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In this issue:

- Reconciliation impossible, Stanley's wife insists
- Addition
- Poll says 'born-again' voters lean toward Dole but uncertain
- Paige Patterson labels 'weak' states out of step with conservative SBC
- Questions could be clarified this fall at Southern Seminary
- Mantle's legacy now includes promoting organ donations
- Mantle welcomed chaplains in final days at Baylor hospital

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Reconciliation impossible, Stanley's wife insists

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Anna Stanley says there is no chance of reconciling her 40-year marriage to Charles Stanley, and the prominent pastor's reports of progress in the troubled relationship are a "charade."

Anna Stanley's first public statement since filing for divorce in 1993 was released Aug. 14, one day after Stanley agreed to relinquish his administrative duties at First Baptist Church of Atlanta in an attempt to quiet criticism that his marital woes disqualify him from the pastorate.

Anna Stanley intended for her prepared statement to be read at the Aug. 13 church meeting called to address Charles Stanley's leadership, but the letter was ruled out of order. In it she said the marital problems that prompted her to seek a legal separation and later a divorce remain unresolved.

She said her conversations with her husband "have convinced me there is little desire on his part to recognize or to rectify the difficulties that have been present in our marriage for 35 years."

"Long ago ... Charles in effect abandoned our marriage," she wrote. "He chose his priorities and I have not been one of them. ..."

"I would like to make it clear that the time for, and possibility of, reconciliation between Charles and me has passed," she continued.

Stanley, pastor of the 13,000-member church since 1972 and one of the best known preachers in the country, reportedly has refused to accept a legal separation, which Anna Stanley said would satisfy her and apparently allow him to remain at the helm of First Baptist and his far-flung "In Touch" TV ministry.

Anna Stanley filed for divorce in 1993, then soon changed the request to legal separation. In March she refiled for divorce.

"After two years of waiting on Charles to agree to a legal separation, I had only one recourse, to request a divorce," Anna Stanley said.

Many members of the church -- and Stanley himself -- say the Bible forbids a divorced person from serving as a pastor. But Stanley and his supporters contend the Bible and the church's teaching are unclear regarding legal separation.

During the four-hour emergency business meeting Sunday night, Aug. 13, Stanley told the congregation he will resign if the divorce becomes final.

Meanwhile, the church is conducting a study that will lead to a church policy regarding divorce and separation. A seven-man committee will handle administrative duties.

Throughout the two-year ordeal, Stanley, 62, has insisted he and his wife will reconcile.

"I have worked and waited two years hoping and praying my marriage would be healed," he told the congregation Aug. 13. Neither he nor Anna wants the relationship to end in divorce, he said. "We are trusting God to put it back together."

But Anna Stanley said she is "dismayed" at her husband's refusal "to accept the critical state of our marriage." She wrote: "Instead, he has made repeated announcements from the pulpit that progress was being made toward reconciliation, when in fact the very opposite was true. I do not choose to contribute to this charade."

Jim Dailey, a Stanley spokesman, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Aug. 14 that Stanley has not agreed to a separation because "that's not his goal. His goal is reconciliation. He loves his wife and has done everything he can to pursue healing."

Anna Stanley said she was making her feelings public at the request of church members. Some of those members tried to have her letter read to the congregation during the business meeting. But Jimmy Draper, who moderated the meeting at Stanley's request, said the content was too personal and ruled against reading it. His ruling was sustained by the congregation.

Draper is president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn., and, like Stanley, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In the statement, which was obtained by Associated Baptist Press, Anna Stanley also complained that a church committee named to promote reconciliation between the couple was stacked with supporters of her husband.

Though well-intentioned, she wrote, the committee "perhaps [was] blinded by its devotion to Charles" and later issued a report that took his side in the dispute.

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ADDITION: To incorporate Anna Stanley's response into the Aug. 14 ABP story "Charles Stanley gives up some duties...", please make the following additions:

After the 4th paragraph, add the following:

However, Anna Stanley contends "the time for, and possibility of, reconciliation between Charles and me has passed."

