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Loftus Fishes For Support  
For Hard-Times Pastorate

By Tim McKay

ENGELHARD, N.C. (BP)--Bill Loftus came to Engelhard Baptist Church three years ago, fresh out of a ministry, to be its first full-time minister in recent years.

With only 34 active members, the church has difficulty supporting a full-time minister. But since Engelhard is located on rich fishing waters Loftus knew he could supplement his salary. Last year he spent two or three hours each morning on a well-worn boat, bought for \$35, working 62 salvaged and repaired crab pots.

Loftus never expected to make a lot of money crabbing and he soon learned the realities: "You don't work to make a living down here, instead you work to survive."

With the price of crabs fluctuating daily, he averaged net earnings of only \$5 a day. Some days he even lost money.

Near the end of crabbing season last year, the main seam in his boat's hull split, filling the rotten boat with water. The boat was a total loss and since many of Loftus' pots were also rotten he gave up commercial crabbing until he could afford a new boat and more pots. Simultaneously, the economy dropped.

Everyone in the community seems to have suffered from the drop, said Loftus, whose misfortunes were compounded by economic hard times. When the community suffers there's no money to pay the pastor, he explained. In Engelhard, where livelihood depends on fishing and farming, the economy even dictates the discussion at the church meetings.

"When we have a deacons' meeting all we talk about is meals and money," said Loftus. "For six months out of the last church year, we didn't meet the budget. Half of our congregation is on Social Security. If they get it cut and prices rise, they need all their money to live, so they take it from their tithe. You can't fault them for that--you have to understand."

Even with income from small jobs, Loftus "just wouldn't be able to survive another pay cut."

As the average age of his congregation is 64 and many are too ill to attend regular services, much of Loftus' ministry is in their homes. To make a hospital visit, Loftus must travel 80 miles to Washington, N.C., or 102 miles to Greenville, S.C. "A minister's primary duty down here is to the elderly," he said.

When the church has a communion service, Loftus spends hours repeating the ordinance in shut-in's homes. Once he tried to organize a meals program for the elderly but because of lack of volunteers it was short-lived.

When Loftus arrived, Sunday and Wednesday services were almost unheard of. Revivals were an impossibility because the church couldn't afford the electric bills. So evangelism is a slow process, Loftus said. "People in the city are used to doing things today; people in the country are used to doing things tomorrow," he explained. "I'm a very impatient person, with a quick temper, but here I have learned patience."

"If you want to make an evangelist, give a man a vision of 24 hours in hell. But if you want to make him a pastor let him come to a place like this where you get to know the problems and hurts of the people."

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Larry McClure, area missionary for northeast North Carolina, noted it takes "a special kind of person to come from the outside and stay to minister to the people in this area.

"It takes a long time to become accepted and some say it takes three generations to really become an insider."

This reluctance to trust outsiders is deeply rooted in a history of isolation. McClure explained, "Many residents feel like a stepchild to the rest of the state because this is a big hunk of geography that is surrounded by water."

While water might be the main physical barrier to the rest of North Carolina, Loftus and his congregation have often felt forgotten by time and distance from other Southern Baptist churches. In this part of the state most churches are small family congregations; Baptists are in the minority. With more than 5,000 residents in Hyde County, less than 300 are Baptist. And only a third of them attend church, said Loftus. In the five Southern Baptist churches in the county, there are only 134 people.

Another problem is "the Home Mission Board emphasizes starting new churches when th y've forgotten the small churches. They spend a lot of time doing studies in the Northeast and other pioneer areas and blanket cities like New York, thinking the homefront is safe, but it's far from it," Loftus said.

Often Loftus doesn't see another Southern Baptist minister for months at a time. Because of distances involved, it is financially impossible for him to attend associational meetings, pastor's conferences or conventions.

It's time for a change, Loftus insisted, back to the past. "These little churches out here, although they want their independence, have no business being independent. They ought to become as parish churches, with the parsonage on neutral territory, all being served by one minister. Then they could afford a minister.

"That's the way they started. They were that way for 25 years. Then they felt they could go it alone. The economy was great then, but now it has fallen, they can't handle it."

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

HMB Notes Increase  
In Missionary Force

Baptist Press  
1/25/83

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board noted an increase of 23 percent over the previous high for missions appointments during 1982, boosting the number of home missionaries to 3,424, reported Irvin Dawson, director of the HMB's missionary personnel department.

The HMB appointed 693 missions workers in 1982, surpassing the previous record of 563 missions appointments set in 1980. The 1982 total also represented a 38 percent increase over 1981 missions appointments, said Dawson.

