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Larry Baker Elected
CLC Executive Director

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Baptist educator and ethicist Larry Baker was elected executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Jan. 15 in a special called meeting of the agency's trustees.

Baker, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., was elected by a 16-13 majority in a secret-ballot vote. The election followed 90 minutes of intense questioning from trustees on controversial issues such as abortion, capital punishment and women in ministry.

Baker, 49, will begin work March 15 as the fourth executive director of the national moral concerns agency. He succeeds Foy Valentine, who will move into a development position with the CLC effective April 15 after a month's overlap with Baker.

A contractual agreement spelling out Valentine's new responsibilities and compensation was approved by a 17-11 vote after debate. Valentine will be executive officer for development until July 1988, when he reaches age 65. He announced last April his intention to move out of the executive director's role because of "personal health concerns." After discovering in 1985 significant blockage in three areas of his heart, doctors prescribed regular medication and recommended avoidance of heavy stress.

In the midst of open divisiveness that has marked the last two meetings of the agency's trustees, Baker pledged to be a "team player."

Asked how he "proposed to work with a divided board," Baker said, "My judgment is that you may be more united than divided. As executive director, I would attempt to lead this body. I have never claimed to have all the wisdom on all the issues.

"Disagreement on some issues," he added, "does not preclude us from being sensitive and open."

Throughout the question-and-answer session, trustees repeatedly returned to the abortion issue in a discussion mirroring the commission's annual meeting last September. In that meeting, trustees by a one-vote margin rejected a recommendation which would have instructed the staff to produce materials allowing for the possibility of abortion only when the physical life of the mother is endangered.

Baker told trustees "the widespread practice of abortion in this society has become a national tragedy and a national disgrace." When questioned about permissible exceptions to moral and legal prohibitions against abortion, he stressed that "exceptions are just that. They are rare in occurrence and few in number. But I think there are exceptional occasions when, while abortion may not be justified, it may be excused. Because we live in a broken and sinful world, ... , there may be occasions when the exception needs at least to be an option."

Baker spelled out "four cases" where he believes abortion "may be allowed as an exception" — threat to the life of the mother, rape, incest and "perhaps in the case where traumatic and severe deformity to the fetus is involved."

Rudolph Yakym, a layman from South Bend, Ind., pressed Baker about "when an unborn child becomes a person or a human being."

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"I don't know," said Baker. "That's why I hold such a strong line with reference to the sanctity of human life. I do know that life is a gift from God, and he has given us the privilege of being co-creators with him and we ought to be good stewards of it."

After a series of questions about his stance on "exceptions," Baker told Gary Crum, a layman from Washington, that "we are faced with the limitations of human language. You want me to put more precision in my answer at that point, and I can't. The exceptions are few and rare in occurrence, and that's what I want to emphasize."

Alma Ruth Morgan, a layperson from Bartlesville, Okla., asked Baker to "give me some of the moral courage we've heard about" and "just tell us whether you're for or against" issues such as women in ministry, capital punishment, secular humanism and the sanctuary movement.

On the role of women, Baker told trustees that "God calls women to serve him in ministry as he calls men to serve him in ministry." Questioned by Crum as to whether he would agree that the Bible specifically prohibits women from serving as pastors, Baker said, "No, I do not agree with that position," and outlined his views on New Testament teaching related to the role of women.

Baker also stated his personal opposition to capital punishment. "I believe capital punishment runs counter to the Christian ethic and the Christian gospel," he said. "I am also aware that Christians of conscience hold a different opinion."

In discussion before the vote, several trustees questioned Baker's ability to lead without consensus on the board, expressed opposition to Baker's views on several issues and voiced disappointment in the composition of the search committee which brought the recommendation.

"The committee is monolithic," said Alabama pastor Fred Lackey. "I feel that my point of view at least was not represented."

"The diversity on the board is not represented in the committee," added Arkansas director of missions Joe Atchison. "It immediately makes us suspicious. It would have helped if you could have added just one or two from our side of the aisle."

