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Charles Stanley, wife  
seek legal separation

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Charles Stanley, one of Southern Baptists' best known pastors, told his Atlanta congregation July 4 that he and his wife are separating.

"Last week Anna filed an action against me and it appears that a separation is now unavoidable, which I deeply regret," Stanley told members of First Baptist Church in Atlanta during the Sunday morning worship service. "I am committed to reconciliation. I am asking you to pray that God would heal our marriage."

Anna Stanley filed for divorce under Georgia's no-fault divorce provision in late June. But the lawsuit was later amended by the couple's mutual agreement to seek a legal separation, according to a church spokesman. The couple has been married 38 years.

In an apparent attempt to conceal their identity, the suit filed in Cobb County's courthouse omitted the Stanleys' names and listed the couple's initials only. The unusual filing prompted courthouse speculation about the identity of the mystery couple, A.S. and C.S.

"I never heard tell of it," Superior Court Judge Robert Flournoy, who was assigned the case, told the Marietta (Ga.) Daily Journal after the suit was filed. "When they come to court ... I'll certainly ask them their names. I'm not going through a trial saying 'Mr. S.' and 'Mrs. S.'"

The Stanleys are scheduled for a hearing July 12.

Although the three lawyers representing Anna Stanley initially declined to identify the parties, one of the attorneys, Penn Nicholson, told the Marietta newspaper: "It won't remain a mystery forever. You can't finalize a divorce without identifying yourself."

Stanley resolved the mystery by telling his congregation about the lawsuit July 4.

In his message to church members, Stanley noted many of them also had encountered marriage difficulties. "Over the past 23 years I have walked with you through your heartaches and griefs. Now I am asking you to walk with us through ours."

Stanley, 60, is considered one of the most popular preachers in

America because of the church's extensive television ministry. He has been pastor of the 13,000-member church since 1970 and was president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1983 and 1984.

Church officials indicated July 7 that Stanley intends to continue as pastor of the church, one of the largest in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"This congregation deeply loves Dr. and Mrs. Stanley and we will support them fully," said deacon chairman Boyd Wages in a statement released by the church. "We are trusting God that this is a temporary separation and that the marriage will be reconciled."

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-- By Greg Warner

FMB reinstates Warrington  
but not to same position

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Jerry Rankin, new president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, reinstated FMB administrator Tom Warrington -- though not to his previous position -- and apologized for the way the 13-year employee was fired June 23.

Warrington, associate area director for Europe, was fired by Area Director John Floyd nine days after Rankin was elected president. Floyd, who joined the FMB in February, said at the time that the move was part of a restructuring of the Europe staff and that the position required someone with "different strengths than Tom." Warrington was told he could apply for another position with the FMB.

Rankin said in a July 2 statement that he supported Floyd's decision to name a new associate director. "But I had no intention to terminate J. Thomas Warrington from the board, merely to transfer him internally."

Rankin did not label Warrington's dismissal a mistake or blame Floyd for mishandling the matter. But he said, "I and other administrators didn't spend enough time making certain everyone had communicated properly."

Rankin took responsibility for the episode and said he apologized to Warrington and the FMB staff.

"We all have learned a painful lesson that time must be taken, especially in such sensitive matters as personnel decisions, to make sure that proper communication occurs," he said. "Steps are being taken to make sure this type of incident does not happen again."

Rankin said he promised Warrington another position when he and Floyd met with Warrington July 1.

Warrington said he appreciated Rankin's "gracious" response. Asked if he will stay with the FMB, Warrington added, "I am not in an emotional state to make a decision." He told Associated Baptist Press July 6 that he asked for, and was granted, time to consider his options.

At his firing, Warrington was granted one week of administrative leave, which was to be followed by a three-month severance period with pay. In reinstating him a week later, Rankin said Warrington "is still an employee of the Foreign Mission Board, with full pay and benefits. He is currently on administrative leave to allow time for him to consider options being offered."

Warrington was the highest-ranking Europe administrator to remain at the FMB after a staff showdown in 1992. Keith Parker, Floyd's predecessor,

and his supervisor, former area vice president Isam Ballenger, resigned to protest trustee-initiated changes in FMB policy in Europe -- changes they said indicated the FMB's conservative trustees were trying to impose their brand of theological orthodoxy on European Baptists.