After the 17th paragraph, add the following:

In the letter, which was obtained by Associated Baptist Press Aug. 15, Anna Stanley said her conversations with her husband "have convinced me there is little desire on his part to recognize or to rectify the difficulties that have been present in our marriage for 35 years."

"Long ago ... Charles in effect abandoned our marriage," she wrote. "He chose his priorities and I have not been one of them. ... "

She said she is "dismayed" at her husband's refusal "to accept the critical state of our marriage." She wrote: "Instead, he has made repeated announcements from the pulpit that progress was being made toward reconciliation, when in fact the very opposite was true. I do not choose to contribute to this charade."

Poll says 'born-again' voters lean toward Dole but uncertain

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- Among Republican candidates for president, Bob Dole currently has the greatest support among conservative Christians, but that might not be enough to help him defeat Bill Clinton, the Democratic incumbent, according to pollster George Barna.

The Barna Research Group polled a representative national sample of American voters in July, asking who would "make the best president" if the election were held today.

The results show Clinton could win in a landslide against either Phil Gramm or Pete Wilson as his Republican opponent. A race between Clinton and Dole would be neck-and-neck, the poll found.

However, a significant number of voters -- 38 percent -- said they don't know who would make the best president if the election were held today.

All "born-again" Christians should not be cast as conservative Republicans, warned Barna. "While journalists and media professionals often describe born-again Christians as conservative, Republican and a solid voting bloc, it appears that all three of these descriptions are an inaccurate portrait of the born-again constituency.

"By a huge margin, born-again Christians are more likely to be conservative than to be liberal in their political and social views," he explained. "However, Christians are more likely to be middle-of-the-road in their views than to hold conservative views."

Forty-one percent of "born-again" adults identify themselves as Republicans, while 32 percent identify themselves as Democrats and 18 percent identify themselves as independents.

Further, only one out of every four "born-again" voters is a conservative Republican, Barna said. "The born-again population is substantially divided in character."

In addition to the 25 percent of this group classified as conservative Republicans, 20 percent are moderate Republicans, 13 percent are conservative Democrats, 17 percent are moderate Democrats, 11 percent are moderate independents, 8 percent are conservative independents and 6 percent are either liberals of any party affiliation or registered under another party.

"Born-again Christians come in all political shapes and sizes," Barna said. "Over the past decade, we have seen a fragmentation of the segment. Where Ronald Reagan unified the Christian body to a large extent, George Bush was not a strong enough leader or spiritual presence to maintain that unity."

The last three years "have brought about a sharpened division within the born-again community on political issues," he continued. "What we have today are three very distinct niches: the conservative Republicans, the moderate Democrats and unpredictable independents, who vote on the basis of a handful of issues rather than in response to party loyalties or relationships."

"There is not a single Christian coalition," Barna concluded, "but several that are forming today."

Paige Patterson labels 'weak' states out of step with conservative SBC

HOUSTON (ABP) -- Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia are four "weak" states that have not yet fallen into line with the Southern Baptist Convention's new conservative leadership, according to seminary president Paige Patterson.

Even in those states, however, "time is on the side" of conservatives as reforms instituted by national leaders trickle down to influence grass-roots participation in denominational affairs, he said.

Patterson, an architect of the SBC's conservative juggernaut, assessed the state of the SBC in an interview published in the July issue of *Texas Baptist*, a newspaper edited by conservative leader Walter Carpenter of Houston. Carpenter also is a trustee of the 15 million-member convention's Home Mission Board.

Baptists in states such as Oklahoma, Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, Florida and Georgia "realize better than most that their future is with the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board and the seminaries over and above what is going on in each particular state," Patterson said.

Those states are in contrast to others "that have not come to this realization," he continued. Asked by Carpenter if he was speaking primarily of Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, Patterson replied: "Those and Kentucky are our four weakest states."

Patterson, since 1992 the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., is credited -- along with Texas appeals-court judge Paul Pressler -- with launching the movement in 1979 that elected a string of conservative SBC presidents and steered the convention's agencies and institutions sharply to the right.

