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April 12, 1989

89-57

Allen resigns RTVC post;  
new ACTS bids received

By Dan Martin

N-10

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jimmy R. Allen has resigned as president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and will join a new group seeking to purchase the ACTS network, if the effort is successful.

Allen, who has headed the agency since January 1980, tendered his resignation during the April 10-11 commission meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. The effective date is May 1, with a termination date of June 30.

Trustees elected Executive Vice President Richard T. McCartney as interim chief executive officer.

Board Chairman Harold Brundige, an attorney from Martin, Tenn., named a five-member search committee to seek Allen's successor. Members are Brundige; incoming Chairman Mike Hamlett, pastor of First Baptist Church of North Spartanburg, S.C.; Jewel Morris, a shopping center owner from Fort Smith, Ark.; T.W. Terral, director of Baptist associational missions in Baton Rouge, La.; and Ernie Helton, an engineer from Columbus, Ohio.

Trustees also received three new bids for the purchase of the American Christian Television System, the network launched by the commission in 1984.

One of the bids was from a group calling itself Investors and Friends of Acts, which has offered Allen the position of president and chief executive officer if its bid is successful.

Brundige declined to identify the other groups, but did say none of the bids was accepted because none offered enough money for the network, which now is accessible to more than 9 million homes across the nation.

The commission has been involved in negotiations for the sale of ACTS -- which has been a financial drain on the agency since it was launched -- for more than a year with a group based in San Antonio, Texas.

The group, headed by advertising executive Center (Chip) Atkins, offered the commission \$34 million for the network and guaranteed five hours per day for RTVC programming on the network for 30 years.

After three extensions and unsuccessful fund-raising efforts, the offer expired March 14.

All three of the new offers "came in in the last week," Brundige said. "We only expect to negotiate with two (of the groups) because the other offered considerably less" money than the others.

The two more-serious offers were "not acceptable," Brundige said. "We have communicated that to them. Now, we will have to go and negotiate." The negotiating committee that dealt with the Atkins group still is intact, he added.

Members are Brundige; Terral; Morris; Leroy Stevens, general manager of an ACTS affiliate station and a retired professor from Phoenix, Ariz.; and Russell Lawson, a bank president from Oklahoma City. No committee meetings are scheduled, but the committee is "on call," he said.

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The commission is "in accord ... together," Brundige said. "Our accord is to sell ACTS if we get the price we want, and if not, to keep it and operate it."

He declined to say how much the commission wants for ACTS, noting the price "depends on how badly someone out there wants it. What I can say is that whenever we get the best offer we can get we are going to report to the board and they can take it (the offer) or keep it," (the network).

Allen, who appeared in the meeting only to resign and to make the new offer to the trustee executive committee, later told reporters his new group had offered \$10 million for the network and would guarantee four hours of programming per day for 12 years.

Allen declined to name the nine investors forming Investors and Friends of Acts, other than Ralph Tacker, a Dallas businessman and president of D/FW Uplink, through which the network beams its signal to the Spacenet II satellite.

Tacker, who spent a year with the commission as a volunteer in 1983, "helped put the deal together," Allen said. He added Atkins, who owns the transponder lease on the Spacenet II satellite currently being used by ACTS, is "not an equity player" in the new group, although "he supports the effort."

Trustees spent most of the April 10-11 meeting in executive session. First, they met for nearly five hours discussing commission matters with its seven vice presidents.

"The trustees had all of the vice presidents come in one by one and sit down and tell us their problems, their views, their desires and what they need. We heard all of them," Brundige said.

In the morning session April 11, trustees accepted Allen's resignation and, for two more hours, called a meeting of the negotiating committee, with the other trustee committees invited to participate.

"We considered what they wanted to do about selling ACTS; everybody got a say about it. Now we know how the entire board feels about it, and we can better negotiate," Brundige said. "The entire board is together ... of one accord."

He also predicted more involvement by the board in the operations of the commission and the network, noting, "We are going to be more informed."

In his resignation, Allen noted the last nine and one-half years have been "exciting, challenging, frustrating and deeply satisfying. We have experimented, developed, launched, demonstrated usefulness and achieved the goal of building the ACTS network, the fastest-growing interfaith cable network in America."