Search committee Chairman Charles Wade of Arlington, Texas, noted nine trustees were added to the 31-member commission after the search committee was appointed. "And, frankly, until this year we never had many divided votes even though we've had differing opinions," he said.

Hal Lane, pastor from Eutawville, S.C., said he feared a split vote would bring "extreme division. If a church gives me a 60/40 vote, I would not move."

Wade said that while Baker would have to make his own decision, "I think if he gets a majority vote, he will be able to work with this board and will be able to increase the support as he works with you."

Richard Elkins, a layman from Albuquerque, N.M., voiced a "practical question" about "what happens to Dr. Baker and to the commission in September (at the next annual meeting). We're dealing with a human being here. What kind of assurances can we give him?"

Commission Chairman Lynn Clayton, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message, said Baker "is not operating under any illusions or delusions. He understands the situation. If he feels God's call, then he'll deal with whatever eventualities may come."

At the end of the meeting, trustees approved unanimously a recommendation from the commission's executive committee "to pray for and work with" the new executive director.

Baker, a native of Louisiana, has been dean at Midwestern Seminary since 1982. He holds three degrees, including a doctorate in theology, from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He has taught Christian ethics at both seminaries and has served as chairman of the Missouri Baptist Christian Life Committee. He also has been pastor of churches in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. He and his wife, Wanda, have three children.

RIVC Trustees Differ
Over Financial Report

By Dan Martin

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission differed over the meaning of the first quarter financial report during their January meeting.

Fred Roach, first vice chairman and finance committee chairman, said the first quarter report is "cause for celebration. It is a most fantastic report; the financial condition of the Radio and Television Commission is on more solid ground than ever before in history." The commission's fiscal year began Oct. 1.

Roach, a Dallas homebuilder, said the commission, which has been in financial trouble during the launch of the ACTS television network, said the commission had a net revenue of \$80,000 in December. He noted the RTVC ended the quarter with a deficit of \$137,000, which was much better than the projected deficit of \$523,000 for the first three months.

Revenues, he said, showed up a plus-\$16,000 for the quarter, primarily brought about by reduced spending, including a cutback in production of new shows for the ACTS network.

However, several trustees took issue with Roach's positive report.

Gary Jossa, an advertising agency owner from Newburgh, Ind., said he is concerned because all anticipated revenues from fund-raising activities "are backloaded. It seems to me there is a lot of 'blue sky' in this report."

Jossa said fund-raising activities are projected to produce revenues in the last quarters of the year and are not prorated on an equal basis through the four quarters. He pointed out \$1.9 million is projected to be produced by development in the \$9.3 million budget. Of that, he said, \$340,000 was projected to be raised in the first quarter, about 17 percent of the total. Of the projection, \$302,000 was reported raised, \$38,000 under budget.

He said no figures were made available about how much is being spent on fund raising. In response to a question by Jossa, Roach said \$300,000 has been spent on a fund-raising effort in Atlanta, primarily in an effort to design a campaign for an agency like the RTVC, which has no built-in constituency. So far, he said, \$160,000 has been raised, prior to the major solicitation, which will seek to raise \$1.5 million.

Trustees were told an effort will soon be intensified in Atlanta, with a primary emphasis on the solicitation of major gifts by RTVC President Jimmy R. Allen. The effort, which is expected to occupy the time and attention of Allen, several staffers and consultants, also will feature four fund-raising telemissions dinners.

"I think we ought to take a more realistic look at what we expect in development," said Jossa. "Development hasn't happened in the first quarter, and sooner or later we will get to the end of the quarters.

"We need to take a lot harder look at this and not get caught up in the vision. I have as much vision as the next guy, but God also gave us gray matter to look at things. The trustees of the Radio and Television Commission are going to need to be ready to decide what to do if development funds do not develop. We should not wait until the end, we should do that now."

Roach, however, told trustees he believes the development goal is "realistic. We reached \$198,000 in December and if we divide out the \$1,575,000 left to raise, that only amounts to \$175,000 per month."