Today, "time is on the side of the SBC," even in the problem states, Patterson mused. The state conventions he described as "not in harmony with the SBC" are "primarily aging state conventions," he said.

In states such as Kentucky, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, the Baptist churches that are growing and influential "are not involved with the state convention, and they are committed to what's going on in the Southern Baptist Convention," Patterson said.

These state conventions face a situation they have "no opportunity of winning," he added. "Eventually they will have to decide whether they are going to decline perceptively or whether they want to be a part of the overall program and grow."

The four state conventions mentioned by Patterson sent a combined \$40.1 million to the SBC in 1993-94 through the Cooperative Program. That amounted to 28 percent of the total \$142 million the SBC received through the unified giving plan.

Yet moderate Baptists in those states have blocked several attempts to bring the state conventions in line with national conservative reforms.

In response to another question, Patterson blamed the historical influence of Southeastern Seminary for "liberal [Baptist] bureaucracies" in states like North Carolina and Virginia. "It's also a cause of the crippling of the churches," Patterson said.

The fact that many Mid-Atlantic churches do not conduct services on Sunday night is not in itself an indication of liberalism, Patterson said, but "it is sort of an indication for the lack of vitality in many of the churches on the East Coast. The seminary has contributed to that largely, and it is the reason why 80-82 percent of our churches are either plateaued or declining."

Three of the four states named by Patterson have an SBC seminary within their borders. Patterson predicted changes at the seminaries will reduce moderate influence at a grass-roots level.

The election of conservative leader Mark Coppenger as president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo, "will have a good effect on that part of the country," he predicted. Similarly, Albert Mohler's leadership at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., "will mean that they recover their evangelical emphasis there."

Also, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, under the leadership of conservative president Ken Hemphill, "will gradually have an effect on Texas," he said. Hemphill was elected last year, after trustees fired the previous president, Russell Dilday, over his moderate leanings.

Elsewhere in the question-and-answer interview, Patterson praised Mohler and declared that "the worst of the problems" at Southern Seminary are over. "Al Mohler has the brains of Erasmus and the courage of Luther," he said.

(Erasmus was a 16th-century Dutch scholar noted for his pioneer publication of the Greek New Testament. Martin Luther, a German, is regarded as founder of the Protestant Reformation.)

Among Patterson's other observations in the four-page interview:

-- Conservatives in Texas "could learn something from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," he said. "In Texas I would have a very strong conservative fellowship. I probably would not start a separate state convention at this time because time is on your side."

-- The SBC's embracing of the biblical inerrantist position should settle any debate on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality, Patterson said. "Once you agree the Scripture is the inerrant word of God, then your position on issues like these is settled. I have great difficulty on seeing how one could support pornography or the taking of innocent life through abortion."

-- Seminary professors should not be tenured, Patterson said. He noted he is the last faculty member at Southeastern to be granted tenure and that he "probably will renounce that tenure at some future point."

"What tenure has amounted to across the years has been in the final analysis a fortress to protect professors so they can peddle anything they want to peddle or be as incompetent as they happen to be and still be protected in their jobs. I view that as far more like socialism than capitalism. It is no accident that the remaining bastions of socialism in America are in the universities," Patterson said.

-30-

-- By Mark Wingfield and Bob Allen

Questions could be clarified this fall at Southern Seminary

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- After three months to cool off from a stormy spring semester, students are scheduled to return to classes at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Aug. 28. But the question for which no one has an answer -- not even seminary administrators -- is how many students will show up.

Enrollment at the Louisville, Ky., seminary has been dropping for several years. But even the most-optimistic seminary officials admit the student head count is likely to drop more significantly this fall.

The reasons cited for the anticipated decline relate mostly to the changing direction of the seminary under its new administration, which is steering the school in a more conservative direction and therefore changing the pool from which potential students are drawn.

