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'Call' Draws Successful
Pastor To Missions

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Tom Elliff is a preacher. A highly successful preacher.

Elliff, 37, is pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church in Tulsa, Okla. He came to Eastwood barely a year out of seminary, and in less than 10 years has led the church to quadruple attendance, almost triple membership (to 5,000) and launch several major building programs.

Today Eastwood is a multimillion dollar complex, complete with television and radio outreach, a mobile video unit, fully accredited primary and secondary schools with 60 teachers and 900 students, and a soon-to-be-opened Bible Institute.

But Elliff is leaving all this to work amid the strife and human need of Zimbabwe, a nation born in bloody conflict, established by a shaky truce and still in the throes of social and economic upheaval.

Appointed missionaries in May by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Elliff and his wife, Jeannie, hope to move to southern Africa with their four children next January, joining 41 other Southern Baptist missionaries already working in Zimbabwe.

He'll assist national pastors as a church development consultant, a specialist in the dynamics of church growth.

The consultant task joins several other job descriptions—rural evangelist, urban evangelist, church planter—under the broad heading "general evangelist," the No. 1 personnel need on Southern Baptist overseas mission fields. At last count, 392 general evangelists had been requested by mission workers in 62 countries. Eleven out of 12 such requests regularly go unfilled. Elliff is the first new general evangelist appointed for any of the seven countries of southern Africa since 1975.

Need, however, didn't motivate Elliff to volunteer for missions. What did was the mysterious, indefinable inner stirring described by most missionaries as the "call."

"In January I was praying about goals and directions for our church, as I normally do," Elliff remembers. "Right in the middle of that prayer time, the Lord called me into missions."

He prayed and thought for several days about the incident, then told his wife. She responded by quoting a Bible passage she'd read two days earlier, revealing to her that the couple would become missionaries.

Further confirmation came when Elliff traveled to Kenya and Uganda in March with another prominent Oklahoma preacher, Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith (Elliff and Smith are brothers-in-law). The two visited missionaries, preached, and talked to local pastors.

"I felt right in my element," said Elliff, barely containing his excitement.

Elliff admits such a move may be unusual for the pastor of a large, growing church, but insists that it "bolls down to a call."

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"When I made the decision, a lot of people thought, 'Ah, there must be problems at church,'" he recalls. "Things couldn't be better! The church is growing rapidly and we're entering all sorts of new ministries. On the logical side it might seem that this is foolish. But when God says do it, you do it, especially if you've preached that all your life."

"I'd challenge other pastors the same way. Are your goals just what you think a successful pastorate ought to be—First Baptist Church, county seat town, or whatever—or is your goal to be in the will of God?" he asks.

"If any man could get to the place in his life where all he wanted for his life was simply all God wanted for his life, then all his life he'd have all he wants.

"I'm not there yet. I'm working on it."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

SBC Not Negotiating
For Mine Purchase

By Norman Jameson

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--It is the Los Angeles Church Loan Corporation and not the Southern Baptist Convention that is negotiating to buy coal properties in Kentucky.

Persistent rumors have plagued the strike-torn mining region near Harlan, Ky., since the first of May that the nation's largest Protestant denomination was about to buy a non-union mine. Such a move would alarm Baptist pastors there whose memberships include both union and independent miners.

Office workers and the company's lawyer were convinced the man who offered to buy the Kentucky Harlan Coal Company was a Californian representing the Southern Baptist Convention. But W.C. Bryant, executive director of the Los Angeles Church Loan Corporation, said he has "no idea" how they got that impression.

"I have always tried to keep the relationship very clear in everybody's mind," said Bryant, pastor of First Baptist Church, Norwalk, Calif.

"The Church Loan Corporation is a privately held corporation," said Robert Hughes, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California. "We disclaim any knowledge of its current operation or relationships."

The Los Angeles Church Loan Corporation, founded in 1963, was at first directly related to the Los Angeles Baptist Association. That relationship ended in the mid-'70s and the corporation has no ties to any Southern Baptist agency or institution.

Its sole objective, according to Bryant, is to accumulate funds to purchase land on which to build Southern Baptist churches in California. Bryant says he currently manages 22 or 23 uni-trusts, though the corporation has yet to finance a single church site.

Neither Bryant nor Kentucky Harlan Coal Co. Lawyer Bill Forrester would confirm the asking price of the company. Area Baptists say it is between \$26 million and \$36 million. Bryant says he is negotiating for "several" mines.

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Maryland Representative
Corrects Clerical Error

LANHAM, Md. (BP)--Fred T. Moffatt Jr. will be renominated to a full term on the board of trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The announcement of Moffatt's renomination was made by Keith G. Koch, pastor of Carrollan Woods Baptist Church in Lanham, the remaining Maryland representative on the Southern Baptist Convention committee on boards.

Moffatt was not renominated to the board of trustees, because a clerical error failed to show him as being eligible. The error occurred last June when Moffatt was elected by the convention to fill a one-year term, replacing John Woodall.

Moffatt's name, however, was inadvertently omitted from a notebook in which all trustee appointments are recorded. Subsequently, it also was not included in a workbook provided to members of the SBC committee on boards. The workbook showed Woodall's name, and that he had moved from the state.

"We acted in complete integrity," said Koch. "We were not aware that Fred Moffatt was a trustee or that he was eligible to be renominated."

The Maryland representatives on the committee on boards suggested Wade Akins, director of missions for the Prince Georges Baptist Association, for the New Orleans Seminary board, and the committee on boards nominated him.

