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September 17, 1992

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TEXAS -- RTVC trustees affirm VISN-ACTS agreement.  
VIRGINIA -- Former employee loses count bid against Foreign Mission Board.  
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Keith Parks offered post with  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Baptist Press  
9/17/92

ATLANTA (BP)--R. Keith Parks has been offered the post of global missions coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Parks, who retires Oct. 31 as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, told Baptist Press he has made no decision on the offer from the CBF, a two-year-old organization of SBC moderates dissatisfied with the current conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"They have been in contact with me," Parks confirmed, "and so have other organizations, but I haven't felt free to enter into discussion with anyone until my job as FMB president is complete. I have not discussed details with any of the offers I've received."

Baptist Press attempted to contact John Jackson, a California pastor who serves as FMB trustee chairman, but Jackson was en route overseas and unavailable for comment.

The 84-member CBF coordinating council voted unanimously to endorse the job offer during its Sept. 10-12 meeting in Atlanta, according to a Sept. 15 report by Associated Baptist Press.

The offer initially was extended to Parks in February by the council's global missions ministry group, ABP reported. In a special March 19-20 FMB trustee meeting in Dallas, Parks announced he felt led of God to retire from the FMB, and he also cited "philosophical differences" over missions strategy with trustees.

Parks, a 38-year veteran of missions who turns 65 in October, has been FMB president since 1980. The board currently has some 3,900 missionaries in 126 countries and a current-year budget of \$183.6 million.

The CBF, meanwhile, has hired eight former FMB missionaries as its first "missioners" and, according to ABP, intends to hire six more by Jan. 1. The CBF has received \$4.5 million during the first eight months of 1992, equal to its income for all of 1991, CBF coordinator Cecil Sherman reported.

The CBF is on target, Sherman said, to meet its 1992 projected income of \$6.4 million to \$6.6 million. Contributions have been received from 680 churches this year, compared to 391 in 1991. These figures include an unspecified number of churches that sent designated gifts to the CBF from individual members and other churches that contributed directly from their budgets, according to ABP. The Southern Baptist Convention, meanwhile, counts 38,221 participating congregations.

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Sherman said he hopes the number of churches in the CBF count will increase to 1,000 by the end of the year and that 2,000 churches are needed to sustain the fellowship's programs. Sherman said he expects the number of churches to continue growing "for about two to three years, then not decline but level off," ABP reported.

Sherman was quoted by ABP as saying Parks "is very seriously considering" the CBF offer. "I think this organization would be greatly blessed if for three or four years he (Parks) could lay the foundation" for CBF missions efforts, Sherman said. "We need credibility and he brings credibility."

In other CBF news, retired FMB administrator Grayson Tennison has been hired as interim global missions coordinator; the coordinating council approved the position of administrative assistant/communications coordinator; and Ceita Bottorff of Austin, Texas, has been named networking coordinator and CBF representative for states west of the Mississippi River.

The council voted to change its 1993 general assembly site to Birmingham, Ala., to reduce anticipated higher costs in Atlanta. The council approved subsequent years' meeting sites of Greensboro, N.C., for 1994; Austin, Texas, 1995; Richmond, Va., 1996; Orlando, Fla., 1997; San Antonio, Texas, 1998; and Louisville, Ky., 1999.

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RTVC trustees affirm  
VISN-ACTS agreement

By Doug Dillard

Baptist Press  
9/17/92

FORT WORTH, TEXAS (BP)--Radio and Television Commission trustees expressed concerns about budgets and burgeoning opportunities but spent little time fretting about complaints regarding the shared-channel agreement between ACTS (the American Christian Television System) and VGI (Vision Group, Inc.) during their meeting Sept. 14-15 in Fort Worth, Texas.

In specific actions, the trustees:

-- adopted a \$9.2 million spending goal, \$700,000 under their current budget and far below the amount needed to meet exploding opportunities shared by RTVC President Jack Johnson.

-- affirmed a services agreement approved earlier by the commission's executive committee by which ACTS is scheduled Oct. 1 to begin sharing a satellite transponder with VISN, an ecumenical network composed of 54 faith groups.

-- heard plans for the formation of radio program fan clubs to promote 1994's "benchmark" anniversaries of three programs: "Country Crossroads" and "Powerline," which will be 25 years old, and "MasterControl," which will be 35.

-- welcomed eight new trustees in day-long orientation sessions which featured former RTVC trustee, Fred Roach.

-- resolved to discontinue ACTS "satellite fees" after Dec. 31, urging affiliates to apply those funds to local ACTS boards.

-- voted to spend up to \$500,000 for replacement equipment required to meet new programming needs.

-- received reports that the commission has operated within its budget, paid all its bills, increased its reserves and is running ahead of schedule in reducing its debt.

