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August 11, 1995

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WASHINGTON--'Roe' professes faith in Christ, renounces abortion rights role.

GEORGIA--Southern Baptists' alternative to abortion helps the hurting.

ALASKA--Alaskans hold 50th convention, elect Cloyd Sullins as executive.

TEXAS--Children grow up in cult of violence, says therapist.

TEXAS--Negotiations at impasse between ACTS, Faith and Values channel.

NEW MEXICO--Deacons' wives encouraged to have a ministry as well.

'Roe' professes faith in Christ,
renounces abortion rights role

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
8/11/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--The woman whose unwanted pregnancy led to the legalization of abortion in the United States has made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and renounced her role in the abortion rights movement.

Norma McCorvey, known as "Jane Roe" in the controversial Roe v. Wade case, was baptized Aug. 8 in the swimming pool of a Dallas area home. She says she placed her faith in Christ at a July worship service at Hillcrest Christian Church in Dallas.

Flip Benham, director of Dallas-based Operation Rescue National, baptized McCorvey at her request. Her baptism by Benham, an ordained Free Will Methodist minister, came only four months after Operational Rescue National moved its offices next door to the Dallas abortion clinic at which McCorvey worked. She resigned as marketing director of the clinic, A Choice for Women, Aug. 7, according to an ABC news report.

Claiming to be a victim of rape, McCorvey challenged the state of Texas' anti-abortion law, resulting in the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. In its opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state laws against abortion and ruled there was a constitutional right for a woman to choose to have an abortion. McCorvey later said she had not been raped.

While she expressed regret about her role in the legalization of abortion, her specific position seemed unclear.

In an Aug. 10 report, ABC News reported she believes women in the first trimester of pregnancy should have the right to choose abortion in at least some instances. An Operation Rescue spokesman said when McCorvey is asked when first-trimester abortions should be allowed, she cites a threat to the life of the mother and fetal deformity.

"I think abortion is wrong," she told ABC. "I think what I did with Roe v. Wade was wrong. And I just have to take a pro-life position on choice."

She said in an Operation Rescue release, "I'll be serving' the Lord and helping women save their babies. I will hold a pro-life position for the rest of my life."

Also, McCorvey has had a lesbian relationship for 21 years with Connie Gonzalez, ABC reported. Her n wfound Operation Rescue friends have not asked McCorvey to "say goodbye" to Gonzalez, ABC said.

"My plan, my purpose is simply encourage Norma to keep her eyes fixed on Jesus, to follow hard after him," Benham told ABC News.

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"We rejoice at anyone's profession of faith in Christ," said Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, "and the pro-life position is consistent with the Christian faith and the Christian tradition. We have to give her some time to mature and grow in the Christian faith, and I hope that she is being disciplined.

"I would say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 6 that one of the evidences that her conversion is genuine would be that she eventually repents of and leaves the lesbian lifestyle. There will be fruit born from saving faith."

McCorvey is seeking Christian advice, spending time reading her Bible and in prayer, said Gary McCullough, an O.R. spokesman. "She did not change her position on anything so much," he said. "She's changed who she's going to serve in this world."

McCorvey attended Hillcrest Christian Church at the invitation of the 7-year-old daughter of Ronda Mackey, office manager of O.R. National, which also operates a crisis pregnancy center, according to an O.R. release. McCorvey, who said she accepted Christ the first time she attended the church, plans to do volunteer work at the pregnancy center.

Abortion rights leaders expressed concern about McCorvey's decision but also downplayed its significance.

"I am concerned about the anti-choice movement exploiting this and exploiting her," said National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League President Kate Michelman to ABC.

Sarah Weddington, the lawyer who represented McCorvey in Roe v. Wade, said, "Luckily it doesn't matter what Norma McCorvey's doing today," according to The Washington Post.

McCorvey told ABC she felt mistreated by abortion rights leaders: "I felt like they only cared about what I could do for them, not what they could do for me."

She told ABC her Christian friends in O.R. "accept me as who I am, not what I've done or what I can do for them."

Though she was the central figure in the Roe case, McCorvey never had an abortion. She gave the baby up for adoption. In 1989, Gannett News Service reported McCorvey's daughter had been located and she was strongly pro-life, according to an adoption search consultant.

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Southern Baptists' alternative
to abortion helps the hurting

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
8/11/95

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--"We have a lot of hurting people sitting in our churches," said Sylvia Boothe, director of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board's nationwide crisis pregnancy center effort, Alternatives to Abortion Ministries.

"Most abortions, 98 percent, are for convenience," said Booth, and legally can occur during all three trimesters of pregnancy. But the feeling of convenience soon gives way to depression and despair.