He has a "sense of satisfaction and gratitude to God" about the new offer he presented to the board, he said, noting it "will enlarge the capacity to share the gospel with the nation while removing from this agency its entire indebtedness incurred in starting and operating the network."

"It is your responsibility to decide how to react to that proposition, ... but I rejoice in the fact that this way to continue our denomination's ministry to the nation in television while entirely debt free is now possible," he said.

He voiced "one deep regret" that he has "been unsuccessful in persuading the decision makers in Southern Baptist mission money that this telemissions tool ... should have some shifting of mission strategy money."

In 1978, he said, the RTVC received 5.09 percent of the Southern Baptist unified budget, and in 1988-89 it will receive only 4 percent.

In a meeting with reporters, Allen said the "sails were set" for his leaving in April 1988, when he announced he would go with the network if the sale of ACTS to Atkins and his group were successful. He spent much of the last year in trying to raise funds to help the Atkins group purchase the network, leaving much of the day-to-day operations to McCartney.

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If the new purchase effort is not successful, Allen said, he has other alternatives, including working with a "people-to-people" peace organization, helping a company build low-power TV stations and a "pulpit committee or two has made contact with me."

In other actions during the April meeting, trustees:

-- Elected new officers. Hamlett was named chairman; Lawson, first vice chair; Stevens, second vice chair; and Steve Huffman, a certified public accountant from Papillion, Neb., secretary.

-- Adopted a statement to be presented to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee about the previously proposed sale of ACTS to Friends of ACTS.

-- Adopted a resolution asking the Executive Committee to grant a one-time exception to a requirement that all short-term borrowing be paid back within the same fiscal year.

McCartney said the commission had borrowed \$625,000 on short-term notes and has paid the debt down to \$445,000.

The loans were taken out, he said, "in full expectation that the sale of the ACTS network would enable the loan to be repaid in advance of the deadline" of April 27.

The Executive Committee will be asked to consider the request at its June meeting in Las Vegas, Nev.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the RTVC

Here's Hope media packets  
mailed to associations

By Joe Westbury

N - HMB  
Baptist Press  
4/12/89

ATLANTA (BP)--Media kits to support the Southern Baptist Convention's 1990 simultaneous "Here's Hope" revivals have been distributed to Baptist associations to help with local planning.

In addition, 5 million New Testaments printed specifically for the revivals are ready for immediate distribution by calling the Here's Hope toll-free phone number. The Bibles are part of a press run of 15 million, in which the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board believes may be the largest religious printing order in history.

The national revivals, set for March 18-April 29, 1990, have been in the planning stages for five years. They will comprise the denomination's second concentrated attempt to evangelize the nation during the 1980s.

The media kits, valued at \$70 each, were mailed in mid-April. The mass mailing is designed to educate pastors of the availability of materials so they can personalize their church's participation in their community.

Most of the information can be customized by overprinting the congregation's name and address, said Richard Harris, director of the SBC Home Mission Board's mass evangelism department.

Harris, who is chairman of the revivals' national steering committee, said the packets will allow churches to preview the materials and to plan their local promotion budgets in advance of setting their 1990 church budgets.

While the Home Mission Board will coordinate a national advertising campaign for the revivals, local promotion will be the responsibility of each church, he said.

"These are the finest examples of newspaper and television spots Southern Baptists have ever produced," added Bobby Sunderland, director of the board's direct evangelism division.

"Since the production costs have been borne by the Home Mission Board, churches will miss an excellent opportunity if they don't begin to prepare now to use these materials in their local media."

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The packets include a variety of sample items, such as color and black-and-white ads, bumper stickers, a lapel pin, bulletin inserts and a video highlighting television spots that are available. A catalog and color poster also are included for each church in the association.

With the exception of the newspaper ads and television spots, all promotional materials are now available from the Here's Hope toll-free number, (800) 346-1990. The other two items will be released Oct. 1 to prevent premature use, Harris said.

