

Progressive Baptists urge end to Iraq war: Funds needed for Katrina relief

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The Progressive National Baptist Convention continued its call for an end to the war in Iraq at its annual meeting in Cincinnati, saying resources spent on the conflict are needed to address the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"The rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in the post-Katrina age should be done with financial and other support systems comparable to the resources available to Iraq," reads one of almost two dozen resolutions approved by delegates.

Another resolution states: "This unnecessary, unwise and destructive war in Iraq is rupturing our nation, corrupting our foreign relations and disrupting our future. Iraq is now a growing cancer rapidly and deeply spreading nationally and globally."

The 2.5-million-member denomination has decried the war in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion was launched in 2003. "We believe it to be unnecessary and that we should have our troops home," said T. DeWitt Smith Jr., the new president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, in a statement to RNS.

Smith succeeds Major L. Jemison, an Oklahoma City pastor who served for four years as president. Smith is the senior pastor of Trinity Baptist Church of Metro Atlanta and the former first vice president of the denomination.

Progressive Baptists also passed resolutions urging the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act, "a just and humane immigration policy," a lifting of travel restrictions to Cuba and a continuing commitment to affirmative action. *-Religion News Service*