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Johnson's challenge to trustees Sept. 14 cited a survey by a St. Petersburg, Russia, television station which has broadcast commission programs to 110 million Russians since July. The survey showed 8.3 percent of the viewers in St. Petersburg watched "The Word of Life" -- the Russian version of "The Baptist Hour"; 70 percent of those who watched RTVC programs expressed a desire to watch them again; and 36 percent acknowledged that the programs "influenced their attitude about religion."

Johnson gratefully acknowledged the Foreign Mission Board's recent unanimous vote to cooperate in building follow-up systems for the Russian programming. He expressed hope the partnership can be "translated into professions of faith, Bible study groups and churches at a faster rate than has been dreamed possible."

Pledging continued cooperation to maximize resources of both agencies, Johnson noted offers of program time in other republics "which are waiting only on money for translation, dubbing and transfers."

Johnson believes the opportunity has a short time fuse. "If the door shuts next week, we'll be able to say we were there when we could be there," he said. Responding to such open doors has guided the RTVC to a growth in potential audience of from 20 million in 1990 to 265 million today.

He surprised trustees with a letter from a missionary in Kenya asking for selected RTVC programs to be translated and provided for both Kenya and Uganda. Like the added Russian opportunities, "these must wait on funds not yet in sight," Johnson said.

Johnson used a summary report from the commission's counseling services department to describe how the sometimes controversial VISN-ACTS decision is consistent with the agency's core mission.

"With almost 8,000 calls this year, 335 prayed to receive Christ, 376 rededicated their lives and 425 prayed for assurance of salvation," he reported. "Yet a telephone company study showed that our present system is handling only 13% of the attempted calls."

"The VISN-ACTS move will increase our potential viewing audience from 8.2 million to more than 21 million homes immediately on Oct. 1," he said. "When the potential audience is doubled, we are praying -- and expecting -- professions of faith to grow into the thousands. And that's what the Radio and Television Commission is all about," he said.

To prepare to meet the surge in responses expected when "a clear gospel message is extended into the massive markets of Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles," Johnson noted, "we are preparing a computerized call-forwarding system to break through the limitations of our present telephone counseling facility and multiply volunteers who can answer callers from their homes."

Trustees' network operations sub-committee, chaired by Billy Thomas, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lafayette, La., urged ACTS affiliates to try the new system before reaching a conclusion, noting that all existing agreements stay "as is" for the first two years and "any new local preemption plan after that requires mutual agreement by ACTS."

ACTS made cooperation a little easier when, meeting in session as the board of the ACTS Satellite Network, Inc., trustees passed a resolution ending ACTS' "satellite fees" -- the 10 cents per resident member paid by churches affiliated with local ACTS boards -- as of Dec. 31, 1992, urging local ACTS boards and affiliates to apply those funds to their own needs for equipment and improved programming.

To the commission's eight new trustees, Fred Roach, RTVC trustee during some of the commission's more difficult days, urged them to "accept the responsibility of trusteeship by striving to become a leader-servant and supporting the organization's goals."

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Roach is president of the Leadership Center of Baylor University Medical System in Dallas.

New RTVC trustees include: Nancy Berlin of Evergreen, Colo.; Toni Moore Clevenger of Pensacola, Fla.; Jack W. Dial of Huntington, W.Va.; Don Hulsey of Bradford, Pa.; Jack A. Marcom of Fort Washington, Md.; Ken Mitchell of Chester, N.J.; Harold Curtis Fry III, of Germantown, Tenn.; and Robert E. Parker of Hampton, Va.

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Former employee loses court bid  
against Foreign Mission Board

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press  
9/17/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A 53-year-old former employee failed to convince the Richmond Circuit Court that the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board wrongfully fired her last year.

The court ruled Sept. 16 that Beverly S. Pierce had not produced evidence of a legally binding contract that could have prevented the Foreign Mission Board from firing her. The ruling, on the third day of testimony, was issued after FMB attorney Lewis Booker asked the jury trial be dismissed.

Booker told the jury the trial was "a sad case of an employee of great ambition and some ability who had to have things her way." He said she refused to work under the board's administrative structure. Pierce's attorney, Wyatt B. Durette Jr., said it was an "unfortunate story ... and it didn't have to happen."

Durette said Pierce had suffered for years as the victim of a personality conflict with a colleague who later became her supervisor. Mission board officials could have reorganized her work unit to put her under a different supervisor but chose not to do so, he added.

Pierce's lawyers said board officials treated her and other employees as if they worked under contract. As evidence, Durette produced sworn statements by FMB officials saying they adhered to policy and considered themselves governed by it. But this evidence, along with other FMB documents Pierce's lawyers presented, is not enough to constitute an employment contract, Booker said.

Booker said that without a written, signed contract, state law in Virginia considers employment an "at-will" arrangement -- meaning no cause is needed for an employee to resign or the employer to dismiss him or her.