In addition to the promotional materials, nearly 90 other revival items also are available by calling the toll-free number at the Home Mission Board.

A combined effort of the missions agency and Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the one-call service replaces as many as five calls needed to receive materials available during the 1986 simultaneous revivals, Harris said. Churches should place orders now to prevent a rush later in the year and to prevent shipping delays, he added.

The Sunday School Board is awaiting orders for the 5 million Here's Hope New Testaments already printed. The Bibles need to be shipped to provide additional warehouse space for another 10 million New Testaments yet to be produced or else the project will be stalled, said Johnnie Godwin, director of the board's Holman division.

The press run is 5 million Bibles larger than the number used in the 1986 revivals, he said.

The project requires 12,000 miles of paper, equivalent of a piece of paper 31 inches wide, stretched twice between Miami and San Francisco.

To print the New Testaments, one printing press would have to run for 6,000 hours. That is 250 days, or almost 36 weeks at 24 hours per day. However, the printing will be broken down into manageable work times over a two-year period, officials said.

The Bibles are available in English in the King James and the New International versions and in Spanish in the Rena Valera Revisa, 1960 text.

In cooperation with the American Bible Society, New Testaments also will be available in Korean, French/Haitian, Chinese and Polish.

The Gospel of John will be available in Arabic, Cambodian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Tagalog, Romanian and German. A total of 160,000 gospel tracts also will be printed in those languages.

The language materials are part of Southern Baptists' growing commitment that the nation's ethnic groups will hear the gospel in their own language, Harris said.

"We want to do a better job in Here's Hope to involve ethnic churches than we did in the 'Good News America' revivals in 1986. Some of the greatest potential to impact our nation evangelistically rests with our ethnic pastors, language missions leaders and state language directors," he added.

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Women in Ministry plan  
7th meeting for Las Vegas

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(WMMU)

Baptist Press  
4/12/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist Women in Ministry will convene for the organization's seventh annual meeting at the Alexis Park Resort in Las Vegas, Nev., June 10-11.

"Stories of Faith: A Rich Tapestry" will be the theme of the meeting.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. Saturday, June 10, followed by the first session at 10. The last session begins at 10 a.m. Sunday. Registration is \$25. The Saturday evening banquet will cost an additional \$10.

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Keynote speakers for the two-day annual meeting will be Catherine Allen, associate executive director of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union; Jack Harwell, editor of SBC Today newspaper; Ken Sehested, executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America; Phyllis Rodgers Pleasants, student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Cheryl Collins, minister of youth at McLean (Va.) Baptist Church; and Marsha Moore, senior chaplain at St. Joseph Northeast Hospital in Albuquerque, N.M.

The Saturday afternoon program will allow participants to choose to attend two seminars. Seminar topics will include "It Only Hurts When I Don't Laugh", "Methods for Implementing Inclusive Language in the Church", "The Ministry of Listening", "The Preaching Event", and "Understanding and Affecting Change in the Local Church."

Special music and liturgical dance will be provided by Agape and the Liturgical Dancers of South Main Baptist Church in Houston. The Agape singers also will provide entertainment during the Saturday evening banquet.

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Southern Baptist Women in Ministry  
Alexis Park Resort, Las Vegas, Nev.  
June 10-11, 1989

N-10

Theme: "Stories of Faith: A Rich Tapestry"

Saturday morning, June 10, 1989

9:00 Registration  
10:00 Worship  
Prelude -- Brass Ensemble, Tropicana Christian Fellowship, Las Vegas  
Hymn of Praise  
Call to Worship -- Cheryl Collins, minister of youth, McLean Baptist Church, McLean, Va.  
Invocation -- Betty Winstead McGary, president, Southern Baptist Women in Ministry, minister to adults, South Main Baptist Church, Houston  
Welcome -- Betty Winstead McGary; Donna Charlton-Starkes, associate pastor, Tropicana Christian Fellowship, Las Vegas  
Hymn  
Anthem  
Reading of Scripture -- Carol Causey, training designer, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala.  
Sermon -- Catherine Allen, associate executive director, Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham  
Time of Silence -- Edgar Tanner, coordinator of field education for the Center for Exploring Ministry Careers, Houston Baptist University, Houston  
Litany of Response  
Hymn of Commitment  
Choral Benediction  
11:00 Break  
11:15 Business Session No. 1  
12:00 Lunch

