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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
 LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
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 Nashville, Tennessee

March on Washington  
commemorates dream

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Calling for jobs, justice and peace, approximately 75,000 people gathered Aug. 28 at the Lincoln Memorial to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the historic March on Washington that was a turning point in the civil-rights movement of the 1960s.

The diverse crowd retraced the steps that Martin Luther King Jr. took in 1963 prior to delivering his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In that speech, the Baptist minister and civil-rights leader said he had a dream that America would one day be a nation where people "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Three decades later, civil-rights activists said that King's dream is alive but it has not been fully realized. While sanctioned segregation may have been eradicated, economic and social injustice abounds, speakers said.

Among the more than 50 speakers was King's widow, Coretta Scott King, a founder of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change in Atlanta. America has made progress in civil rights, she said, but there is still too much racial bigotry, poverty, homelessness, joblessness, hunger and violence.

She encouraged the crowd to return to their communities with her husband's dream "burning in their hearts," using that passion to bring about non-violent social change.

In his 1963 speech, King said that America had defaulted on its promissory notes -- the Constitution and Declaration of Independence -- that guaranteed every American "the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"Instead of honoring the sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check: a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds,'" he said.

Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, told the 1993 audience the commemorative march honors the past, defines the present and determines the future of the civil-rights movement.

Thirty years ago the African-Americans who marched could not check into a Hyatt or Hilton, he said. Today, they can check in, but too many of them

don't have the financial resources to check out, he said.

"Poverty still stalks our children."

Lowery challenged Americans to face the future with "guts not guns" and to "turn to each other, not on each other."

Benjamin Chavis, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the marchers were serving notice that the civil-rights movement is alive and well.

Urging participants to fight all forms of injustice, Chavis said he wants more than mere freedom; he seeks economic democracy or a fair share of the economy for African-Americans.

The day before the march, sponsors held a series of workshops on various legislative issues, such as a jobs-stimulus package, educational funding, religious freedom, gun control, health care and violence.

Brent Walker, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, led a workshop on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Pending in the U.S. Senate, the bill would restore a high level of protection for religious practice that the nation's high court virtually abandoned in 1990.

Another Baptist group, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, was visible at march-related activities.

The peace organization, one of the march's co-conveners, organized a prayer vigil at the National Rifle Association to call attention to gun violence.

The peace fellowship targeted the NRA because they view it as "the chief bottleneck for any effective gun control legislation," said Ken Sehested, BPFNA executive director.

Sehested said about 70 people turned out for the public demonstration. The group was lively, singing songs and displaying signs. Some of the larger march's organizers, such as Lowery, came and spoke to the group, Sehested added.

While vigil supporters were unable to meet with NRA officials, Sehested displayed a letter from an NRA official to illustrate the vigil "may have some follow up impact."

Sehested also felt good about the March on Washington festivities -- even though the temperature reached 95 degrees.

He said he was aware the march was under "indictment" because it didn't pull 250,000 -- the number at the original march. But that's a bogus comparison, he said. It was unrealistic to expect a march like this to draw the same crowd, he said. An "I Have a Dream" speech comes along once a generation or millennium, he said.

He also would refute the criticism that the organizers in 1993 were not as focused as those in 1963. Thirty years ago it was easier to find a handle for civil rights, he said. Although those "raw forms of bigotry," such as segregation, have been overthrown, the issues confronting civil-rights activists today are more complex and are harder to define, he said.

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Returning Congress  
faces full agenda

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Congress will grapple with several issues of interest to Baptists when it returns from August recess.

The U.S. Senate reconvenes Sept. 7 and has agreed to resume consideration of the nomination of Joycelyn Elders for U.S. Surgeon General. Elders, the former director of the Arkansas Department of Health,

has drawn fire from several groups on the Religious Right because of her outspoken style on issues such as teenage pregnancy and abortion.

Among Elders' most controversial statements, to which anti-abortion activists objected, was her comment that they should "get over their love affair with the fetus."

During confirmation hearings, Elders said her statements should be taken in context and that she often speaks boldly to get people's attention. She said she would like to eradicate teenage pregnancy, making abortion a mute issue.

The controversy surrounding her nomination has delayed Senate action, but the chamber has agreed to limit debate to eight hours on Sept. 7 after which it is scheduled to vote.

The Senate also adjourned for the month-long break without taking action on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (S. 578). The bill, which has been unanimously approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, would restore a high level of protection virtually abandoned by the nation's high court in 1990.

The measure would restore the "compelling interest" test the court formerly required government to meet before it could restrict religious practice. A compelling interest would include the health or welfare of society. Now, government can restrict religious freedom as long as that restriction does not target religion alone.

A coalition of 68 religious and civil-liberties groups, chaired by the Baptist Joint Committee, backs the bill. The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission also is a coalition member.

Oliver Thomas, BJC general counsel, said he expects the bill to be on a fast track when the Senate returns. Perhaps it could come to the floor within the first two weeks of September, he said.

