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October 5, 1988

88-159

CLC trustee arrested  
in abortion protests

By Joe Westbury and Mark Wingfield

ATLANTA (BP)--A trustee of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission was arrested Oct. 4 along with 343 protesters in renewed efforts to close Atlanta's abortion clinics.

James Wood, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Atlanta and a member of the denomination's moral concerns agency since 1986, was arrested with 138 other protesters outside the Hillcrest Clinic in midtown Atlanta.

Another 205 protesters were arrested at two other clinics, making the morning's "rescues" the largest in Atlanta history. The 343 arrests more than doubled the highest single-day number of protesters previously jailed.

All three clinics have been earlier targets of Operation Rescue, an evangelical group that has attracted clergy and laypeople from across the nation to Atlanta. In the first round of protests, between mid-July and early September, more than 700 people were arrested in attempts to "rescue" babies from abortion.

Wood is the first Southern Baptist pastor known to have been arrested in the protests. He was released in less than 24 hours, an improvement over earlier conditions.

At least a dozen Southern Baptist church staff members and laypeople were arrested in the first round of the protests. Many of them spent several days in jail because they identified themselves only as "Baby Jane Doe" or "Baby John Doe."

As the protest at Hillcrest was underway, Wood left picketers and blocked the entry to the clinic. He dropped to his knees and began praying. Police dragged him across the pavement to a paddy wagon as onlookers wailed and prayed for those being arrested.

After Wood was put in the paddy wagon, one lone man from his group was left lying prostrate on the pavement. The man's fingers, bloodied from being dragged across the rough pavement, grasped a small plastic replica of an aborted fetus. Police later took the man to jail.

Five blocks away at the Atlanta SurgiCenter, police used an armlock and a neck hold on Southern Baptist layman Allen Duyn from First Baptist Church of Nokomis, Fla., to arrest him and bring him to his feet.

Lee Ann Warner, a Southern Baptist layperson from Christ Community Church in Clarkston, Ga., was arrested at the Feminist Women's Health Center less than a mile away. Warner was photographing a protest for Operation Rescue when a clinic worker allegedly knocked her to the ground and accused her of assault.

Two other Southern Baptists -- Ken LaTall and Pat Cartette, both of Atlanta and members of Rehoboth Baptist Church -- also were arrested at the Feminist Women's Health Center.

New "get tough" tactics used by police included painful finger-benders and a pressure point technique, where police applied thumbs and forefingers in the soft spot behind the jaw, just below the ear.

Atlanta police reportedly have become annoyed by the continuing drain on personnel and finances to arrest and process the protesters.

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Watching the arrests from the sidelines, Operation Rescue leader Randall Terry said, "This level of brutality against good, ordinary citizens has not been seen in two decades." Terry said precinct commander Maj. Kenneth Burnette should resign for ordering his officers to respond with such brutality.

Burnette, a deacon at First Baptist Church in Redan, Ga., said his officers did not use any unnecessary force. "We haven't used any stretchers today," he said, to illustrate that no one was disabled by police force.

On the same day, the Atlanta City Council won injunctions against Operation Rescue, declaring the rescuers a public nuisance and instituting fines of \$500 per offense per person.

A representative of the American Civil Liberties Union, who assisted patients through picket lines at one location, also defended the rights of the protesters.

Gene Guerrero, executive director of ACLU of Georgia, said the local ACLU chapter filed a formal complaint with the mayor's office and the Atlanta Police Bureau, saying police inflicted unnecessary pain during the arrests.

The following day, Burnette told Guerrero Atlanta police will no longer use the tactics and will resort to previous methods of carrying protesters to paddy wagons more gently.

Operation Rescue, headquartered in Binghamton, N.Y., has targeted Atlanta for concentrated protests in hopes of making it "the first abortion-free city in America," said Joe Foreman, director of the recently established Atlanta Operation Rescue regional office.

Protests were scheduled to continue through the week.

Although Charles Stanley, pastor of Atlanta's First Baptist Church, has publicly opposed the tactics of Operation Rescue, Catholic Archbishop Eugene Marino of Atlanta recently called the evangelical movement "a courageous and honorable" effort.

Juli Loesch, a spokesperson for Operation Rescue, said the archbishop's affirmation would offset the negative impact of Stanley's statement. Catholic priests and laity turned out in much stronger numbers for the new round of protests.

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CLC leader commends  
witness, non-violence

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NASHVILLE (BP)--The interim executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has commended the "prophetic witness and commitment to non-violence" of Commissioner James Wood of Atlanta, who was arrested Oct. 4 in an abortion clinic protest.