Pivotal events of spring and summer accelerated this change: the firing of Diana Garland as dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work; trustee actions to strengthen the authority of the president and weaken the authority of the faculty; introduction of a new set of criteria for faculty hiring; 10 faculty members taking an early retirement option; a financial crunch that caused the seminary to cut nearly \$1 million from its budget; and the announcement that three of the seminary's accrediting agencies are planning to investigate the school.

Neither maintaining nor increasing enrollment has been a stated objective of the new administration. Rather, the focus of President Albert Mohler's leadership has been on tightening organizational and academic structures, as well as changing the seminary's identity within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Estimates of fall enrollment vary widely, but the total on-campus enrollment is projected by various campus sources to hit somewhere between 800 and 1,200. On-campus enrollment last fall was 1,450.

Total enrollment for the 1992-93 school year -- the last before Mohler became president -- was 2,858.

David Dockery, vice president for academic affairs, said he has an idea how enrollment will come out, but it's premature to voice that projection. The one thing he will say for sure: "Enrollment will be down from last fall."

Pre-registration of current students, held last spring, was about the same as the year before, Dockery said. But how many of those students actually will return remains to be seen.

A seminary document detailing projections of new student enrollment, obtained from a source other than Dockery's office, estimates a 24 percent decline in new students this fall. The only degree program projected to realize an increase is the master of divinity in missions, a new degree associated with the seminary's Billy Graham School.

No new students will be accepted into the Carver School of Church Social Work, pending a trustee study of the school's future. That report should be given at the October trustee meeting.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the Carver School's future -- and an exodus of social work faculty over the summer -- a full range of courses will be offered in the fall semester, according to Dockery and Janet Spressart, acting dean of the Carver School.

Spressart and Diana Garland are the only two remaining full-time Carver School professors out of six on faculty last spring. Their work will be supplemented by visiting professors and adjunct professors.

Overall, the seminary will enter the fall semester with 14 fewer faculty and administrative staff on board than last fall, Dockery said. This reduction in personnel expenses is the primary way the seminary has cut the mandated \$914,000 from its budget, Dockery and others said.

However, the faculty losses will not create staffing problems in any area of the seminary's academic program, Dockery said. "I think everything is very adequately covered, both by new people who have been added, the use of visiting faculty and by some capable adjuncts from the area."

Despite tense interactions between faculty and the president and trustees last spring, Dockery said he sees promise of hope for the fall.

"I think there's a hopefulness for a very positive fall that exists on campus," he said. "Even though numbers are down, there's a hopeful and optimistic attitude that we'll have a good fall."

Dockery specifically cited as hopeful several conversations during the summer between Mohler and the seminary's faculty committee.

John Hendrix, chairman of the faculty committee, confirmed his group met twice with Mohler and arranged two other meetings between Mohler and portions of the faculty.

These were "rather lengthy conversations," Hendrix said. "They were pretty direct, but not volatile by any means."

While the meetings perhaps helped further the conversation, there has been no major change of sentiment on the part of the faculty or the president, he said. "The main thing I can say about the summer is we're trying and he's trying."

Relations between the president and faculty will come under closer scrutiny in September or October, when three accrediting agencies will make a joint visit to the seminary campus. The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Council on Social Work Education all are scheduled to send representatives.

Their investigation reportedly will focus on Mohler's firing of Garland as Carver School dean, changes in faculty hiring and promotion policies and the general fallout of last spring's controversies.

All three accrediting agencies will report back to their full boards for ultimate consideration. Any sanctions resulting from the investigations could be announced as soon as October or as late as January.

-30-

Mantle's legacy now includes promoting organ donations

By Laura Horne

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle, 63, died Aug. 13 at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, nine weeks after receiving a liver transplant at the Texas Baptist hospital.

About 1,500 mourners, some wearing New York Yankee baseball caps, filled the sanctuary of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church in Dallas for Mantle's funeral Aug. 15. "Look at this gathering," said pastor William Bryan. "This is what it looks like to be loved by America and beyond." Mantle supported the church's ministry to runaways and homeless youth.

