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ANGERED: Parishioners demonstrate.

Clash over pastor of Korean church boils into protest

The Atlanta Journal
By David Corvette
Staff Writer
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A battle between parishioners and their pastor erupted in a public protest Sunday when about 50 members of the Korean First Presbyterian Church demonstrated outside the DeKalb County church.

Police were summoned to prevent disruption of the morning church services by the protest, another incident in a two-year battle over whether the pastor has misused prophetic and healing powers he claims to have.

The demonstrators, about a third of the church's 150-member congregation, carried signs comparing the church's pastor to cult figures Jim Jones and Sun Myung Moon, but no violence was reported, unlike another incident last week.

DeKalb police Lt. J.N. Fenley said the church's attorney called the police to the church at 4649 Glenwood Road. "All they want us to do is stand by in case they have any trouble," he said, adding that the protest resulted from "a problem within the church."

Demonstrators said the rift began about two years ago, after the Rev. Sam Jung Suh allegedly used his claims of prophetic and healing powers and spiritual revelation for his own profit. One member said Suh raised his salary \$400 a month, telling church deacons God had instructed him to do it.

Suh would not comment on those charges.

SEE Church

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Minister denies being cult figure

By David Corvette
Staff Writer

The Rev. Sam Jung Suh Monday denied he is a cult figure, saying some members of the First Korean Presbyterian Church are comparing him to Jim Jones and Sun Myung Moon just to draw attention to their attempts to oust him.

DeKalb County police Sunday went to the church, at 4649 Glenwood Road, for the second time in a week to prevent violence. No outbreaks were reported during a demonstration by about 50 parishioners this Sunday, police said, but a shoving match disrupted services last Sunday.

Speaking through an interpreter, Suh said he first learned of the comparisons to religious cultists Jones and Moon when he read placards the protesters carried. "That's what I'm being portrayed as," he said. "If you want to run the preacher out, that's the way to do it: make it too hot for him to stay."

Protesters said the controversy began two years ago after Suh allegedly used claims of prophetic and healing powers and spiritual revelation for his profit.



CENTER OF CONTROVERSY
The Rev. Sam Jung Suh

But Suh denied he claimed the gift of prophecy. He said a prediction last year that the church's membership would double this year and boost the church budget 80 percent was only his "vision of the future" based on past trends.

He also disputed claims that he speaks directly with God. The Korean minister said he spends every Saturday at the church praying and preparing his mind for church services, but he added that he follows the Presbyterian doctrine that says revealed prophecy ended in the biblical era.

"I have not received any prophecy, and I have not prophesied," he said.

Jin Park, one of the protesters and a leader of the church youth group, alleged that Suh told church deacons that God instructed him to seek a salary increase. "If we let him continue these things, he'll become the same kind of person as Sun Myung Moon," Park said.

Suh received a \$3,640 raise this year, but he said the national Korean Presbytery called for the increase last December. "They sent a note to all the local churches suggesting they pay the minister's retirement," he said. The so-called raise was a payment for the retirement plan, he said.

But the church budget, which includes Suh's raise, was not passed without disagreements, said Ok Suh, the minister's wife.

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