

BWA budget goes beyond bare bones to 'bleeding,' Lotz says_72803

October 10, 2003

Posted: 7/25/03

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Kentucky Western Recorder

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (ABP)—Responding to mounting financial pressure, members of the Baptist World Alliance General Council adopted a zero-growth budget for 2004.

The action during the council's July 9-12 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, followed an earlier \$425,000 reduction in the current year's budget.

The BWA is comprised of 211 member bodies representing more than 46 million baptized believers worldwide.

While the organization has operated with a "bare-bones budget" for several years, General Secretary Denton Lotz told council members: "This is not only bare-bones. This is leukemia. We are bleeding."

The Virginia-based BWA, already suffering from the weak economy, lost another \$125,000 in revenue for next year when the Southern Baptist Convention, its largest contributor, voted in June to reduce its allocation by

about a third. Southern Baptist leaders objected to the BWA's decision to admit the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as a member.

The past year “has been a very challenging year financially,” noted Wallace Charles Smith, chairman of the BWA's budget and finance committee. He said preparing next year's budget required “a great deal of stress, strain, agony and prayer.”

Despite the financial hardships, Lotz said, “We believe God is going to provide for us.”

The projected \$1.69 million in revenue includes more than \$520,000 from member bodies; \$780,000 from individuals, churches and other groups; and more than \$300,000 from administrative fees, investments, rental income and other sources.

Major expenses include \$1 million for personnel-related costs, \$126,400 for publications and media, \$118,260 for general office expenses and \$89,600 for staff travel. BWA is involved in global evangelism and education as well as work in the areas of religious freedom, human rights and Christian ethics.

Efforts to increase revenue for the alliance include recruiting Global Impact Churches, congregations that contribute at least \$1,000 annually.

Leaders also proposed bylaw changes that would expand BWA membership to include individual and associate members. Associate members would include local churches and other Baptist entities such as colleges and seminaries, as well as associational, regional or state Baptist organizations. The proposals will be considered during next year's BWA General Council meeting in Seoul, Korea.

In addition to BWA's operating budget, council members approved a 2003-2004 funding goal of \$2.66 million for Baptist World Aid, BWA's relief

and development arm.

Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid, noted the funding goal is a significant drop from the current year's \$3 million goal. Only \$1.2 million was received last year, resulting in several unmet ministry needs.

Among proposed ministry projects for the coming year are \$100,000 for hunger relief and \$100,000 for HIV/AIDS ministry efforts. Development projects-in Bangladesh, Liberia, Nicaragua and elsewhere-would fund housing for street children, AIDS prevention programs, and water and sanitation projects.

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