The House returns to Washington Sept. 8 and is scheduled to consider several motions for bills to go to Senate-House conference. Among them is the Treasury, Postal Service and General Government Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2403). The bill includes a provision affecting non-profit postal rates, which affect most Baptist newspapers and some other church-related mail.

At best, non-profit mailers probably face a 12 percent increase -- about 2 percent annually for six years -- for second-class non-profit publications, and a 23 percent hike -- about 4 percent each year -- for third-class publications. The increase for this year would be effective Oct. 1.

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-- By Pam Parry

Diverse pastors promoting  
foreign missions offering

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Three pastors drawn from the spectrum of theological views in the Southern Baptist Convention are heading up an effort to raise more money for the denomination's foreign missions effort.

In a late August letter, John Bisagno of First Baptist Church in Houston, Frank Pollard of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., and Dan Yearly of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church urged 100 pastors to increase their churches' gifts to the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions, collected in Southern Baptist congregations during the Christmas season.

Contributions to the offering -- which is expected to provide about 45

percent of the SBC Foreign Mission Board's \$185 million 1994 budget -- have leveled off during the last five years, hovering in the \$80 million range. That, combined with a decline in gifts to the Cooperative Program, the denomination's primary financial source, have led to cuts in capital investment overseas and a downsizing last May in the board's home office that eliminated 37 jobs.

FMB trustees hope gifts to this year's \$85 million offering will be boosted by appeals from the three widely-known pastors.

Although all three are generally viewed as conservative theologically, each has taken a different stance in the turmoil accompanying the recent shift to the right in the SBC.

Bisagno has supported the conservative movement and has close ties with its leaders.

Yeary has maintained a low profile in the controversy, but he did speak at the 1990 meeting that led to the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderates that disagrees with the SBC's new conservative emphasis. He also aided the Fellowship's Hurricane Andrew relief operation while pastor of a Miami church.

Pollard is often described as "non-aligned."

The three are representative of all Southern Baptists, said Don Sewell, the FMB's director of special projects, who is providing staff support for the effort.

The 100 pastors who received letters are each being asked to contact 30 other pastors. "That would bring to about 3,000 -- or one-twelfth of the total pastors in the SBC -- the number of those who are aggressively promoting the offering," said Sewell.

The FMB is providing funds for postage and promotional materials, he added. FMB trustees recently increased by \$200,000 the funds budgeted for Lottie Moon promotion, bringing the total amount to about \$500,000.

Gifts to the Lottie Moon offering have not reached their goal since 1981. Last year's \$84 million goal fell short by a little more than \$3 million, the second time in three years the offering had dropped from the year before.

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-- By Robert Dilday

Young's improper tax exemption  
on house will cost him \$60,000

HOUSTON (ABP) -- Ed Young, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has not paid property taxes on his Houston home since moving into it in 1979.

Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston and a prominent TV preacher, owes about \$60,000 in taxes on the \$600,000 home, which has been improperly listed as fully church-owned and therefore tax exempt.

The unpaid taxes may be the result of a mixup, however, and church officials say there was no intent to avoid paying legitimate taxes.

The church, which bought the home in 1979, has since been gradually transferring ownership of the property to Young as part of his housing allowance. He has been granted ownership to one-fifteenth of the property each year and now fully owns the house.

But Young's ownership has never appeared on property rolls, which until recently indicated the church owned the house. The discrepancy was

first reported by the Houston Chronicle Sept. 1.

Young will pay the taxes due back to 1984 -- an estimated \$60,000 -- said Lynn Carter, chairman of the church's deacons. Young declined to comment.

Prior to 1984, Second Baptist mistakenly paid property taxes in full on the property, even though the church could have filed for a tax exemption on most of it. When church officials discovered the mistake in 1983, they began listing the property as church-owned and tax-exempt. But Young's partial ownership was not noted, leading to the 10-year error.

Property-appraisal officials said the church should have disclosed Young's ownership, but church officials say property appraisers overlooked legal notices filed in 1985 that detailed Young's ownership.

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Stanley not resigning,  
church official says

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Reports that Charles Stanley would resign as pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta are apparently false.

Nolen Rollins, administrator of the 13,000-member church, said Sept. 2 there is no truth to the rumor. He said he had talked to Stanley twice that day and received no indication Stanley would resign.

"If that were true, I would be utterly, totally shocked," Rollins said. "In fact, Dr. Stanley talked to the church Sunday and explained why he is continuing as pastor."

On July 4 Stanley, one of America's best-known preachers, told his Atlanta congregation that he and Anna Stanley, his wife of 38 years, were separating but that he was seeking reconciliation. Since then, there has been speculation he would resign the pastorate he has held since 1970.

But, Rollins added Sept. 2, "We're more hopeful now that the marriage will be healed."

Stanley was president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1985 and 1986.

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-- By Greg Warner

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