Those among the hurting are not only women, but also men who fathered the babies, moms and dads who would have been grandparents and friends who suggested the abortion route.

They fear rejection if they reveal their secret, and they feel stress from concealing their secret.

"Part of our call as the church," Boothe said, "is to be approachable and to be instruments of God's healing and God's resources."

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Through Alternatives to Abortion Ministries, Boothe wants to "educate and equip Southern Baptists to become involved in long-term, positive ministry to those involved in crisis pregnancies." Boothe was director of a crisis pregnancy center in Oklahoma City eight years ago when the HMB asked her to coordinate the SBC's nationwide ministry.

"This is not just a 15-minute pregnancy test. It can be a lifetime commitment with those involved," from the women to the boyfriends, husbands and other affected family members.

Boothe, who has several women still in contact with her eight and nine years later, has helped through her position to provide training for the establishment of 31 centers. Currently there are Alternatives to Abortion Ministries-trained centers in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Maine, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia.

Although training and logistical help are provided by the HMB, each center is completely self-supporting and staffed by volunteers in the area. The ministry hopes to establish 10 centers every year.

Besides counseling on the alternatives to abortion -- either parenting or adoption -- most centers also provide post-abortion counseling.

For the women who choose to raise their children in a single-parent situation, most centers also help them learn how to finish their education, learn a trade "or whatever is needed to get their feet on the ground and get a new start in life," said Boothe, a former SBC Foreign Mission Board missionary to Thailand and France.

The Alternatives to Abortion Ministries headquarters is in Alpharetta, Ga., in the new HMB building and has a database with information on more than 5,000 pro-life ministry resources. The resources are not necessarily endorsed, and if Boothe should learn one of the ministry resources does not have standards matching the Alternatives to Abortion Ministries, she will delete the file.

To obtain information on starting a center, receive counseling or locate a pro-life ministry in a particular area, call the Alternatives to Abortion Ministries office at 1-800-962-0851.

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Alaskans hold 50th convention,
elect Cloyd Sullins as executive

Baptist Press
8/11/95

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--Messengers to the 50th annual meeting of the Alaska Baptist Convention elected Cloyd R. Sullins as the successor to retired Executive Director Bill G. Duncan.

"Making Missions Happen in Alaska" was the theme of the Aug. 8-9 sessions attended by 221 messengers at First Baptist Church, Anchorage. Begun in 1946, the convention now encompasses 62 churches, 26 missions and 16 preaching points.

Sullins, 59, will begin his new duties Sept. 15, coming from the post of director of evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. He was Alaska's director of church evangelism/church growth from 1991-94. He also worked with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as a SHARE facilitator in Denver and Indianapolis after more than 30 years as a pastor.

Sullins is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Cecilia, have four daughters.

Duncan, who retired March 31, was elected executive director of the Alaska convention in August 1988; he had served as interim executive director since February 1987.

In other convention business, messengers:

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-- re-elected to a second term as president Tim Clark, pastor of First Baptist Church, Palmer. Bill Brown, pastor of College Heights Baptist Church, Soldotna, was elected in a two-nominee race for first vice president, while Shirley Miebs, a member of Sunset Hills Baptist Church, Anchorage, was elected second vice president by acclamation.

-- adopted a 1996 Cooperative Program budget of \$597,164, up from \$574,204 for 1995. The convention retained the same 67-33-percent division of gifts for state Baptist causes and for Southern Baptist Convention national and international missions and ministry. The convention's overall budget for the coming year will be \$1,690,157. Cooperative Program giving, however, is down 12 percent from a year ago, W.C. Garland, the convention's interim executive director, reported to messengers, encouraging a renewed financial commitment by Alaska Baptists.

The 1996 convention will be a jubilee celebration Aug. 6-7 at First Baptist Church, Anchorage.

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Children grow up in cult
of violence, says therapist

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
8/11/95

WACO, Texas (BP)--American children are growing up not only in a culture of violence but in a "cult of violence," according to a Texas Baptist marital and family therapist.

"We have deified violence as a viable way of life, and we are getting down to the logical conclusion of that deification," said Rick Allen, a program director with the Waco (Texas) Center for Youth and instructor at McLennan Community College.

Allen, a member of Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco, with 20 years experience as a social worker, special education teacher and family therapist, led seminars on "Rearing Your Child in a Violent World" at the Texas Leadership Conference, Aug. 9-12 at Baylor University, Waco. The annual conference is sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union of Texas.

Citing a study by Harvard Medical School, Allen pointed to four characteristics of society that create violence in children: poverty, overcrowding, accessibility to guns and -- most important -- a "make my day" philosophy.

