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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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August 30, 1988

88-140

PAC to make request  
for \$75,500 funding

By Dan Martin

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee will request \$75,500 as its allocation from the convention's 1989-90 Cooperative Program budget during the Sept. 19-21 meeting of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee in Nashville.

The decision to request the funds -- which represent a 300 percent increase over the 1988-89 allocation of \$24,200 -- was made during an Aug. 26 meeting of the PAC's "executive body" of officers and "members who have had specific duties assigned to them."

The group, in addition to determining the amount to be requested in the 1989-90 budget, also made plans for the Oct. 2 and Oct. 4 meetings of the PAC, scheduled a Religious Liberty Conference in Atlanta for April 21-22, 1989, and discussed the need to revise the program statement under which the PAC operates.

The group also discussed continuing problems with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs concerning staff evaluations.

Sam Currin, a state court judge from Raleigh, N.C., and PAC chairman, said the "executive body -- the officers, committee chairmen and others with specific assignments" -- met Aug. 26 in order to have a budget request ready to present to the September Executive Committee meeting.

The September meeting will mark the first time the PAC has made a direct request for funding from the unified budget of the Southern Baptist Convention, although the Executive Committee granted the PAC an allocation of \$24,200 in the 1988-89 budget without a specific request by the PAC to do so.

Technically, the PAC is a standing committee of the SBC, and standing committees do not have staff, budgets or program statements. Usually, standing committees are entitled to one meeting per year and are funded through a line item in the Executive Committee's budget.

During the 1987 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, messengers adopted a recommendation that reallocated membership on the 18-member PAC as well as changed the way the committee functions, particularly in relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee. Previously, the PAC was the method by which the SBC provided trustees and funds for the Baptist Joint Committee.

The 1987 action instructed the PAC to continue to be a part of the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious liberty organization of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada, but also empowered the PAC to act on SBC motions and resolutions upon which the Baptist Joint Committee either cannot agree or does not support.

The action made the PAC into a "hybrid" which "is still struggling through" questions of how to relate to the Baptist Joint Committee and how to function on its own, according to one committee member.

The newly reconstituted PAC has had two major disagreements about the Baptist Joint Committee. In the first, members expressed the opinion funding for the Baptist Joint Committee was to flow through the PAC and requested a clarification from the SBC Executive Committee. The Executive Committee determined funding should continue to be sent directly to the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee.

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In the second, the PAC voted 8-4 in October 1987 to sever all financial and institutional ties with the Baptist Joint Committee and to establish an exclusive Southern Baptist presence in Washington. The dispute centered on efforts by the PAC to conduct its own evaluation of the Baptist Joint Committee staff and action by the larger Baptist Joint Committee board declining to allow individual denominations access to the staff. The SBC Executive Committee declined to follow the suggestion and urged the PAC to continue to function in relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee.

In a related action, the "executive body" of the PAC met with officers of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in December 1987 to explore the possibility of a merger between the two organizations. Later the CLC executive committee declined to ratify the proposal.

The Aug. 26 meeting of the "executive body" was the first time such a group has met, but PAC Chairman Currin explained: "Everything we do sets a precedent. Everything we do is new."

Currin, who has been PAC chairman five years, explained the PAC does not have an "executive committee" but felt it necessary for officers to meet in August to be ready to make the budget request in September.

Participating were Currin, Albert Lee Smith, a Birmingham, Ala., insurance executive, vice chairman; Richard Land, an administrator at Criswell College, Dallas, chairman of the long-range planning committee; Tom Pratt, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Brighton, Colo., newsletter editor; and Roy Gean Jr., a Fort Smith, Ark., attorney who has been asked to meet with the SBC Executive Committee's legal counsel concerning a legal opinion on the PAC.

Les Csorba III, executive director of Accuracy in Academia in Alexandria, Va., and PAC secretary, was unable to attend the meeting, Currin said.

During the meeting, which was conducted under "background rules" that prohibit direct quotation or attribution, PAC members decided to request the \$75,500 to fund the work of the committee 1989-90.

The request includes \$48,000 for producing and mailing the Southern Baptist Public Affairs newsletter, which will be produced three times in 88-89, and six times in 89-90; \$17,500 for cost of meetings and a conference, and \$10,000 to produce two pamphlets.

Following the meeting, Currin told Baptist Press the budget is "based on what we want to accomplish during 1989-1990."