But Floyd, a conservative, said in June that Warrington's dismissal was routine and unrelated to the earlier upheaval. After Warrington's reinstatement, Floyd was traveling in Europe and unavailable for comment.

Rankin's apology came in a press statement released by the FMB July 2.

"I deeply regret the pain and suffering this has caused Tom and his family," Rankin wrote. "He is an experienced, valued employee of the highest character and reputation. He has gifts we need in our organization. He has been faithful to the board in difficult times and deserves our respect and appreciation."

Warrington praised Rankin's actions, adding, "I think Jerry is trying to bring some degree of reconciliation.... I am appreciative of Jerry's sensitivity and I pray the Lord will give me guidance."

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-- By Greg Warner

Baptist judge in Illinois  
has a faith to sustain him

By Ferrell Foster

METROPOLIS, Ill. (ABP) -- The teenager wore nice clothes and sported a short haircut. It was hard to imagine he had a "severe substance-abuse problem" and had admitted to various crimes.

He sat at a metal table, not smiling, later crying. A public defender sat by his side, and they faced another metal table occupied by the state's attorney.

The question before the court was what to do next with the 16-year-old. The boy admitted he needed help, but he wanted to stay at home with his mother (who has a drinking problem) and receive out-patient treatment for his substance abuse problem.

The state's attorney argued that the youth should be sent to a residential-care facility in another city because the youth recently had broken terms of his probation.

The decision rested with one man, Terry Foster, judge in the First Circuit Court of Illinois. And he decided the boy should be placed in a residential-care facility.

In announcing his decision, Foster spoke in a caring, fatherly tone to a boy who had testified he didn't have a normal father-son relationship with his dad, who is an alcoholic.

"I don't think there's anybody in this room that doesn't care about you," Judge Foster told the youth. He spoke of the problems that life brings and of each person's responsibility to deal with them.

Then, Foster said, "My back's against the wall." If the boy doesn't work through his problems, the judge said, confinement by the Department of Corrections is the next step. "We're running out of alternatives," he warned.

When Foster had finished, the boy responded, "Thank you, sir."

Only time will tell what happens with the youth. But for Judge Foster, there was no time to wonder. It was on to the next case during a day filled

with the business of justice.

Foster, 44, has been a judge since 1982. He was appointed an associate circuit judge then, and in 1988 he was elected as one of 14 resident judges in the First Circuit, which includes the nine southern-most counties in Illinois.

He brings his legal training and experiences to the bench each day, but he also brings himself, a man shaped by a childhood in which he learned compassion and by an adulthood that has taught him spiritual maturity.

Foster is a member of First Baptist Church in Metropolis, Ill. He's a deacon, Sunday school teacher and choir member. He also has served Illinois Baptists on several committees.

He told the teenager about responsibilities, and that is a subject with which Foster is familiar.

"It's a job with a lot of responsibility," Foster said of his judgeship. "These decisions are affecting people's lives, sometimes for years and years."

Shortly after the teenager had his day in court, a deputy sheriff escorted two men into the courtroom. They wore the orange coveralls of the Massac County Detention Center. Their handcuffs clattered as the men walked. They had a tougher, rougher look about them.

But when they, like all the others that morning, took their turn sitting at the defendant's table before Judge Foster, they assumed the body language of the meek -- slumping shoulders, heads lower than normal. And when they spoke, their tone was one of respect.

Behind the bench, Judge Foster seems no different than he does at home or at church, save for the black robe. But in the courtroom, he reigns with an authority supported by law.

Foster presides over all kinds of cases, "from small claims and traffic tickets to murder cases," he said. Some require jury trials, but in the vast majority the decision rests solely with the judge.

"I have to figure out what's fact and what's not, what's true and what's not," he stated. One of the hardest things is to figure out who is telling the truth, he said. "Some people are convincing liars.... Sometimes you have to tell people you just don't believe them."

But the judge is not cynical about the people who come before the court. He is determined to see that each one gets fair and impartial treatment.

"To the judge it's not who wins and loses but have you made the right decision... and in the right way," he said. The "right way" involves being attentive and concerned, he said.

How does Foster's faith relate to his work?

He doesn't see himself as a Christian judge. Rather, he sees himself as a Christian who is a judge. "I don't stop and think, 'I'm a Christian judge so I ought to do this or that.'"

