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Million Man Marchers pledge to support family, community

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- African-American men pledged Oct. 16 to take responsibility for bettering their families and communities and to refrain from violence, spousal abuse and the use of drugs.

Participants in the Million Man March -- estimated by the U.S. Park Police to number 400,000 but said to top 1 million by march director Benjamin Chavis Jr. -- heard more than 60 speakers during the daylong event.

Nation of Islam leader and march organizer Louis Farrakhan said in his nearly two-and-a-half-hour speech that there are two Americas -- one white and one black -- that are separate and unequal.

He called the black men crowded into the Washington Mall a "sea of peace, a sea of tranquility, a sea of men ready to come back to God, settle their differences and go back home to turn our communities into decent and safe places to live."

Farrakhan led the men in a pledge: "From this day forward, I will never raise my hand with a knife or gun to beat, cut or shoot any member of my family or any human being, except in self-defense."

While many people praised the march for its focus on atonement and personal responsibility, others -- including many black religious leaders -- refused to endorse the event because of Farrakhan's controversial opinions and statements. Viewed by many as anti-white and anti-Semitic, Farrakhan was widely quoted as calling Jews who own businesses in black communities "bloodsuckers."

President Clinton declined to appear at the march, instead traveling to Austin, Texas, to deliver a speech on racial equality. He commended march organizers for their message of atonement, reconciliation and responsibility but, in an apparent reference to Farrakhan, warned Americans not to heed the message of malice and division.

Farrakhan, in his speech, responded to Clinton by denying his message is one of hate. He asked Clinton to deal with the "root of the problem," which he said is slavery and the idea of white supremacy. "White supremacy has to die in order for humanity to live," Farrakhan said.

He told the masses that blacks feed the "degenerate mind of white supremacy" when they resort to violence, use filthy language or make filthy films.

He also asked the men to help register 8 million eligible voters by 1996 in order to help change America. And he called on black men to join organizations in their communities, such as the NAACP, the Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and others working for "the uplift and the liberation of our people."

High-school teacher Steve Melay of Detroit said he is going to join such an organization when he returns home, and he is pledged to love his wife a little more. "That's all this thing did was generate love," he said.

Some in the crowd said those blacks who did not join the march because of the controversial Farrakhan missed out.

Attorney Bob Gates of Baltimore said he attended because "I wanted to show solidarity with other African-American men. I thought it was important to make the statement that there are positive black men in this country and that we're not as negative as the media portrays us."

Concerning Farrakhan, Gates said he does not understand why a messenger who says "lift yourselves up, get off welfare, get off drugs and invest in your community," is so bad. "I thought that's what conservatives wanted because they don't want to pay taxes," he said.

"I came here not as an anti-white gesture but a pro-black gesture," he continued. "We have to come here and be truthful. We do and have done some bad things in our community, and to acknowledge that in front of several hundred thousand black men makes you feel good all over."

Other march speakers included Jesse Jackson, civil-rights activist Rosa Parks, poet Maya Angelou, singer Stevie Wonder and Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Jackson had harsh words for the Republican Congress and said laws putting young blacks in prison for small amounts of drugs were unfair.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: ABP plans to carry a reaction story on the Million Man March Oct. 19.

Clinton urges Americans to bridge nation's racial rift

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP) -- Citizens must not tolerate "the existence of two Americas" divided along racial lines, President Clinton said Oct. 16 at the University of Texas in Austin.

Clinton gave the address on race relations the same day that the Million Man March attracted about 400,000 African-American men to the Washington Mall.

"Under my watch, I will do everything I can to see that, as soon as possible, there is only one, one America under the rule of law," he continued. "One social contract, committed not to winner take all, but to giving all Americans a chance to win together -- one America."

He said he honored the 400,000 African-American men who marched on Washington to carry the message of atonement, reconciliation and responsibility. But he warned Americans not to heed the message of malice and division -- an apparent reference to controversial statements by march organizer Louis Farrakhan.

"Today, we face a choice," Clinton said. "One way leads to further separation and bitterness and more lost futures. The other way -- the path of courage and wisdom -- leads to unity, to reconciliation, to a rich opportunity for all Americans to make the most of the lives God gave them."

The march's great potential, beyond the African-American community, is that whites will come to see a larger truth: that African-Americans "share their fears and embrace their convictions," he said.

"This march could remind white people that most black people share their old-fashioned American values.

"At its base, this issue of race is not about government or political leaders. It is about what is in the hearts and minds and lives of the American people. There will be no progress in the absence of real responsibility on the part of all Americans."