In the other matters, the group discussed:

-- Conference. The group decided to conduct a religious liberty conference in Atlanta April 21-22, 1989, which it hopes will be self supporting through registration fees and sales of tapes and proceedings. The program, members said, will feature as many Southern Baptists as possible.

Following the meeting, it was noted the Baptist Joint Committee conducts a religious liberty conference every other year. Land said the PAC's conference is not necessarily because members disagree with the Baptist Joint Committee, and added, "For us and our constituents, there is the feeling that religious liberty and separation of church and state might be emphasized differently in a conference by and for Southern Baptists as opposed to one for all of the member bodies of the Baptist Joint Committee."

-- Program statement. The program statement under which the PAC operates was adopted by the SBC in 1961 and amended in 1966, 1967, 1974 and 1975. It spells out membership and notes the committee "works directly with the joint committee and has no other staff except that employed by the joint committee."

With the adoption of the revisions in 1987, the program statement is out of date, members said, and noted the current document primarily deals with the work of the Baptist Joint Committee. Members will work to revise the program statement in order that it can be presented to the full PAC when it meets in October in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee board.

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-- Staff evaluation Members expressed displeasure with articles written by Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director James M. Dunn in the July/August issue of Report from the Capitol, and General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas in the July issue of Liberty magazine.

Part of the controversy in October 1987 which led to the 8-4 vote to sever ties was an effort to evaluate the staff by a PAC committee chaired by Smith. The Baptist Joint Committee declined and appointed its own staff evaluation committee, which includes Currin and Darold Morgan, president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

The Baptist Joint Committee evaluation committee is to meet Oct. 2, during which Currin is expected to bring up the matter of staff performance and evaluation.

The PAC will meet Oct. 2 following the evaluation committee meeting and prior to the full board meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee, and again Oct. 4, after the Baptist Joint Committee board meets.

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Jailed pro-life Christians  
plant church behind bars

By Joe Westbury

F- -HMB

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8/30/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists protesting abortion in Atlanta are not content to be arrested for their belief that abortion is murder.

Once they are arrested with other evangelicals, they are carrying the gospel into jail to evangelize the inmate population of Atlanta's prison system. At least one interdenominational church has been established, and 27 conversions were reported between Aug. 19 and Aug. 29.

Since the protests began six weeks ago, 753 individuals, including about 40 ministers, have been arrested in 22 peaceful demonstrations outside abortion clinics. At least a dozen have been Southern Baptists.

The non-violent protests are being coordinated by Operation Rescue, an interdenominational fellowship led by Randall Terry, an evangelical layman from Binghamton, N.Y.

One of the recently jailed Southern Baptists, Brian Butler, associate pastor and youth minister at Fortified Hills Baptist Church in Smyrna, Ga., confirmed reports a church has been established at Atlanta City Prison.

"There's a literal revival going on, no doubt about it," said Butler, who served five days at the facility on misdemeanor charges. "It was no picnic, but there was a time I was in no rush to get out because of the spirit of revival. From a spiritual standpoint, it was one of the richest experiences of my ministry."

Although the prison population is constantly changing -- pro-lifers are released while others are being jailed -- the ministers and laymen are "passing the mantle of leadership on a regular basis" to keep the discipling process going, Butler explained.

The interdenominational church, which has increased its services from twice to three times daily, has a council of pastors who minister in the various prison dormitories and who serve as a board of elders.

"There's always someone to keep the spiritual nurturing and teaching going with the new converts. Some pro-lifers are actually delaying their release because they feel led to stay in a particular leadership role for another week or so," Butler said.

Thirty-one of the original 134 protesters arrested July 19 walked to freedom Aug. 27 from Fulton County Jail after 40 days of imprisonment. Three of those original protestors remain in jail, according to reports in the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, including a man who has fasted since his arrest.

At least 100 people from more recent arrests are reported to remain behind bars.

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Butler said he expected some of the inmates to be resentful and to "make light of our going to jail." But they were impressed to learn of the commitment of those who had given up vacations or time from work to be arrested for their convictions, he said.

The minister, who also is president of the Baptist Youth Ministers Fellowship for the Georgia Baptist Convention, said his ultimate goal in the pro-life movement was not to be arrested but to take a stand on biblical principle.

"If America can tolerate the murder of 25 million babies by abortion in the past 15 years, surely it can tolerate people protesting abortion on the sidewalk in a non-violent manner," he said.