Robert Parham, who has been interim director of the Southern Baptist moral and social concerns agency since June, told Baptist Press:

"From the whipping posts of New England to the Birmingham jail, Baptists have given witness on moral issues through non-violent civil disobedience. It is a legitimate and exalted form of prophetic Christian involvement in the world.

"Many Southern Baptists may not see eye-to-eye on the issue of abortion. But all Southern Baptists ought to affirm the biblical truth and Baptist tradition that a believer must follow the dictates of conscience, even if it results in the violation of the law of the state. To be Baptist has meant and must continue to mean freedom -- freedom to obey Christ rather than Caesar."

Wood, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Atlanta, has been a trustee of the CLC since 1986. He was arrested in a protest at Hillcrest Clinic as part of Operation Rescue, an effort designed to "rescue" babies from being aborted by discouraging pregnant women from entering abortion clinics.

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He was one of 343 people arrested Oct. 4 in a new round of protests at three Atlanta abortion clinics. He is believed to be the first Southern Baptist pastor arrested, although about a dozen church staff members and laypeople were among the more than 700 arrested in the first round of the protests.

Parham said of Wood: "James Wood has stepped from behind the security of the pulpit into the vulnerability of the public square, leaving behind rhetoric for tangible action.

"He and other Southern Baptists involved in Operation Rescue are to be commended for their prophetic witness and commitment to non-violence."

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William Carey trustees  
won't extend president

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
10/5/88

HATTIESBURG, Miss. (BP)--In a closed meeting Sept. 29, trustees of William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss., voted 5-4 not to extend the contract of President J. Ralph Noonkester past his 65th birthday in June of 1989, abruptly ending a presidency that began in 1956.

Trustees gave no reason for not renewing Noonkester's contract, nor did they say what had been discussed in the 30-minute trustees-only session.

Noonkester was summoned to the meeting room to be informed of the decision and left campus immediately afterward. He made no statement and campus officials Oct. 5 said the long-term president still had no comment.

The action set off protests by faculty and student groups. The faculty senate adopted a statement saying the contract denial "may be detrimental to the college." Students, carrying signs which said "We Love Our President" and "Students Have A Right To Be Heard," held a rally Oct. 4 on campus.

The day after the trustees' meeting, Chairman Billy McKay, pastor of First Baptist Church of Belzoni, Miss., told the Mississippi Baptist Record: "The school has prospered in years past under his (Noonkester's) leadership numerically and financially, but in recent years William Carey has suffered like almost all institutions across our country and it has been difficult to meet the financial obligations. He has struggled and wrestled with this universal problem to maintain the financial balance."

McKay said short term credit is difficult at this point for the school. Monthly cost of the Gulf Coast campus apartments, which are at half occupancy, is \$25,000.

"Trying to pay around \$25,000 out of the regular budget is very difficult. The lack of occupancy of those apartments has not provided the funds adequate to pay this monthly note. That has stressed the budget," he added.

Immediately before the 5-4 vote, trustees voted to make a policy change making extended employment of the president beyond age 65 a contract matter to be renewed yearly.

Also, prior to the vote, trustees declined to approve a third administrative reorganization plan proposed within a year by Noonkester. The two other plans had been adopted.

Trustees were told by auditors the college is fiscally solvent but that debt levels have increased. The trustees approved a 1988-89 budget of \$6,964,000, which includes \$1 million for debt retirement.

A seven-member presidential search committee to include five trustees, one representative from the faculty and one student was approved and McKay said trustees likely will meet Oct. 25 to name the committee.

During the meeting, reports were given that indicate the full time equivalent student population of the three Carey campuses -- Hattiesburg, Gulfport, and New Orleans -- totals 1,293 this term. About 400 students attend day classes at the main campus in Hattiesburg.

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There are 15 members of the trustee board. Ten attended the Sept. 29 meeting, three were absent and two have resigned. Trustees are elected by the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Noonkester, a native of Virginia, has been associated with the Hattiesburg school since 1954, when he joined the faculty as professor of religion. He was inaugurated as president Dec. 14, 1956. He is a graduate of the University of Richmond (Va.) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

The Carey faculty held a special session Oct. 3 and adopted a four-point resolution, which said:

"The trust and confidence of alumni, the general public, and the Baptist constituency in the stability of the college are jeopardized by not allowing the president to continue with his leadership role and to be involved in the selection of a successor.