Saturday afternoon, June 10, 1989

1:00 Business Session No. 2  
1:45 Break  
2:00 Introduction to Seminar -- Dianna Aguila, literacy consultant for Nevada, home missionary, Las Vegas  
2:15 Seminars: "It Only Hurts When I Don't Laugh," "Methods for Implementing Inclusive Language in the Church," "The Ministry of Listening," "The Preaching Event," "Understanding and Affecting Change in the Local Church"  
3:15 Break  
3:30 Seminars (repeated)

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Saturday evening, June 10, 1989

7:00 Dinner, Entertainment and Fellowship

Sunday morning, June 11, 1989

10:00 Worship

Prelude

Call to Worship

Invocation -- Betty Winstead McGary

Litany of Confession

Offertory -- Agape and Liturgical Dancers, South Main Baptist Church

Hymn of Praise

Anthem

A Tapestry of Faith: Readings and Testimonies

A Time of Silence

Choral Benediction -- Duane Blakely, minister of music, First Baptist Church, Garland, Texas

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Executive Committee's Brown  
sets sights on governorship

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press  
4/12/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Baptist layman Jerry D. Brown has announced he will be a Republican candidate for governor of Oklahoma in 1990.

Brown, 53, is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee and is on the board of directors of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. He is a Sunday school teacher and deacon at Emmanuel Southern Baptist Church in Edmond.

Brown has been a Republican for 18 years, but he ran for governor as an independent in 1986. In that race, he received 60,115 votes, or 7 percent of the total. "We only campaigned three months and got the largest independent vote since Oklahoma gained its statehood," he said.

He has owned and operated the Truckers Village No. 2 truck stop in Oklahoma City for 22 years.

Brown told Baptist Press his campaign will focus on business, education, and law and order.

"My goal is to bring business into Oklahoma," he said. "I intend to make Oklahoma a trucking hub. Geographically, we're in the prime location."

He also will support diversity in business, he said: "Our economy was strong during the oil boom. But when the boom stopped, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana really hurt. We need to diversify rather than have an economy built on just one strong area. As a businessman, I see we need to change direction."

Of education, he added: "This is an issue with us and certainly with the people in Oklahoma. Oklahoma ranks low in teacher pay." He promised to eliminate the "disparity" between salaries of teachers and school administrators.

His campaign is "very strong on law enforcement -- troopers, sheriffs, the Oklahoma City Police Department," he said. "We stand with it and for it and back them up. We want to do something about the crime in Oklahoma."

Brown stressed that he is the person who can provide the state with the government it needs: "It's time for Oklahoma to have strong, honest, up-front leadership, and I can give that. Oklahoma is suffering because we have not had input from business leaders in government. And above that, we have not had Christian leaders in government. We must have strong business people and born-again Christians in our government."

Brown has received support from owners of small businesses, attorneys and church leaders, he said, noting about 25 clergymen attended the news conference when he announced his candidacy.

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He has been invited to speak in numerous churches, he said, but added: "When I go to the churches, I preach the gospel. I don't talk politics."

The theme for his candidacy, printed on his logo, is "Oklahoma Proud." His supporters are known as the "Brown Brigade."

In addition to his Baptist affiliations, Brown has been a director of the National Association of Truck Stop Operators. He has been chairman of Transport for Christ International and remains on that board, and he has been active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

The activity of his campaign will not interrupt his involvement in Baptist work, Brown said: "We've made a commitment to be there. The Lord comes first in my life."

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Baptist chaplains meet  
people in all walks of life

By Mark Wingfield

F - HMB

Baptist Press  
4/12/89

ATLANTA (BP)--"I've got to talk to you," the military reserve officer said anxiously. "For the first time in my life, I'm really scared. I'm afraid I'm going to die. I'm so scared I won't even drive a car.