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-- By Pam Parry

Coppenger unveils 'dream team' to help him lead at Midwestern

By Bob Allen

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Two staff members of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the top communications official at the Home Mission Board and the Baptist state newspaper editor from Indiana have been chosen as Mark Coppenger's new administrative "dream team" at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Coppenger, who assumed the Midwestern presidency in August, unveiled the team of four vice presidents he hopes will help establish the Kansas City, Mo., school as a bastion of Southern Baptist conservatism and missionary outreach in the upper Midwest.

The new officers, elected by trustees meeting Oct. 16-17 in Kansas City, are:

- Lamar Cooper, currently director of denominational relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty;
- Indiana Baptist executive editor Gary Ledbetter, as vice president for student development;
- Martin King, currently director of the office of public relations and development at the Atlanta-based Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, as vice president of institutional development.
- Michael Whitehead, currently general counsel for the Christian Life Commission, as vice president of business and finance.

Coppenger told trustees his emphasis on conservative theology and the fervent spirituality he refers to as "prairie fire" has been well received since coming to Midwestern. He said the staff recommendations "are perfectly consistent with my commitment to prairie fire and the inerrancy of the Word of God."

"I am amazed who God is calling here," Coppenger said, adding friends have described his new leadership team as "a power team" and "a dream team."

"We're seeing folks take cuts in salary and leaving established agencies to take a risk here because they believe in what we are doing," Coppenger said.

Trustees also elected Cooper, 53, as professor of Old Testament. He has worked at the Nashville, Tenn.,-based CLC since 1989. Previously he taught at Criswell College in Dallas, where he was dean of graduate studies, 1980-1989.

Cooper told trustees that moderate or liberal theological schools often deride conservative schools like Midwestern by saying they are nothing more than centers for "indoctrination."

"I plead guilty on that charge," Cooper said. "What I see us becoming is an indoctrination center in the Bible and Baptist doctrine."

Cooper said he believes the Bible is the "infallible, inerrant, fully inspired word of God that's our rule of faith and practice."

Still, he said, seminary students should be presented with a variety of views. For instance, he said he would teach the development of the "documentary hypothesis" -- the idea that the first five books in the Bible were not written by Moses but compiled from various sources -- and then explain why "the whole concept is untenable and

I do not accept that particular interpretation of the Old Testament as we have it."

Ledbetter was elected to a new position of vice president for student development. The job combines the duties formerly done by the dean of students and the task of coordinating short-term and volunteer missions opportunities for students, particularly in churches in the "pioneer" Baptist state conventions in the upper Midwest.

"We're becoming more self-consciously a missionary seminary," Coppenger said. "We need somebody to take leadership of this focus to cultivate and fulfill missions opportunities."

In 1989, Coppenger, then executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, brought Ledbetter on staff as state student director and executive editor of the Indiana Baptist newspaper.

At the Indiana Baptist, Ledbetter has been assisted by his wife, Tammi, who has worked part time as the paper's managing editor. They have three children.

Ledbetter, 40, is a native of Arkansas and graduate of Criswell College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. "The kind of thing I see going on at Midwestern ... is the kind of thing God has been preparing me for all my life," he told trustees.

Coppenger also cited a long friendship with King, who will be in charge of the seminary's communications and fund-raising efforts.

Coppenger told trustees he also met King in Indiana and recommended King for his job at the HMB in 1993. He described King as "a very serious pioneer-work layman" and noted he will take a pay cut to come to the seminary.

King, 45, is a graduate of Indiana State University. He held public relations and marketing jobs at several secular firms before going to the HMB.

Whitehead, 45, an attorney who lives in Kansas City, has worked with the Christian Life Commission since 1990.

Whitehead will continue a private law practice in Kansas City on his own time, Coppenger said. While serving as the seminary's legal counsel is not part of Whitehead's assignment as vice president, "he also has the capacity to give legal advice" that would benefit the seminary in day-to-day operations, Coppenger said.

Cooper's base salary is \$60,000. The other vice presidents will be paid \$50,000, plus benefits, Coppenger said. All four are expected to be in place by Jan. 1.

Coppenger came to Midwestern after serving five years as vice president for convention relations at the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in Nashville, Tenn. He succeeded longtime President Milton Ferguson at Midwestern, who retired July 31.

Trustees also elected two other faculty members.

Donald Whitney was elected to a new position of assistant professor of spiritual formation. Whitney, 41, is currently pastor of Glenfield Baptist Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and earned the doctor of ministry degree from Trinity Evangelical School in Deerfield, Ill.