Although the media has frequently characterized the Christian protesters as violent extremists, Butler said, he was surprised to discover the broad spectrum of demonstrators who were arrested with him.

"There was a shrimp boat captain from Louisiana, a surgeon from Florida, a computer engineer from Colorado, and a Sheet Rock hanger from neighboring Marietta -- hardly what I would consider society's extremists," he said.

Operation Rescue came to Atlanta July 19 to lay siege to abortion clinics and to encourage the Democratic National Convention, which opened the same day, to take a pro-life stand. More than 130 evangelicals were arrested the first day, and the demonstrations have not ceased.

Atlanta has since become a rallying point behind the non-violent pro-life movement and continues to attract mainline denomination evangelicals from Georgia and around the nation.

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Baptists minister  
after air disaster

By Art Toalston

N- FMB  
Baptist Press  
8/30/88

KAISERSLAUTERN, West Germany (BP)--Numerous members of Faith Baptist Church in Kaiserslautern, West Germany, were on duty or among the spectators when three Italian jets collided Aug. 28 during an air show at nearby Ramstein Air Force Base.

"It's a miracle that one of us wasn't hit" by debris from the wreckage, said the church's pastor, Jim Tomberlin. A day after the tragedy, he said he had gotten no reports of injured church members.

Three-fourths of the church's 600 worshipers are military personnel or their families, he said. Tomberlin has been pastor at Faith Church since October 1987. Before that he was associate pastor for seven years at Hoffmantown Baptist Church in Albuquerque, N.M.

Tomberlin, his wife and three children were about 100 yards from where one of the planes crashed into the crowd. He, like many other spectators, was videotaping the show.

For several hours after the disaster, Tomberlin did volunteer chaplaincy work in the air base's theater, where people separated from family members were instructed to wait.

"Some (people) were hysterical, some were in tears, some were just stunned. There was great joy when people would be reunited. There were all those emotions going on," he said.

The immediate past chairman of the church's deacons, Bob Heriford, did volunteer paramedic work at the air base's hospital. Heriford is an Air Force sergeant from Colorado.

"There was a lot of that kind of thing -- people really responded and jumped in (to help) where they could," Tomberlin said.

Another church member, Tony Westbrook, son of a Georgia Baptist pastor, was a member of an emergency crew stationed near the crash site.

The explosion knocked the crew to the ground, Tomberlin said.

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"There was a big fireball," he recounted. "It looked like the plane was coming right at us as it was tumbling along the ground. (There was) a brief second of wondering if this was going to kill us. Immediately we began to try to pick up the children and run."

Many people around them were struck in the back by flying debris as they fled, he said.

The Tomberlins were separated from their 6-year-old son, Jared, for about half an hour, after Jared fled in a different direction from the rest of the family.

Faith Baptist would plan its next service "to deal with this tragedy in the community. We anticipate a lot of people in the church knowing people who were affected by it," Tomberlin said.

The church is the largest member of the English-language European Baptist Convention. Most of its members come from Ramstein and 10 other military bases in the Kaiserslautern area.

Officials estimate about 200,000 people attended the air show.

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Lewis urges US-2ers to remember  
debt, not be ashamed of gospel

*N- HMB*

Baptist Press  
8/30/88

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. (BP)--Forty-one newly commissioned Southern Baptist US-2 missionaries were challenged to remember the people who taught them and never to be ashamed of the gospel.

Southern Baptist President Larry Lewis spoke to the young missionaries during the annual commissioning service for US-2ers at First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Ga., Aug. 28. The Home Mission Board appoints college graduates under 27 as US-2 missionaries for two-year assignments around the nation.

The missionaries should remember the Christians who had taught them from the Bible, Lewis urged. "Every one of us is really no more than what others have put into us," he said, citing his own experience of being introduced to Christ as a child through the witness of a woman who picked him up for Vacation Bible School.

The young missionaries also owe a debt to Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program unified budget, he added. "Our debt to the Cooperative Program is not paid off until there's not one person left who needs to hear the gospel," he said.

Lewis commended the host church for its support of missions through the Cooperative Program. First Baptist Church of Lawrenceville gives 14 percent of its budget to the Cooperative Program and intends to increase the amount 1 percent each year until reaching 24 percent.

The 41 new missionaries come from 17 states and Puerto Rico and will serve in 16 states and Canada.

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