Armitage Baptist under attack;
Attempt to intimidate the church backfires and becomes a source of revival.

Chicago, IL — In a triumphant display of Christian solidarity, over 25 Chicago-area churches sent representatives and delegations to stand with the Armitage Baptist Church as it came under the attack of a radical pro-abortion coalition.

The protesters, led by such groups as Refuse and Resist, Queer Nation, Sister Serpents, and the Women's Action Coalition (WAC), were observing the March 9 anniversary of the shooting of abortionist David Gunn. The church was chosen as the site of the demonstration because of its aggressive pro-life activities and because its weekly Wednesday night prayer meeting happened to fall on the same date.

The church has been the frequent target of pro-abortion vandalism in the past and has had services disrupted on occasions by feminist and homosexual radicals. Armitage members were able to prepare in advance for the March 9 attack, working from tips gathered by various sources who monitor the activities of radical groups through "gay" and *avant-garde* publications in Chicago.

Though the church's pro-life ministry has involved aggressive measures such as picketing the home of an abortionist and blockading clinics, leadership has stepped short of condoning violence. In a statement to the press a day before the protest, one leader said, "We had nothing to do with the killing of David Gunn, nor do we encourage violence against abortionists. These groups are simply trying to associate us with the incident, all in an attempt to damage our reputation. It's a smear campaign, nothing more."

The Armitage Baptist Church is a multi-ethnic church in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago.

Security team for the church gathers early after intelligence confirmed an impending attack.

Pro-aborts from WAC scream at entering church members. A plot to throw eggs was foiled by police when they confiscated a box of them from protesters.

When word got out how pro-abortion groups were planning to disrupt the church's prayer meeting, church staff said that pastors from all over the city began phoning in to say that they would "come to support us during this attack."

"We even began receiving FAX letters of support from across the country," said one staff member. "Churches were upholding us in prayer during their Wednesday night services throughout the nation."

Experienced in dealing with opposition attacks on the church, Armitage men organized a security force of more than fifty guards, covering areas both in and outside of the building. They were joined by another twenty-five members of security teams from other churches.

"We have training sessions on how to deal with protesters who cause a disturbance during the services," said church deacon Curtis Blair. "We are ready to physically intervene if necessary, yet we are committed to showing these people respect and love while defending the church."

Protesters arrived at the building one half hour before the service and began shouting, beating drums, howling and chanting with megaphones. Worshipers arrived and walked through the lines of security guards protecting the main doors. Police were also on hand to hold the demonstrators at bay.

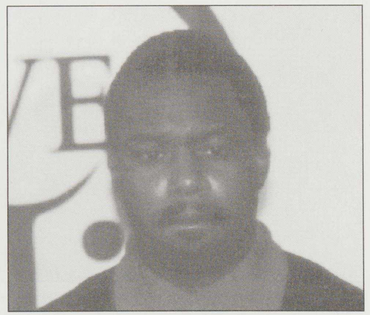
One half hour into the meeting, the main auditorium was full and overflowing when seven buses from a south side Black church pulled up in front of the building, jamming traffic in the four lane Kedzie Boulevard. The chants by pro-abortion activists accusing pro-lifers of beings "racists" and "white supremacists" quickly died out as the 400-plus members of Salem Baptist Church flooded the street, sidewalk and steps in front of the church. Their gospel choir took to the front steps and began singing, drowning out the chants of the protesters who soon gave up their attempt to disrupt the service and left.

So large were the numbers of worshipers, that a second prayer meeting was quickly organized from the lower-level auditorium in addition to the crowd of singers outside.

In a statement during his address to the congregation that night, Rev. James Meeks, one of several pastors attending the service, said, "We are against abortion because Jesus said, 'I have come that you might have'. . ." Over a thousand voices answered in a resounding cry, "Life!" The auditorium erupted in applause and the Salem Baptist choir closed the evening by leading in several songs of praise.

For the members of Armitage Baptist Church, a protest intended to threaten and discourage them became an event of revival and encouragement. the following Sunday evening, 34 members pledged to join the church's on-going weekly picket of a neighborhood abortion clinic.

"We praise God that He has given us joy in persecution." said Blair. "It's by His mighty hand that we press on." ■



Meeks