Ron Rogers, who is currently under a one-year contract as visiting professor of missions, will join the faculty as associate professor of missions. Rogers, 44, is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary currently on leave of absence as a Southern Baptist foreign missionary to Brazil.

Trustees also approved a questionnaire to be used in processing prospective faculty members. Coppenger said the form is still a "working document" that will be refined. He said it will ask prospective faculty their positions on such issues as biblical inerrancy, abortion, homosexuality and whether women should be ordained as pastors.

In other business, the board of trustees adopted a resolution to "express a deep regret and disappointment" at a decision by leaders of Woman's Missionary Union to provide missions education material to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The resolution describes the Fellowship as "antipathetic" to SBC missions and criticizes the move by WMU leaders as giving "increasingly open support to those who criticize and oppose our Southern Baptist Convention work."

They also met in an executive session to discuss a severance package that administrators gave to an employee fired this summer for writing an article for *The Door*, a satirical Christian magazine.

David Thompson was fired as an adjunct professor after writing an article titled, "You Might Be a Fundamentalist If ...," a takeoff on comedian Jeff Foxworthy's "You Might Be a Redneck, If ..." routine.

Trustee Kent Cochran said he found the article offensive and supported the decision to fire Thompson, but severance funds should not have been given without trustee approval. After the executive session, trustees adopted a motion expressing appreciation for the academic dean's "expeditious handling of a difficult situation," while noting they expect in the future to be notified before any severance funds are granted.

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Samford-Southern negotiations broke down over assets

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Officials at Samford University thought they were negotiating to obtain the Carver School of Church Social Work and its legacy. But the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary now claims he never intended to transfer the entire Carver School -- including its endowment -- to the Alabama Baptist university.

The only thing under consideration was the seminary's master of social work degree program and related library holdings, Southern President Albert Mohler said in a recent interview with the Alabama Baptist.

What Mohler is attempting to do is "legal fiction," according to William Hull, provost at Samford and chief negotiator in the Samford-Southern Seminary conversations.

"You cannot separate the degree program from all of the rest that is now a part of the Carver School of Church Social Work," Hull declared. "Such a division was unknown until Mohler."

Hull previously was provost at Southern Seminary, under the administration of President Duke McCall.

The seminary's trustees have been studying what to do with the Carver School since last spring, when a crisis arose after Mohler fired Diana Garland as the Carver School's dean. Garland was fired after she told students Mohler's restrictive policies on faculty hiring were endangering the school's accreditation.

In a hastily called meeting with social work students Sept. 21, Mohler announced negotiations were underway to transfer the Carver School to Samford. The action was to be considered by seminary trustees at their Oct. 9-11 meeting, he said.

But just days before that trustee meeting, negotiations between the seminary and Samford broke down. Neither side would say publicly what had created the snag.

According to information later provided by Mohler, Hull and Samford President Thomas Corts, the sticking point was determining exactly what assets would transfer from Southern to Samford.

News that the entire Carver School was not for sale "came as a real surprise to us," Corts said.

Yet Mohler argues the only thing ever up for transfer was the degree program and materials connected to it, such as books, audiovisuals, computer programs and a list of graduates with social work degrees.

"We have no interest in severing the legacy of the Carver School of Social Work from Southern Seminary," Mohler said in the recent interview. "What we are after is the degree program being transferred to a different institutional context."

Yet the seminary's own Sept. 21 news release announcing the Samford deal said the negotiations were to "transfer the Carver School of Church Social Work to Samford University."

That same seminary news release quoted Mohler: "We are pleased that we are able to protect the interest of our current students and maintain the focus of the seminary and see the Carver School continue and flourish in a new institutional context."

Corts said Samford's interest was always in the Carver School of Church Social Work. That includes the school's two endowed faculty positions, endowed scholarships for social work students, archives of the school and

its predecessors, as well as the school's library and other support materials.

"Why would we want to buy used library books and import to our campus the baggage associated with the church social work program at Southern Seminary?" Corts asked. He said in the view of the university, the Carver School of Church Social Work stands in a direct line from the Carver School of Missions and Church Social Work and its predecessor, the Woman's Missionary Union Training School.

The WMU Training School operated under the auspices of WMU for 50 years before being given to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1957. In 1963, the Training School merged with Southern Seminary, primarily in an attempt to attain accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education. The merger gave the seminary all of the school's land, buildings and endowment.

In 1984, the seminary made the Carver School one of four distinct schools within the seminary structure and received accreditation for the master of social work degree. Southern Seminary became -- and remains -- the only theological seminary in the United States with an accredited master of social work degree.