"You know, Hong Kong and Tokyo are more overcrowded than Texas, but they're not killing each other at the rate we are. Texas ranks high among all states in the number of children living in poverty, but the poverty in Bangladesh and Calcutta is greater, and they're not killing each other like we are. There are more guns in Somalia, but they've been using them on American soldiers, not on each other.

"The difference is this 'make my day' philosophy that says, 'I'm more important than you, and what I want I will get by any means possible.'"

One force that has contributed to the creation of this materialistic value system is the lack of support systems for child-rearing, Allen said. In 1940, one of four families in the United States had at least one extended family member living in their home, offering parents a built-in support system. Today, the ratio is one in 30.

"It used to be that if Mom and Dad were busy, kids could go talk to Granny or PaPa or go see Aunt Minnie. Today, if Mom and Dad aren't around, the kids spend time with the TV or video games," he said.

"They're not interacting with anybody. They're passive participants. They're not hearing the family stories from south Alabama or Sonora, Mexico. They're watching stories from a material culture that teaches violence not only is a viable alternative for solving problems, but actually is the solution of choice."

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While adult television programming from 7 to 9 p.m. averages 10 violent acts per hour, "kid vid" on Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons averages three times the incidences of violence. And passive television viewing influences behavior, Allen said.

"Kids who are exposed to violent images become immune to the emotional impact of violence," he said. "Children under the age of 6 who receive a daily dose of TV violence show a marked increase in fearfulness. They begin to see power and force as the solution to problems. And they become desensitized to violence."

Allen offered as suggestions to parents and church workers with children:

-- Avoid mixed messages.

"On the one hand, we say to our kids that the way to solve problems is non-violently. On the other hand, we teach them that good guys solve their problems violently. On the one hand, we say, 'Pray to Jesus.' On the other, we say, 'Make my day.' That does not compute. Those two don't go together."

-- Impart spiritual values.

"The culture of materialism says that the acquisition of material things, not spiritual things, is the measure of our worth. Children need a spiritual value system placed on them by their family, church and community."

-- Spend time with children.

"So-called 'quality time' in and of itself doesn't do the work. Children need that regular one-to-one contact."

-- Support organizations working to create a less violent culture.

At the local level, Allen said he has become part of an interfaith, interdisciplinary team focused on making Waco and McLennan County less violent. At the national level, he pointed to organizations such as the Center for Media and Values in Los Angeles and Peace Grows at Humanity House in Akron, Ohio.

-- Help children choose the path of non-violence.

Allen noted that one of Jesus' last teachings on earth was telling Simon Peter to put away his sword.

"Jesus picked up the soldier's ear that Peter whacked off, dusted it off and put it back. He said, 'I could call down a bazillion angels to protect me, but I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to escalate the violence. The violence stops here and now with me.'

"We need to teach our children that there's no need for violence. It's been hung up on the cross."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Please substitute the following story for one with the same headline in (BP), 8/9/95.

**Negotiations at impasse between
ACTS, Faith and Values channel By C.C. Risenhoover**

**Baptist Press
8/11/95**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Negotiations with the "Faith and Values" channel regarding ACTS programming have not worked out as hoped, Jack Johnson, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, said Aug. 8.

American Christian Television System is the cable television service operated by the RTVC.

"We think negotiations are at an impasse," Johnson said, "so we have canceled a special called meeting of the RTVC trustees that was scheduled for Aug. 11."

The trustee session was to approve or disapprove a possible agreement between ACTS, Liberty Media and the National Interfaith Cable Coalition (NICC) that would keep the SBC network on the "Faith and Values" channel.

NICC owns 51 percent of the channel and Liberty Media, a subsidiary of TCI (the nation's largest cable operator), owns 49 percent.

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Neither Johnson nor Portia Badham, director of media and public relations for the VISN Interfaith Satellite Network, would disclose the issues being negotiated. "The conversations do continue," Badham said, "and we hope to reach an agreement with ACTS." If, however, no agreement is reached, Badham said ACTS programming on the "Faith and Values" channel would continue through September.

Johnson, however, did comment about the negotiations without voicing specifics:

"I acknowledge a personal disappointment that the events of the last few days have convinced those of us at the RTVC that negotiations with the Faith and Values channel will not be fruitful. This conclusion is reached in part because of the failure of the Faith and Values channel management to negotiate in good faith with regard to the placement of ACTS programming in the fall schedule.

"It has been more than 10 months since ACTS first received notice that the 1992 agreement with VGI (Visn Group, Inc.) would be terminated on June 30, 1995. During this time ACTS has been held hostage, first by the tedious negotiations between NICC and Liberty Media, and then by the unwillingness of NICC and Liberty Media to negotiate in good faith on an agreement that would enable ACTS to at least maintain its equity position and participate as before on the channel. We cannot keep faith with our constituency and further delay pursuit of our available options.