"I can't talk to anyone else about it, because they couldn't possibly understand. But I know you're a Vietnam vet yourself and a chaplain. Could you please help me?"

The man, a church member but not a Christian, sought the help of Southern Baptist chaplain Sam Birky during weekend training exercises at San Francisco's Presidio military installation.

Normally, Birky's ministry takes him across the state of California starting new churches as director of church extension for the California Southern Baptist Convention. But one weekend every month, he drives 200 miles from his home in Fresno to San Francisco, where he is a chaplain in the Army Reserves.

On those weekends, Birky said, he ministers to people who might not have any other contact with a pastor or a church. "This is the one place I directly intersect the unchurched community," he explained. "Chaplaincy is the only program where the secular community has a minister assigned to them."

Birky, who spent five years in active military duty, strikes up conversations with reserve personnel at training sessions, during mealtimes or while jogging across the Golden Gate Bridge. In addition, he conducts worship services that are attended by about one-fifth of the reservists.

Last year, Birky's worship services were part of more than 66,000 such meetings conducted by Southern Baptist chaplains around the world. His ministry visit with the man afraid of dying was just one of more than 1.8 million visits made by Southern Baptist chaplains.

Currently, Southern Baptists have 2,014 endorsed chaplains serving in both military and non-military settings, said Huey Perry, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board chaplaincy division. Southern Baptists are the largest non-Catholic supplier of chaplains to the military as well as most other fields of pastoral care, he said.

"Southern Baptist chaplaincy is alive and well," Perry said, noting that Southern Baptist chaplains recorded 22,273 professions of faith through their ministries in 1988.

The Southern Baptist Convention has given the Home Mission Board the assignment of coordinating chaplaincy ministries. However, chaplains are not appointed and paid in the same way as missionaries.

The Southern Baptist Chaplains Commission, working in conjunction with the HMB's chaplaincy division, endorses chaplains for employment by the military, hospitals, correctional institutions, businesses, industry and others.

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Chaplains serve in a variety of settings, Perry explained: "Wherever there is a group of people with spiritual needs, there is potential for a chaplaincy ministry. Chaplains attempt to take the church to the people -- in the workplace, in leisure settings, in times of crisis."

In addition to Birky's ministry, other examples of chaplaincy ministries include:

-- Col. Ken Thompson, senior chaplain at Myrtle Beach (S.C.) Air Force Base, who ministers among 4,000 active-duty personnel and 700 civilian employees. In the past year, attendance at the base's Protestant chapel services has increased by 40 percent.

Thompson said he attributes the increase to a renewed emphasis on the base's four chaplains visiting in the workplace. Thompson and the other chaplains mingle with airmen in offices, in maintenance shops and out on the runways with the A-10 fighter aircraft.

"The average pastor doesn't work in the workplace with his members," Thompson explained. "But the chaplain works for the same employer as those he ministers to. The airman knows I understand what he does."

-- Joe Williams, associate director of chaplaincy for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, who heads up an interdenominational ministry during the State Fair of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City each year. Last year, volunteer chaplains at the fair recorded 1,303 one-on-one counseling sessions and seven professions of faith.

-- Gail Wade, chaplain at Scottsdale (Ariz.) Memorial Hospital North, a 230-bed facility affiliated with the Mayo Clinic. Because of the high number of acute-care cases the hospital receives, Wade deals with death and crisis on a daily basis.

"I can't think of a better place to find God in our culture than in the midst of pain and suffering and crisis," he said. "There's not a better place for ministry."

In addition to 4,000 one-on-one contacts Wade makes with patients each year, he conducts two cancer residency programs to train clergy to understand and minister to cancer patients.

-- Sam Haughwout, chaplain at the Oklahoma County Jail in Oklahoma City, where 1,715 inmates made first-time decisions for Christ in 1988. Haughwout and a team of volunteers counsel with each person making a decision and follow up with discipleship training.

Last year the inmates completed 31,408 Bible correspondence courses. Haughwout said this kind of training is important because of the isolation inmates face. "They come to know the Lord and go back to the tanks and run into strong Satanic forces. They are engaged in spiritual warfare," he explained.