During 1982, the board appointed 77 missionaries, 118 missionary associates and 41 US-2 missionaries and approved 385 persons for church pastoral assistance and 72 persons for language pastoral assistance.

Dawson said the surge in mission appointments stemmed from increases in the number of church planter apprentices appointed by the HMB's church extension division. The board appointed 35 church planter apprentices in 1982, up from only 13 during 1981, said Dawson. The church planter apprentice program is designed to use seminary graduates with limited pastoral experience in the starting of new churches.

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"The increase in missions appointments represents Southern Baptists' commitment to reach people with the gospel and offer them the opportunity to worship with other believers," said William G. Tanner, HMB president. "It also indicates that Southern Baptists are willing to answer God's call to become witnesses as well as providers of resources for expanding our missions force in order to make Bold Mission Thrust a reality."

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Ministry Demanding,  
Rewarding, Campbell Says

Baptist Press  
1/25/83

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--"Ministers need to remember that preaching is a daring, almost pr sumptuous act," Frank R. Campbell said at the Spring Convocation for students of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The second-term president of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Statesville, N.C., explained that preaching "is a man claiming to speak for God, but also it is a man speaking to men with the gospel."

He added, "Just because you have responded to the holy calling of God does not certify you as a saint. We all must continue to grow in Christ in the church, both pastor and people."

Campbell stressed the personal initiative necessary to be an effective pastor following graduation from seminary. "After the initial excitement fades, you will face the frightening reality that you are alone," he said. "No one is going to make you punch a time clock or turn in a weekly sales report. It's your ministry."

"The ministry is an absolutely frustrating, demanding, disappointing, unrealistic, impossible calling," Campbell said, adding, "it is also the most rewarding, fulfilling, thrilling and meaningful way a person can invest his life."

Within the personal area, he pointed out many ministers neglect their own devotional life and their families. "Choose a ballgame over a church meeting sometime," he said. "God will approve and, you might find to your surprise, so will many of your church members."

Commenting on current conflicts within the Southern Baptist Convention, he said, "There is no Baptist way to which we all must subscribe. While Southern Baptists have been noted for making 'unity within diversity' work, some of our more vocal brothers are calling for the replacing of diversity with sameness and unity with uniformity. I hope that you will refuse to be a part of anyone's program to change the denomination we love."

"You do not sacrifice any biblical or spiritual principles by being cooperative," he said. "Cooperation is the way Southern Baptists work together...That's an exciting experience."

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Scripture Distribution  
Up, Reports HMB's Belew

Baptist Press  
1/25/83

ATLANTA (BP) -- The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board distributed more than 6.5 million copies of scripture during 1982, a 23 percent increase over the previous year, reported M. Wendell Belew, director of the HMB's missions ministries division.

The HMB distributed 6,532,244 pieces of scripture during 1982, exceeding the 1981 total of 5.27 million. The scriptures, which were provided to missionaries either free or at a nominal charge, included Bibles, New Testaments, books of the Bible and excerpts from Bible passages, and scriptures in 11 different languages.

Belew said Baptist Ministries at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tenn., where more than one million scriptures were distributed, accounted for some of the year's increase. But he added that the 1982 total indicated "a good leap forward."

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National Acoetens Panelists  
Named During WMU Board Meeting

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Six teenage girls were named to the seventh National Acoeten Panel by the Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention, during its Executive Board meeting.

The panelists are: Lydia Lowe of Evanston, Wyo.; Shannon Brawley of West Memphis, Ark.; Tracy Ellen Webb of Lexington, Ky.; Janine Walker of Austin, Texas; Leigh Sneed of Raleigh, N.C., and Kimberly Wiese of Nashville, Ill.

Wiese's sister Tina was a 1980 panelist. This marks the first time sisters have served as panelists since the panel was created in 1977.

Selections are based on scholastic achievement, school and church activities and accomplishments in Studiact, the individual achievement plan for Acoetens.

In addition to their applications and written testimonies, candidates had to be recommended by their pastor and Acoetens leader.

Panelists will be featured in the April 1983 issue of Accent, the monthly missions magazine for girls in grades 7 through 12.

Their duties will include writing for Accent and appearances at state and associational WMU-related meetings. They will also serve as pages at the WMU Annual Meeting, June 12-13 in Pittsburgh, Penn., and at the Southern Baptist Convention which immediately follows.

They will serve until Dec. 1, 1983, when selection for new panelists begins.

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CORRECTION: In BP 1/24/83, please KILL "Elder Says Search Process 'Satisfying'". More complete information will be provided later.

Thanks,  
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