Mohler has placed the blame for the breakdown in negotiations on Samford. "Southern Seminary and Samford University had negotiated a written transaction agreement," he said in a statement. "As of the time of our Oct. 10 trustee meeting, I was prepared to move forward on that previously negotiated agreement."

That's not the case, according to Corts and Hull.

"We had a two-page working document, but nothing that approached an agreement," Corts said. Hull added: "It was never a case of them giving us a dollar figure and our saying that is too high. We could not even agree on what assets to put on the list."

When asked about the differing accounts, Mohler said there was a "basic framework" for an agreement. "I did not say we had completed the agreement."

Mohler explained he could not transfer the Carver School to Samford because the school had been given to the seminary by the Southern Baptist Convention, and it would take action at an SBC annual meeting to approve such a transfer.

Hull contends that should not have been a problem.

"The documents say the school is to be operated by an SBC agent or its legal successor. We were willing to become that legal successor," Hull said. He also asked how the seminary could legally give away any of the social work program without approval of the SBC if the seminary is not able to transfer the whole program without SBC approval.

The seminary currently is negotiating with Campbellsville College, a small liberal arts school affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, to take over the social work degree program.

"The world view of the official structures of social work" make it impossible for the seminary, with its conservative theological convictions, to continue offering an accredited master of social work program, Mohler said. "When the (trustee) committee recognized that fact, they sought a way to eliminate the school of social work while maintaining the emphasis of Christian social ministries," he explained.

Mohler has said the seminary would continue to offer social work courses, even without the specialized master's degree program. However, he has not said what will become of the Carver School name and legacy if it cannot be transferred to another institution.

What information seminary trustees have been given remains a mystery, since their deliberations have been handled behind closed doors. No official of either Samford or the Carver School addressed the board during their October meeting.

Corts called the episode with Southern Seminary "embarrassing" for the university. "We spent a lot of time and a lot of money for the project to end up like this," he explained.

For his part, Mohler said he had no animosity toward Samford. "It is a case of two institutions having different goals."

Kentucky seminary idea takes new direction

By Mark Wingfield

LEXINGTON, Ky. (ABP) -- A new option for Baptist theological education may yet come to Kentucky, despite a task force's earlier assessment that such a venture might not be feasible.

The new option would be a joint venture between Lexington Theological Seminary; Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va.; the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship; and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Supporters say the venture is necessary because of the new conservative direction of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

The new school would be a Baptist program housed at Lexington Theological Seminary, according to Greg Brooks, moderator of the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Frankfort.

During the Oct. 6 meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship, Brooks announced the creation of a special committee to study forming the new school. The "joint venture committee" will be chaired by Paul Simmons, former professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Brooks described the effort at this point as "exploratory." The committee has been asked to begin finding funding and students for the school and "to think creatively about what a distinctive Baptist education might look like in an ecumenical setting."

This venture would create a new model for theological education, Brooks said. Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond is a school founded by Southern Baptist moderates, while Lexington Theological Seminary is a Disciples of Christ-affiliated school.

"If we can pull this off, it would be the first such collaborative effort between denominations," he said. "It could become a model."

Other schools, such as Duke University in North Carolina and Emory University in Georgia, have popular Baptist studies programs but are not collaborative efforts between schools.

Under the arrangement being discussed, one-third of the curriculum in the new school would be "distinctively Baptist," and the remainder would be common to both Lexington Theological Seminary students and the Baptist students, Brooks explained.

The benefits of locating a program at an existing seminary include immediate access to a library, not having to duplicate basic course work common to all theological schools and access to classroom space, Brooks said.

A theological education task force formed earlier this year decided against founding a seminary and in favor of providing scholarships for Kentucky students to attend moderate Baptist schools out of state. However, that task force now has endorsed the newfound option with Lexington Theological Seminary, Brooks said.

Fall enrollment declines at Southwestern Seminary

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Enrollment at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary continued to drop this fall, more than two years after the abrupt firing of President Russell Dilday disrupted life at the Southern Baptist Convention's flagship school.

The total number of students enrolled for fall classes at the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, is 3,025, down 7 percent from the 3,254 enrolled in the fall of 1994.

The number of new students entering the seminary also declined. The 539 new students fell one short of the 540 who entered the seminary last fall.

One bright spot for the seminary's new president Ken Hemphill is growth in the seven off-campus centers offered by Southwestern. Total off-campus enrollment this fall is 104, more than twice the 50 students in off-campus centers last fall.