-- Gil Strickland, who left behind the security of a traditional pastorate to begin his own organization providing chaplaincy services to businesses in Dallas. "I believe the greatest mission field in America is the place you'll get up and go to Monday morning," he said. "There ought to be a minister wherever there are hurting people."

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Chaplain dispenses Kleenex and smiles to hospital employees

By Mark Wingfield

F - HMB  
Baptist Press  
4/12/89

ATHENS, Ga. (BP)--At St. Mary's Hospital, Mark Fite dispenses Kleenex and smiles as frequently as most nurses give out aspirin.

Fite, a Southern Baptist chaplain, empties several boxes of facial tissues every week. He offers the tissues to nurses, doctors and other hospital employees who come to his Athens, Ga., office to unload their problems.

After facing the daily trauma of a hospital, employees sometimes need a shoulder to cry on or someone to listen, Fite says: "They need to have a little bit of time to sit down and cry like a baby. They need a place where they can feel comfortable, not threatened, and let it all hang out -- let their makeup run.

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The place many employees come is the chaplain's office, a small room tucked away at the end of a long hallway near the back door of the hospital. The remote location provides confidentiality for employees who don't want their supervisors to know they are seeking counseling, Fite says.

He may counsel with an employee there or at a workstation somewhere in the hospital. "Maybe three or four minutes is all it takes sometimes," he says.

Fite, a retired Navy chaplain, has been part-time employee chaplain at St. Mary's for 11 years. He is endorsed by Southern Baptists through the denomination's Home Mission Board.

"Nursing is where the stress really piles up," he explains. "If a patient is dying, a nurse will feel responsible and wonder what more she could have done.

"And then to go from a room where someone has died and to be able to smile and serve the next patient -- it's almost impossible. All of us go through the grieving process. That nurse just needs someone to listen for a while.

"I let them know that in every problem we have, God is for us."

"I do not feel like any counseling is worth the name without the religious aspect of it. But I never push religion as the magic rabbit's foot that will instantly cure all our problems.

"I don't consider that I have to make everybody a Baptist. But if I can help everyone relate to God as they see him, I'm a success."

Fite sometimes writes hospital employees a prescription on a small piece of paper. His recommended medicine is selected Scriptures that address the problems employees face.

Fite says how much business he has in his office depends on how visible he is on the nursing floors. He makes the rounds daily, starting on the top floor and walking the hallways of each of the hospital's six floors.

"People are not going to come to me if I sit in the chaplain's office," he explains. "The work place is where the mission field is. I don't really get to do mission work until I get out where people have grease on their clothes.

"I think it's important even if I'm just visible on the floors. It reminds the employees that they are people God cares about. It reminds them that there's more to their work than bedpans.

"If I can help that employee, that translates directly toward good patient care. That nurse or doctor can be so disturbed over their own problems that they can come in and prescribe the wrong medication or perform the wrong care.

"If you have happy employees, in whatever job they're working at, they're going to do a better job."

Sister Antonette, who supervises St. Mary's nurses, says she has seen the difference Fite's ministry has made at the hospital: "I don't know how we ever did without him. He has salvaged so many marriages.

"Before Chaplain Fite came, I had to spend an awful lot of time dealing with employee problems. I needed someone who would meet not only their physical needs but their spiritual needs.

"He is a deeply spiritual man but very human and understanding. Our employees feel they have the assurance and availability of someone who's concerned about them."

Although St. Mary's is a Catholic hospital, Fite says he has no trouble ministering there. "This is like when I was on a Navy ship. I have the run of the ship. I'm not in the pocket of anyone," he says.

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Sister Antonette agrees that the hospital does not expect Fite to compromise his own beliefs: "We're a Catholic hospital, but we respect the beliefs of all people."

"When we hired a chaplain, we didn't look at what denomination he was. We looked for the most qualified person."

After 11 years on the job, Fite is well-known throughout the hospital. He recently discovered how much employees appreciate his ministry when his 7-year-old grandson died.

At that time, recipients of his ministry began to minister to him, he says: "I have a long history with so many of these people. That's how you really grow, when you've been through deep waters together."