Bobby Richardson, Mantle's former teammate and now a lay minister, officiated at the service, and six other teammates served as pallbearers. Sportscaster Bob Costas, who delivered the eulogy, called the Yankee superstar "a fragile hero to whom we had an emotional attachment so strong and lasting that it defied logic."

Mantle was admitted to Baylor on May 28. On June 7, doctors announced that Mantle had liver cancer and Hepatitis C and he would not survive unless he received a transplant within the next few weeks.

On June 8, Mantle received a new liver. He was released from the hospital 20 days later and enjoyed a few weeks of peace before doctors discovered cancer had spread from his liver to so many organs it could not be stopped. He began chemotherapy treatments and was hospitalized again on Aug. 4, where he stayed until his death.

One third of the nearly 3,000 patients who have received donor organs or bone marrow transplants at Baylor were liver transplant recipients.

Critics maintained that Mantle received preferential treatment, since the average wait for a transplant organ is five months and Mantle waited one day. Others decried the fact that Mantle died so soon after the transplant and the organ could have been given to someone with a better chance of surviving longer.

But hospital officials insist that Mantle was simply the sickest one on the recipient list that matched the organ, and at the time tests did not show any signs of cancer that could hinder the transplant.

"The sorrow of it for him (Mantle) and maybe for all of us is that he was having a chance to revisit life, and it looked like he had a new beginning that could be another turn at bat," said Robert Duncan, chaplain coordinator in Baylor's pastoral care center and minister to liver and kidney transplant patients and their families.

"He was ready to go to bat for organ transplantation," Duncan said. "He was extremely grateful for the new shot at life."

Since Mantle's transplant, local organ-transplant officials say requests for organ donor cards have jumped from 15 a week to hundreds a week.

As one of Mantle's last wishes, the Mickey Mantle foundation was set up to promote the need for organ donors. Mantle chose the slogan "Be a hero. Be a donor."

Duncan alluded to a press conference when Mantle said that throughout his life he had been a taker, but now he wanted to be a giver. "Maybe through his encouragement to donate organs Mickey did return a bit of what he had taken," Duncan said.

The New York Yankee slugger was one of the major league's greatest switch-hitters despite a long history of leg injuries and alcoholism.

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Mantle welcomed chaplains in final days at Baylor hospital

By Laura Horne

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baseball legend Mickey Mantle was eager for chaplains to visit and pray with him during his stay at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, according to a chaplaincy administrator at the Texas Baptist hospital.

"In that sense, I think that he had a sort of simple faith that God was going to be with him through this," said Robert Duncan, chaplain coordinator in the pastoral care center who works with liver and kidney transplant patients at Baylor Health Care System in Dallas.

Mantle, 63, the Hall of Fame center fielder who led the New York Yankees during the 1950s and 1960s, died Aug. 13 at the Baylor hospital. On June 8, doctors at the hospital performed a liver transplant on Mantle, not knowing that his cancer had spread to other organs and become terminal.

Chaplains from Baylor's pastoral care center had several opportunities to visit with Mantle, despite strict security at the hospital to shield the Yankee great from adoring fans.

"He had a real desire for us to be interested in him and not in his notoriety and his fame. I think that's why he was as welcoming as he was. He enjoyed being treated as an ordinary person," Duncan said.

At least three chaplains from the pastoral care center at Baylor visited with Mantle, but he took a particular liking to David Bachelor, a summer intern and student at Southern Methodist University.

"I think he came to trust me and have confidence that I was there and I was interested in him. I wasn't just there to talk baseball or sit in awe of him," said Bachelor.

Several days Bachelor visited Mantle, talked with him, listened to him and prayed with him.

"I think he respected the fact that I didn't push anything on him. I treated him with respect and I got to know his family. Mickey could see that I really cared about his kids."

Mantle was grateful for the lease on life that the liver transplant afforded him, and Duncan says even if it was just for a few weeks, the quality of life during those weeks was so much better than before the transplant.

"Mickey had an overwhelming sense of gratitude that someone would do that [donate an organ] for him," Duncan said.

Baylor is one of seven hospital systems affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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