Administrators said growth in off-campus enrollment reflects an effort to make theological education more accessible and predicted that enrollment in off-campus centers will continue to grow in the future.

"There is a definite trend for seminary people to go to school closer to where they reside rather than move," said Bill Tolar, dean of academic affairs. "It well could be that our future growth may come on off-campus centers rather than on."

Sources at the seminary said, however, that Hemphill had expected overall enrollment to begin to turn around this fall, and was privately disappointed that new-student enrollment did not increase.

Administrators quoted in a seminary news release blamed declining enrollment on demographics, competition from new options for theological education and graduating classes in 1994 and 1995 that were unusually large.

The news release also noted "continuing transition" as a factor, as Hemphill enters his second year as president.

Trustees at Southwestern fired Dilday in March 1993, alleging he resisted conservative reforms at the seminary, the largest of six schools owned by the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention.

Dilday's firing sparked a decline in enrollment, the loss of several contributors and the creation of a new seminary at Baylor University in nearby Waco, at which Dilday is now interim dean.

Southwestern trustees chose Hemphill -- a church-growth expert with conservative credentials but a reputation as a mediator -- as Dilday's successor, hoping to minimize damage from the strong reaction to Dilday's firing.

Observers had also speculated that Southwestern might gain some new students this fall because of recent controversy at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., a sister school.

Since Hemphill's hiring at Southwestern, which has been fairly well received by faculty and students, Southern Seminary has seen a popular theology professor resign and a social work dean fired -- both women -- over disputes with President Albert Mohler.

"The fact that Southwestern has been able to maintain a strong enrollment figure in a transition time is a very healthy sign," Hemphill said.

A record number of prospective students visited the campus this summer, Hemphill said. He credited staff and faculty for "a good job of telling the story of what's happening here, the good news of what God is doing on campus."

"The healing process is well underway, and you can see the enthusiasm in class, chapel and around the campus. Visiting students pick up on that," Hemphill said.

Supreme Court rejects pair of First Amendment appeals

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Supreme Court refused Oct. 16 to hear arguments that the First Amendment bars a Florida county's ordinance against Christmas Day alcohol sales and a California city's restrictions on residential picketing.

In the Florida case, the high court let stand a state appeals court ruling that Clay County's 14-year-old ordinance outlawing alcohol sales on Christmas did not violate the First Amendment's requirement of church-state separation. Silver Rose Entertainment and nine other businesses argued that the ordinance endorsed Christianity, but the lower courts disagreed.

Left standing in the California dispute was a state appeals court finding that San Jose's ban on demonstrations within 300 feet of a targeted residence did not violate the free-speech rights of picketers. The municipal ordinance, challenged by 16 abortion foes arrested for parading close to a physician's home, applies to all demonstrations, not just abortion protests.

In upholding the ban on Christmas alcohol sales, the Florida appeals court rejected arguments that the ordinance had the purpose and effect of endorsing Christianity.

"We conclude that Christmas, notwithstanding its deep religious significance for many, also has secular traditions which local government is free to acknowledge, without offending the constitutions either of Florida or of the United States," the court said.

In upholding San Jose's picketing ordinance, the California appeals court reversed a lower-court ruling that the ordinance's 300-foot buffer around targeted residences was unconstitutionally broad.

The appeals court noted the ordinance is "content-neutral" and does not represent a complete ban on demonstrators' right of expression.

The Supreme Court, the appeals court said, "has described targeted picketing as highly offensive conduct which is not entitled to the same level of First Amendment protection as is more general expression of political and social views."

Terry Thompson and other petitioners asked the high court to reverse the appeals court, arguing that the 300-foot buffer is an overbroad restriction on free speech.

San Jose officials argued that the ordinance is narrowly drawn "to serve the significant government interest of protecting residential privacy."

The high court's refusal to hear the case was the second recent setback for anti-abortion demonstrators. Two weeks earlier, the Supreme Court refused to review a federal appeals court ruling that upheld the constitutionality of legislation protecting access to clinic entrances.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE) did not violate the First Amendment or statutory rights of abortion opponents.

The appeals court said FACE does not violate the free-speech rights of protesters because it is "content and viewpoint neutral" and restricts no more conduct than necessary to preserve clinic access.

The appeals court also rejected arguments that FACE violates the First Amendment guarantee of free exercise of religion and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993.

The court described FACE as a "neutral, generally applicable" law that "does not offend" the free-exercise clause.

It satisfies the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the court said, because it uses a sufficiently narrow means to serve a compelling governmental interest.

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-- By Larry Chesser

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