"My prayer life, my Bible study and my church worship are what prepare me," Judge Foster said. And, as a result, "when I get squeezed ... God is going to show."

"As Christians we're taught that 'God is no respecter of persons,'" he said, and in the court that takes on special significance. "The color of your skin or the size of your pocketbook or your position in society should have no affect on your standing before the court. I try to be as fair and impartial to every person in my courtroom as I possibly can."

Foster also believes his faith has influenced his ability to deal with the problems and responsibilities. "I don't feel stress that much," he stated. "One of the great things about being a Christian is the peace and the joy you have knowing that the Lord is in control."

"If I weren't a Christian I think I still would have been a caring and concerned person because that's the way I was brought up, but I think I would have a lot more stressful life."

Foster believes God has led him to where he is now, both personally and professionally. He accepted Christ as a 13-year-old boy, but afterward his faith fluttered on the periphery of his life, more an avoidance of hell than a commitment to growth in Christ.

He went into law and married his wife, Tamia, because he wanted to, not because he felt led by God. But, in retrospect, he said he can see God's hand at work in those decisions even though he wasn't aware of it at the time.

"I do appreciate what God has done for me," the judge stated. "I feel that he's got me to where I am now."

Foster now walks the same streets that he walked as a boy growing up in Metropolis, a town of 7,200 people in a county of 15,000. He is the only judge there. But his friends still call him Terry when he's away from the courtroom.

"They respect the position, but I believe they also like to feel the person holding that position is someone they can talk to and relate to," Foster said.

And that is the kind of person he wants to be.

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Baptist youth teach life skills  
to kids from housing projects

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- With "Lean On Me" as their theme, 30 youth from Glenview Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, taught teamwork, self-esteem and Christian values to 150 middle-school children from low-income Dallas housing projects during a five-day camp in East Texas.

Glenview Church is predominantly white. Most of the campers were African-Americans.

Glenview Church worked with the Dallas Housing Authority and Drug Prevention Resources, Inc., in sponsoring the camp June 28-July 2. Members of the church's youth choir worked as counselors during the camp, and they performed an original musical that creatively presented the camp themes of leadership, teamwork and positive attitudes.

Adult sponsors were drawn from Glenview Church and Paul Quinn College -- a predominantly African-American school in Dallas -- as well as VISTA workers with the Dallas Housing Authority.

Three other predominantly white churches in the Dallas area contributed to the project. Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving purchased Bibles to distribute to every camper. Richardson Heights Baptist Church in Richardson provided transportation to and from the camp. And Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas provided funding to help sponsor the middle-school youngsters.

The young people from 14 low-income housing projects were selected by the Dallas Housing Authority on the basis of their perceived leadership potential.

"We targeted the sixth, seventh and eighth graders because they are at the most acute age with the greatest possibility to be trained as leaders," said Phil Watson, a Southern Baptist minister who works as executive

director of Drug Prevention Resources, Inc.

Watson's organization secured a grant to provide partial funding for the camp, and it solicited additional support from churches, individuals and businesses throughout the state.

Nearly half of the youngsters at the camp had spent their entire lives within a 20-block area of south Dallas, according to Richard Henderson, minister of music at Glenview Baptist.

"None of these kids had ever been to camp before," Henderson said. "When they got off the bus Monday, their eyes were big as saucers as they looked around. Some of them were saying, 'Wow, look at all the trees.' They had never seen anything like it."

The middle-school youth randomly were divided into 13 "family groups," and they were required to be with them at all times during the camp.

In their family groups, the youngsters joined in games designed to enhance self-esteem, spark creativity and foster teamwork. Points were awarded not only for achievement, but also for good sportsmanship, teamwork and demonstrations of positive attitude. Other activities carried a Christian message.

In preparation for the camp, the Glenview youth took 12 hours of cultural sensitivity training through Paul Quinn College.

"I've seen another side of our kids," Henderson said. "They are the leadership here, and they've taken it very seriously. They have grown up a lot."

Ryan McCain of Glenview Church, a high-school senior, admitted it felt "kind of weird" being a sponsor instead of a camper, but he said relating to the campers presented a valuable challenge.

"Some have walls built around them, and they don't want to let anybody in," McCain said. "Really, though, they are just wanting attention. They want somebody to love them instead of fight them."

"They're just kids like us, when you get down to it. They've just grown up in different circumstances than we have."

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