"Often, when I see someone in the hall whom I know is facing a problem, we don't even have to stop and talk. We're fellow travelers."

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Pastor's pulpit has changed,  
but he's still a minister

By Mark Wingfield

F - HMB

Baptist Press  
4/12/89

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Jack Poe's pulpit has four wheels, and his shield of faith is a bullet-proof vest.

Poe, a former Southern Baptist pastor, is chaplain to the Oklahoma City police department. "My pulpit may be the front seat of a squad car, it may be in a coffee shop or it may be at a homicide scene," he says.

But Poe wants to make one thing clear: just because his pulpit has changed does not mean he has left the ministry.

"Some pastors may think I couldn't do anything else so I became a chaplain," he says. "But that can't be. I've done ministry as a chaplain that I never could have done as a pastor."

"When my pager goes off, it's not a call to go down and have Kool-Aid and cookies in the fellowship hall. It's usually a crisis."

Poe was pastor of Highland Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma City before moving into full-time chaplaincy in 1984. He is endorsed by Southern Baptists through the denominations Home Mission Board and funded by churches in the local Capital Baptist Association.

Poe believes chaplaincy allows him to take the church to a segment of society that might never come to church.

Because of the high stress and unusual requirements of the job, police officers quickly become skeptical of outsiders and form a close-knit circle among themselves, he says: "They will not go to a pastor and tell him what they feel because they don't think he can understand. They're also not going to come to my office to talk. So I go out to where they are."

That means riding on patrol with officers, going with them to deliver death messages, sitting in on briefings, making hospital visits and sometimes visiting in homes.

Poe recently dealt with a young officer whose second marriage was about to break up. The officer's wife said she was tired of being left at home with their three children while he worked long hours. She was depressed and nearly suicidal; he thought she didn't care about his needs.

Around midnight one night, Poe sat at a table in a Kwik Shop convenience store and counseled with the officer, who was completing paperwork on an accident report. With the chatter of a police radio in the background, the young man unloaded his frustrations on Poe.

"If I wasn't out here working with this kid, he wouldn't have anyone who gave a flip about him," Poe says.

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When Detective J.M. Einhorn lost his 38-year-old wife to cancer two years ago, he also discovered a friend in Poe. "Jack was up at the hospital with me every day," Einhorn recalls. "He is not an outsider, he's part of the family."

"Policemen are skeptical of sharing their problems with anyone. But we feel comfortable talking to Jack. It doesn't matter if you're from a strong Christian background or not."

"He's more than a counselor. He's a friend."

After five years on the job, Poe has identified two major issues that confront every police officer: the trauma they see and the time spent away from their families.

"Police officers struggle to make sense out of the senselessness they see every day. It's hard to get Christian people to understand that when we talk about bad people, we're talking about people who will curse you, spit on you, shoot you," he says.

One officer Poe rode with recently expressed this frustration: "If somebody wants to kill an officer, they can do it. We've got all these rules. They don't have any rules."

Also, police work requires odd schedules and often second jobs to support a family. "How do you build a meaningful relationship with a spouse when you're never together?" Poe asks.

The divorce rate for police officers is higher than the national average. In fact, statistics indicate that rookie female officers have only a one in 800 chance of avoiding divorce, he reports.

"Police officers have to become cold and indifferent to handle their jobs," he explains. "The problem is when they go home and stay cold and indifferent."

Poe and his wife, Phyllis, take this message to officers at the earliest stage possible. He teaches several classes at the Oklahoma City police academy, and they jointly speak to every class at a meeting where spouses are invited.

If the rookie officer doesn't connect with Poe's message then, a second chance might happen when trauma strikes.

When an officer is involved in a shooting or other traumatic event, Poe finds a window of opportunity for ministry unlike any other time, he says. "There is a primetime -- from the incident to two weeks, maybe a month later -- when the officer is questioning his own mortality."

At that time, because Poe already has credibility, he can step in with a Christian witness.

"It's important that we understand that the church is not confined to four walls -- it's the world," he explains. "This is part of our mission field."

"We're going to reach America with the gospel by reaching people where they are."