Jossa also pointed out \$475,000 has been budgeted for syndication, or sale of ACTS programs to commercial television stations. For the first quarter, syndication was projected to produce \$30,000 — about 6 percent of the total — but produced only \$24,000.

"I think we are looking at \$475,000 that is not going to happen," he said.

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In response to a question by Jossa, Bob Taylor, senior vice president of programming services, said the RIVC staff currently is conducting a study to determine how well the syndication efforts will be received on three lines of products: current production of ACTS, an updated version of Country Crossroads and a package of old movies.

Taylor said the complete study will be available when the trustees meet for a retreat in early April but said it appears only about \$100,000 of the projection "is pretty sound."

Country Crossroads, a country music show, is getting a negative response, Taylor said, primarily because the "whole country music genre is in the pits right now." Negative results also are being received on the movie package.

"At this point it is not encouraging," Taylor said. "I am less enthusiastic than I have been, and that is based on the response we have gotten from the industry."

Another trustee, Laverne Butler, a pastor from Louisville, Ky., told Roach: "I don't have that gut level feeling of enthusiasm. I think we need to stop relying on inspiration and get down here in the real world."

Butler said it appears to him the commission "is living on borrowed money." He also commented: "My alarm went on in September when we were told we were depleted in personnel and our ability to produce (new shows). So what if we succeed and celebrate and don't have the product. We must keep it all in focus. If this is a major concern, then we should stop celebrating and get to work."

In response to the questions from the trustees, T.W. Terral, a Baton Rouge, La., pastor and immediate past chairman of the board, told trustees he was "scared to death a year and a half ago" by the financial condition of the agency.

Then, he said, the RIVC had high accounts payable it could not meet, and now the commission is current. He said there was a short-term bank loan with high interest rates, and now a new, longer-term loan has been negotiated with lower interest.

"I know there are a lot of challenges," he said. "But I see a lot of positive things, too. I celebrate because it looks so much better than it did."

RIVC President Allen said the commission has been learning how to conduct development activities. "Development is not a science, it is an art," he said. "I feel a far greater expectancy out of development since we have learned how to retool according to our need."

In other actions:

— Trustees met Richard T. McCartney, who was elected in December to become executive vice president and chief operating officer of the RIVC. McCartney, who has been editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, began work at the Fort Worth, Texas-based agency Jan. 15.

Under RIVC bylaws, McCartney was elected by the administrative subcommittee of the trustee executive committee, composed of the chairman, first and second vice chairmen and two other members. It did not require action by the 27-member board of trustees.

— Appropriated "\$50,000 to \$70,000" to make up a deficit in payments to WLIG-TV, Channel 55, on Long Island, New York. The network has been using restricted gifts to pay the station \$250,000 per year to broadcast ACTS programs, primarily from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. The appropriation was necessary, trustees were told, because gifts have not been sufficient to cover the cost of the contract.

— Entered into an agreement with Dominion Direct Broadcast Services to allow the company to air ACTS programming if and when DDBS sells sufficient receiving dishes to be able to launch a satellite. According to information presented at the meeting, Dominion will use RIVC-provided mailing lists to attempt to sell a half million receiving dishes — each to cost \$650 — to Southern Baptists.

— Elected Gene Linder of Denver, a veteran cable and broadcast television executive, as vice president of multiple service owner (MSO) operators for ACTS Satellite Network, Inc.

He recently retired from the American Television and Communications Corp., where he supervised the design, installation and management of 55 cable TV studios and 26 remote vans and developed the company's community programming activity.

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Social, Moral Concerns
To Highlight WMU Agenda

By Karen Benson and D'Lesia Carroll

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Social and moral concerns will headline the agenda of curriculum and activities for the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in 1989-90 following action Jan. 11-14 by the WMU executive board. A focus on Acteens and personal witnessing also are key agenda items.

The board approved the 1989-90 dated plan, which outlines the activities, curriculum and products for WMU organizations in the churches for that year.