He told the court that if working policies became construed as just-cause contracts, every employer in Virginia would be affected. While the FMB might need policies to govern itself, it was going too far, he argued, to consider them legally binding. Further, Booker said Pierce's own testimony showed she decided she "could not and would not" work with her new supervisor -- in Virginia, a valid reason to fire an employee if one is needed.

Pierce's lawyers asked about a week before the trial to withdraw a claim of sex discrimination from the original suit filed in May 1991. In that claim Pierce alleged male employees received higher pay than she did for similar work at the FMB. She has until March if she chooses to file that as a separate claim.

Pierce faces a 30-day deadline if she decides to ask the Virginia Supreme Court to consider reversing the lower court's ruling. If the high court agrees, she will have until mid-December to file an appeal.

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Pierce was employed in 1977 and was promoted from a secretary to a manager in 1982. She became responsible for coordinating missionary involvement in World Mission Conferences, where church members in an area hear missionary speakers tell about their work. She was dismissed April 15, 1991.

Much of Pierce's original \$1 million suit, filed a month and a half after she was fired, was dismissed in a May Circuit Court ruling. Still, that ruling left open the question of whether two board policies cited by Pierce prevented the FMB from firing employees without proving good cause, an issue settled in the judge's Sept. 16 ruling.

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Her life is devoted to helping  
missionaries, people in need

By Annette Harper

Baptist Press  
9/17/92

MARIANNA, Fla. (BP)--The postman's curiosity peaked. Today a letter from Tanzania, yesterday Venezuela, the day before Spain. Week after week letters had arrived from the Far East, South America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and all parts of the United States. What was going on? Who was this woman?

Finally he had to ask, "Do you know all these people?"

No, Carolyn Majors does not know them all personally, but her mail comes in response to one of her loving ministries -- writing to missionaries.

Every day -- EVERY day -- Carolyn writes to at least one on the foreign missionary birthday list to let them know she and her group of Girls in Action at First Baptist Church in Marianna are praying for them. She asks if there are special needs they can help fill and offers them a home for a night or two if they ever are passing through the Marianna area. Then they follow up by providing needed items.

The Majors' home is open always for the passing missionary, and every day since November 1990 her letters have carried encouragement and blessing to missionaries around the world.

Carolyn grew up in Marianna where GA's opened her eyes to the world and its needs.

Growing older, she sensed her life was to be involved in missions, so she prepared by becoming a registered nurse, training at Samford University's Ida B. Moffatt School of Nursing (formerly Birmingham Baptist Hospital).

Although accepted into the journeyman program of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Carolyn's plans changed when she met a young Army officer, Mike Majors, who became her husband. Her mission field then became the wives of foreign military men training in the United States.

Literacy classes on base and off allowed her to share not only her knowledge of English but also her love for Christ. Assignments took them many places in this country and even to Italy, where she worked with missionaries there.

But back in Marianna now, Carolyn still is focusing her life on helping others. Wife and mother of a high school senior and college junior, she is active in almost every phase of her church and contributes to the community. She is GA director at First Baptist for 60-70 young girls, frequently opening her home for their parties, studies and other activities.

Her husband, Mike, a deacon and Baptist Men president, shares her love for missions and ministry. He also heads up the Jackson County Association for Retarded Citizens and is active in civic organizations.

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Carolyn and Mike frequently take in people in need, especially missionaries. But she has been active in prison ministries as well, befriending families of inmates.

The past two summers, Carolyn has coordinated two-week visits for three children from Pennsylvania whose mother is in the Federal Correctional Institution in Marianna. Not only is their Lebanese mother now a believer in Christ, her children also have experienced the warm love of Christian homes and church through Carolyn's efforts.

Women transplanted to Marianna from Venezuela, Vietnam and Korea have found friendship and help with shopping, adjusting to a new culture, learning English or getting a driver's license because of Carolyn.

A friend is having surgery? Carolyn quietly appears, comforting patient and family with her medical skills and knowledge.

A child is ill? Carolyn arrives to relieve the exhausted mother.

A senior citizen needs companionship? Someone is moving? A neighbor's father dies? Yes, Carolyn is there.

An attractive woman with short graying hair, caring eyes and a ready smile, she does not seek the spotlight, but focuses it on others.

Amazingly, she never is rushed. Her quiet spirit calms and encourages, bringing hope and comfort. There always is time for the one with a need. Without any fanfare, she just shows up, sensing the right thing to do or say.

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Harper, a Marianna, Fla., resident, is a former Southern Baptist missionary in west Africa.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Gary Jones declines post after split Georgia vote," dated 9-16, please correct the name in the 18th paragraph to Rodger Whorton, not Roger Horton, and change the second sentence in the last paragraph to: James Griffin, retiring executive director-treasurer, will continue in the post until a successor is named.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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