Maryland's two representatives on the committee on boards were Koch, the church-related vocations member, and Reeves Andrews, of Churchville, an insurance agent, who was the lay member.

Since the committee met March 23-25 in Nashville, it has been revealed Andrews presented himself as a candidate for membership in an independent Baptist church. Since he is no longer affiliated with a Southern Baptist Church, he is ineligible to serve.

Koch said he acted alone in the decision to renominate Moffatt. "I had no need to speak to him (Andrews). He is no longer on the committee and what he would say would not mean anything. I am the official representative from Maryland."

He added, however, he has been in consultation with Roy Gresham, executive director of the Maryland Baptist Convention, in making his recommendation.

"Fred Moffatt by rights was eligible to be renominated," he said in explaining his decision to return Moffatt to his place on the New Orleans board. "I made the decision because of the difficulties of this particular year. I did not wish for Maryland to be innocently a part of a controversy in which we weren't really involved, and which could bring bad feelings toward Maryland."

He also added Moffatt and Akins have been "continually congenial. We have not been involved in a liberal versus conservative or one faction versus another issue. Everybody has been more than generous."

Akins told Baptist Press: "I told him (Koch) all along that it was his decision and that I would be happy to abide under any decision he felt the Lord led him to make. God put him in that position to make the decision and he has the ultimate authority. I am assuming this

is what the Lord wants him to do. I will just accept it."

Moffatt, who said he had not yet been notified, said he was "rather bemused by the whole experience."

He said he was informed Monday, March 30, of the clerical error and that another nominee had been named and that the Maryland representatives "did not see fit to change their recommendation."

"Then," Moffatt said, "Mr. Koch called me May 19—three weeks later—to ask if I would be willing to serve. Then, the next day, he told me he was not going to change the recommendation."

"Now, you call me and tell me I will be renominated. I am very befuddled by all of this. However, I think the thing I should do is to accept the nomination as graciously as possible," Moffatt said.

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Chafin, Patterson
To Debate At RNA

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HOUSTON (BP)--Kenneth Chafin, pastor of Houston's South Main Baptist Church, will debate Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, at the annual convention of the Religion Newswriters Association of North America June 6 in Los Angeles.

The debate topic will be "Inerrancy Is an Issue Crucial To the Survival of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Chafin will take the position that "biblical inerrancy is not an issue crucial to the survival of the SBC." Patterson will take the side that "biblical inerrancy is an issue crucial to the survival of the SBC."

Houston Chronicle Religion Editor Louis Moore, second vice president of the RNA, will moderate the debate.

Moore said Chafin and Patterson have been asked by the RNA to debate the issue "because both are articulate and knowledgeable spokesmen representing both sides of the issue. We have asked the two men to tell us their positions on whether the issue of biblical inerrancy is crucial in the life of the SBC."

The RNA is a professional organization for religion editors and writers on secular newspapers, wire services and news magazines in the U.S. and Canada.

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Senate Further Restricts
Federally Funded Abortions

By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate has voted to deny federal funding of abortions for poor women who become pregnant due to rape or incest.

By a 52-43 vote, the Senate defeated an Appropriations Committee recommendation to delete a restrictive anti-abortion amendment added by the House to a supplemental appropriations bill.

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Sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and Rep. Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., the amendment permits federal payment for abortions only when the life of the mother is threatened.

Because the appropriations bill to which the rider is attached provides supplemental funds to run the government only through the end of the current fiscal year, the restrictive amendment would be in effect only a few months if it is signed into law.

However, the key vote may have set a precedent or signaled the direction for future abortion votes in the Republican-controlled Senate.

The anti-abortion vote came after a heated debate and dashed the hopes of Majority Leader Howard Baker Jr., R-Tenn., to delay floor action of such emotionally volatile issues until the Senate completes action on the president's economic package.

Sen. Robert Packwood, R-Ore., charged that the Hyde-Helms amendment says "tough luck" to poor women who become pregnant due to rape or incest.

Helms maintained his anti-abortion views came from "a little set of instructions, 10 of them, that came down from Sinai."

Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr., R-Conn., later responded, "We are not running this country by divine commandments or instructions from Sinai. We are running this country by virtue of a constitutional process which has nothing to do with any divine commandments or instructions from Sinai."

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From Sandwiches to HMB Help,
Church Finds Ways to Finance

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RUFFS DALE, Pa.(BP)—When a tiny mission Sunday School first brought a man to Ruffs Dale to talk about being pastor, members had to sell sandwiches to help buy his plane ticket.

Now Ruffs Dale Baptist Church has 115 members, and directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board have voted to provide James L. Smith with church pastoral assistance.

Smith and his wife, Jimmie, were among 54 persons named to missions service by board directors during their May meeting. But the Smith's affiliation with the Ruffs Dale church dates to June of 1979, when Smith first visited the congregation.

"At this time there were just two adult men, the only working members" out of 21 people, Smith said. "They sold hoagies (sandwiches) to anyone who would buy them, had yard sales and special offerings to raise the funds needed" for the airplane ticket.

"I felt then that if a group of Christians could exercise such faith. . .then I could do nothing less but trust the Lord to supply my needs," Smith said.

Since then, the group has constituted into a church and has won three awards from the Baptist Sunday School Board for growth. Ruffs Dale members also have led the state convention in church study course credits.

But the church is not gloating over its success, nor is it resting on its news support from the Home Mission Board.

"There have been many steps forward," Smith said, "and we see down the road that God shall lead us to help give birth to new works in our area."

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