"Because of the demonstrated lack of respect for ACTS in the proposed agreement, and the evident personal bias against ACTS programming, we have canceled the special called meeting of trustees."

Johnson said the RTVC would look at its options and apprise its constituency following the regularly scheduled trustees meeting Sept. 11. He said he was not sure how many options were available, but whatever determination was made would be made by the trustees.

"We won't be commenting on what should or should not be done," he said. "Whatever decision is made will be made by our trustees, then released to the public."

In the spring of 1992, ACTS was facing expiration of its transponder contract a year later. Prices were escalating and choices were diminishing. Cost for one of the few remaining transponders would have increased the cost of operating ACTS by almost \$2 million a year beginning in the spring of 1993.

While the RTVC staff was searching for a solution to the problem, it was approached by an executive representing VGI, the operating and affiliate relations company for the VISN network. The intent was to create a program service that could reach most of the United States with faith and family programs.

A "shared channel" agreement was reached. ACTS would provide eight hours of programming daily. Cost of the transponder and uplinking (transmitting the signal from earth to satellite) would be borne by VGI. This saved the RTVC \$1.7 million annually.

Transmission on the VGI transponder began Oct. 1, 1992. The revised channel operated as VISN/ACTS at first, but the name was later changed to "Faith and Values" channel. ACTS and VISN acted as separate entities. At no time was there a merger, said RTVC officials.

The agreement between ACTS and VGI provided for either party to exit the agreement June 30, 1995, provided advance notification was given. This particular date was set because an agreement between VGI and VISN had a similar provision.

Since VGI was bearing the cost of the transponder and uplink, the exit clause was its safety valve if the channel failed to reach a break-even position.

VGI gave notice in late 1994 that it planned to terminate the agreement at the end of June 1995. Negotiations between VGI, VISN and Liberty Media resulted in a new agreement to alter the direction of the channel with a greater emphasis on family programming and to continue as the "Faith and Values" channel. After the agreement was signed, the entities involved requested ACTS to join the channel with programming aimed toward the evangelical audience.

**Deacons' wives encouraged
to have a ministry as well**

By Linda Lawson

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--True or false?

-- The deacon's wife is to see to it that her husband and children are perfect.

-- The worst thing about being a deacon's wife is having your children play with the preacher's kids.

-- The greatest benefit of being a deacon's wife is being able to tell the deacons what to tell the pastor.

Most wives of deacons attending Barbara Sheffield's training sessions knew the above three statements on a class quiz were false. What they and other deacons' wives don't know is what the church expects of them.

"They may not have been talked with before their husbands were ordained," said Sheffield who led conferences for deacons wives during the Aug. 5-11 Bible preaching-church growth leadership conference. Also, expectations may vary from church to church.

"Wives really want to do what the church wants them to do," she noted.

Sheffield, a middle school computer skills teacher and wife of Bob Sheffield, deacon ministry consultant at the Baptist Sunday School Board, has been leading deacons' wives conferences for eight years. She also is the author of two chapters in the Convention Press book, "Help! I'm a Deacon's Wife."

Ideally, she said churches should include wives in the deacon selection process. "This is especially true with the shift from the concept of deacons as a management board for the church to deacons as ministers."

The primary role of a deacon's wife is "to support him and to be a partner with him in ministry," Sheffield said. "As a couple, many times they can minister more effectively. But the wife also needs a strong sense of who she is so she can minister through her own uniqueness."

The greatest pressure faced by deacons wives is the time needed to be effective ministers, Sheffield said.

"Usually they and their husbands are the busiest people in the church. It becomes a matter of balancing the needs of family and other issues," she said.

On the positive side, Sheffield said deacons' wives tell her the most rewarding thing about their role is the "special joy in sharing in ministry, doing what they feel the Lord wants them to do."

Using 1 Timothy 3:11, Sheffield identified four characteristics of an effective deacon's wife: 1) worthy of respect and serious about the Lord's work; 2) careful not to gossip; 3) self-controlled; 4) trustworthy and reliable.

"To me it's a very high honor for someone to say you're dependable," she said.

In ministering to people in need, Sheffield said deacons' wives should not tell others they understand their problem.

"Don't assume your experience will help someone else," she warned. "Don't ever say, 'I know how you feel.'"

Also, "we need to be less in tune with what we need to do for someone else than on what they need for us to do," Sheffield said. "Too often we minister out of our own needs."

When in doubt, she urged, minister. Even in the best of circumstances, people fall through the cracks and fail to receive ministry they need.

"There's no such thing as too much care," Sheffield said.

More information about training for deacons' wives is available from associations, state conventions and the BSSB pastor-staff leadership department.

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