The board also instructed the national WMU staff to develop guidelines for implementing the base design, interpreting social and moral concerns and issues as they relate to missions. The staff was asked to prepare those guidelines for presentation to the executive board in January 1988.

Board members voted to apply most of the 1985-86 budget surplus to help retire the debt on the WMU headquarters facility in Birmingham, Ala.

In addition, the executive board collected \$2,572 during its meeting for the Centennial Thank Offering. All contributions to this offering go directly to retire the headquarters debt. WMU expects to pay the debt by the organization's centennial date, May 14, 1988.

A special contribution of \$50,000 to the Baptist World Alliance from the executive board will sponsor the Baptist World Aid office in McLean, Va. The Baptist World Aid office will be named the Martin-Mathis Room in honor of Olive Martin and Marie Mathis, two longtime WMU leaders.

Board members also adopted two resolutions recommitting support to the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Speaking on behalf of WMU's 1.2-million members, the board resolved to "recommit this organization to our historic purpose" of supporting both boards as the "denomination's inspired, committed and responsible vehicles" to which the SBC's 14.6-million members may cooperatively join to tell their country and their world about Christ.

In other board actions, members:

— Adopted a philosophy statement on fund raising. According to the new philosophy, WMU will emphasize missions giving through tithing and sacrificial giving. WMU, SBC promotes these channels of missions giving, the Cooperative Program, Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, state missions offerings, associational missions and world hunger and disaster relief response through the mission boards. WMU, SBC stresses that missions giving is done through the local church."

The philosophy statement also encourages Southern Baptists to include missions in wills and trusts or to make individual gifts to an SBC agency for capital needs or endowment related to missions.

However, the national WMU will not "promote fund-raising activities," according to the new philosophy statement. "Pictures, articles or information about fund-raising activities will not be included in WMU magazines or other publications," the statement says.

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— Noted that when a Baptist Women organization in a church begins with a missions group, "the leader of the missions group is responsible directly to the (church) WMU director."

— Approved a two-year theme for the week of prayer for home missions for the church years 1990-92.

— Approved a recommendation that WMU presidents from state conventions qualifying for membership on the SBC Executive Committee be vice presidents of the national WMU, which means those individuals would become members of the national WMU executive board.

Currently board members are seated only if they are from states with 25,000 Southern Baptists. The change will allow board members to be seated if they are from states with 15,000 Southern Baptists.

The board action was taken to bring the WMU executive board in line with recently amended SBC bylaws. It is expected that this change will allow three more vice presidents to be seated on the national WMU executive board.

In her report to the board, WMU Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford said WMU has "flexed its system" to meet changing conditions and has committed to a "challenging aim, a singular purpose and desire to grow along with the convention in usefulness, in power and in vision."

The field in which Southern Baptist churches are planted "has a desperate need for our work of mission action and personal witnessing," Weatherford said. "One of the pressing needs in our churches is an awareness of the importance of missions education."

More WMU members are needed to help meet the needs in missions education, said national WMU President Marjorie Jones McCullough: "This enlistment can't be done by one organization, plan or gimmick. It cannot happen without our personal one-on-one involvement. It will take a lot of personal touches for us in enlistment to reach the goal." WMU hopes to double its 1.2-million membership by the end of 1988.

"As leaders, our touch has to be charged with chemistry, power and enthusiasm for missions to motivate others," she said.

New techniques and equipment must be used to "get the story of missions out," McCullough added. "We must take advantage of every possible means of touching others."

"Every possible means" will include continuing to work with the Baptist women of the world, said Edna de Gutierrez, new president of the women's department of the Baptist World Alliance.

"You have tremendous responsibility before you, and you have a great crowd of witnesses surrounding you. Women of the world are looking to you for support, your love and your prayers," de Gutierrez said. "Do not lose your vision but multiply it. Be good stewards of the many gifts and talents the Lord has bestowed upon you."

WMU leaders have been known for using their gifts in creative ideas to further missions education, McCullough said: "The magical quality of imagination dwells in each of us. Our responsibility is to think and create ways to do missions education. There is no end to what we can do if we put our minds to it."