn from the church budget. It operates on gifts over and above the regular tithes and offerings of church members.

The center is complemented by other ministries. A prenatal care program is available. Through a "shepherding home" ministry, women during pregnancy can live with a Christian family. A group maternity home is on the drawing board. An adoption agency, licensed by the state in 1985, placed more than 30 babies in Christian homes in its first 18 months. An educational team gives presentations on the ministry of the center, abortion and the case for sexual abstinence outside of marriage.

The church hopes to begin a post-abortion ministry to provide emotional and spiritual support for women dealing with the repercussions of an abortion.

While the church pursues a broader anti-abortion agenda overall, "the focus at the crisis pregnancy center is on these girls and their families and trying to minister to them in a holistic way," Merritt explains.

"The distinctive thing about the center is not so much to save a baby, as important as that is, but to offer an extension of God's love. When the girl chooses life for her baby, we rejoice, but that's when the work really begins."