"The rejection of the president's proposal on administrative structure comes at an inappropriate time in view of scheduled reaccreditation review by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

"The lack of faculty involvement in critical decisions suggests an unwillingness on the part of the board of trustees to communicate and cooperate with the faculty for the purpose of building better William Carey College.

"It appears that the board of trustees has acted in neither an ethical nor a professional manner in the dismissal of the president."

Faculty Senate President Obra Quave said most of the faculty attended the meeting and that the ballot vote was "overwhelming" in favor of the resolution. However, he said the group agreed not to release the numbers in the vote.

One college representative told Baptist Press: "The people here are very upset about the way this was done. We feel that after 33 years of leadership, Dr. Noonkester was treated very shabbily."

During the student rally, about 60 students gathered in front of the post office/bookstore to protest the action.

Student Government President Shannon Robert, a senior from Luling, La., gave a statement which said: "The student body at large is taking a stand against the manner in which the board acted. We hope they (trustees) will listen to what we have to say because we will have to suffer the consequences of what they have done."

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(Also contributing to this story was Dan Martin, news editor of Baptist Press.)

Deaf have new link  
to foreign board

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Deaf Southern Baptists who want current foreign missions information now can call the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and get what they need.

A telephone-typewriter-like machine, called a telecommunication device for the deaf or TDD, will link deaf Southern Baptists to prayer needs throughout the world and to opportunities for missions involvement, said A. Clark Scanlon, the board's director of research and planning. The board's TDD also will be able to take messages 24 hours a day.

The TDD number is 804-754-9402.

"For a deaf person, this opens up a world of communication," said Ray Bearden, pastor to the deaf of First Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va. Using TDDs, deaf people can type messages back and forth over the telephone lines. More than 70 percent of deaf Americans have TDDs, Bearden noted.

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There are plenty of deaf people for the board to communicate with -- the Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf encompasses 850 churches with deaf ministries, Bearden said.

Scanlon and Bearden placed the initial TDD call from the board to Bearden's deaf father, Carter Bearden, longtime deaf work consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Opportunities for deaf people in overseas ministry are "growing every day," Ray Bearden said. He credits the board with becoming increasingly aware in the last three years of the needs of some 130 million deaf people throughout the world.

The board now has one request for a deaf person as a career missionary in the Dominican Republic. The missionary will work with several mission points for the deaf and a camp program attended by about 100 people each year.

Deaf Southern Baptists have worked in volunteer teams or with deaf ministries in several countries, including Korea, Taiwan and Brazil. And, when the 16th World Games for the Deaf are held next year in New Zealand, the Southern Baptist Conference for the Deaf plans to send a team of eight volunteers to minister among 1,700 deaf athletes from 30 countries.

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Houston pastor urges  
Baptists to fish for lost

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
10/5/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Never in their history have Southern Baptists done "so little with so much" to reach the lost, a Houston pastor told students and faculty at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, during fall revival services Sept. 27-30.

Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, lamented the static growth in Southern Baptist churches during the last 30 years.

The convention's 37,000 churches baptized 338,495 people in 1987. But of those, 175,000 were children reared in Southern Baptist churches, 50,000 came from other denominations, and 26,000 were "re-baptisms." That leaves only 75,000 "pagans" or unchurched people baptized in Southern Baptist churches last year, Young said.

"Actually, in pagan growth, our churches averaged fewer than two baptisms per congregation," Young said. "Never have so many done so little with so much."

Young compared today's church with a fishing net, and urged Christians to follow God's leadership by casting their nets "into the deep" of the lost world.

"Something's gone wrong with the net, something's gone wrong with our trying to go out and identify and reach and introduce the least, the last, the lost to Jesus Christ." He said it's time for some "creative boldness" in Southern Baptists' efforts to reach the lost.

Young also urged Christians to "work the net." He said Baptists often are guilty of weaving a net of church programs and activities and forgetting about personal evangelism.

"We can worship an institution, a denomination, a way a doing things, and we can just stay with it and wake up one day and realize we're not catching anything, we're just going through all the motions of it."

Young said seminary students ask him for the secret of growing a church in a metropolitan area. But that's not the right question, he said.

"The question is, how do you take a church and put it in the middle of thousands of people who are lost, and if you faithfully preach the word and you faithfully weave that net and work that net, how do you keep from building a large church? That's the question."

Young said the one characteristic of Jesus the church should mimic in reaching the lost is being a friend to sinners. "When you catch a fish you take that fish out of a beautiful life to death, but when you catch a man for Jesus you take him out of death to a beautiful life," he said.

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(Chip Alford is a student newswriter at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.)