

Salem - 1849

Lincoln

SOUTH FORK

1849 - Const. Admit. to BROAD RIVER(SC)

1864 - Dism. from BROAD RIVER(SC). Admit. to CATAWBA
RIVER.

1879 - Dism. from CATAWBA RIVER.

South Fork
The Gaston Gazette
Gastonia, NC
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12/13/00

Carolina Clipping Service
Raleigh, NC 27603

State called in on Lincolnton church probe

■ Investigation under way on employee suspected of stealing about \$140,000

By MARILYN COX
Gazette Staff Reporter

LINCOLNTON — The State Bureau of Investigation is looking into possible embezzlement at Salem Baptist Church in Lincolnton.

A church employee is suspected of stealing approximately \$140,000 from church coffers, said Lt. Ronnie Matthews of the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office.

The report was filed at the local sheriff's office Friday. On Monday, local authorities turned the case over to the SBI to avoid a conflict of interest.

"We have a couple of officers who go to that church and are deacons or were deacons and are still church leaders. That being the case, the sheriff and myself felt we had to call in the State Bureau of Investigation because

of a potential conflict of interest," Matthews said. "They can spend more time on the case and have access to sources the sheriff's department wouldn't have."

No one has been charged in the case and the investigation is ongoing. Once the church receives an audit, more details about the case will be known, including the exact amount of money allegedly stolen.

The pastor of the church, at 1982 Salem Church Road, could not be reached Tuesday afternoon.

Coleman Dellinger, the stewardship chairman of Salem Baptist Church, had little to say about the case.

"It will be left to the SBI for the investigation. Everyone is sorry this has happened. The church was sort of devastated," Dellinger said.

South Fork B. A.

CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

CHARLOTTE, NC
MONDAY 240,324
SEP 1 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES

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BOLT IGNITES FIRE

Church struck by lightning again

750K3

*Building damaged for
2nd time in 6 weeks*

BY MARK PRICE
Staff Writer

A bolt of lightning is being blamed for a fire that heavily damaged Salem Baptist Church in the Lincolnton area Sunday afternoon, leaving its congregation of 600 without a sanctuary.

It marked the second time in six weeks that the building at 1982 Salem Church Road near Boger City has been damaged by lightning, said Pastor Ken Gibson, who was the only one in the church at the time.

"I heard a loud pop about 1:15 (p.m.), and the alarm system went off immediately," Gibson said. "Then I smelled smoke. About that time, some other members of the congregation came in, and we discovered the fire. We used three extinguishers, but it was too hot and too far gone."

Five fire departments responded, and it took 45 minutes to get the blaze under control, an official with the Lincoln

County Sheriff's Department said. Several firefighters suffered heat exhaustion but were not seriously injured, sheriff's officials said.

A preliminary investigation showed that lightning struck the roof near the front of the church, destroying a room full of sound equipment that was purchased a few weeks ago.

The equipment was bought, Gibson says, to replace other sound equipment destroyed when lightning struck the church steeple six weeks ago.

"It's ironic that we just bought a new steeple and put it up two weeks ago," said Gibson, who has served as interim pastor since November.

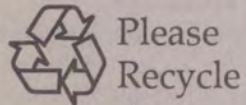
In many respects, he said, the congregation is lucky. Insurance on the 26-year-old building was recently updated. Plus, had the lightning struck 45 minutes later, at 2 p.m., the church would have been full for an ordination service, Gibson said.

Church leaders will meet Tuesday to determine how to handle the reconstruction. In the meantime, the congregation will hold services in the church fellowship hall, Gibson said.

Inside:

Rebels downed by Shelby - page 8A

LINCOLN TIMES NEWS



Vol. 91-No. 149

Lincoln County's Home Newspaper

Lincolnton, North Carolina

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CAROLINA CLIPPING
1115 HILLSBOROUGH ST
RALEIGH NC

27603

December 13, 2000

Money reported missing from church

By RANDY HAWKINS
LTN Staff Writer

A criminal investigation has been requested into the alleged embezzlement of tens of thousands of dollars from Salem Baptist Church.

Lincoln County Sheriff Barbara Pickens said Tuesday that she asked the State Bureau of

Investigation to conduct a probe after church officials filed a report with her agency.

"I have two officers that are members of the congregation and one that is holding an office and one that has held an office. I know a lot of the members and the pastor and the pastor's family and feel it would be more

appropriate for an outside agency to look into the case," Pickens said.

The report was filed Friday with the sheriff's department.

"We have turned it over to the sheriff's department and they have turned it over to the SBI," said Coleman Dellinger, chairman of the church's finance

committee. "As far as how much money is gone, I don't know right now."

Elaine Putnam, former church secretary, admitted in a Dec. 3 letter to the congregation that she wrote checks to herself to help pay for necessities for her family. She and her husband both have medical problems.

"Yielding to temptation is exactly what I did, and I honestly can't tell you how long.... I know that I could have gone to my family or my church family with my needs. But ... the devil can be so deceiving, you don't know right from wrong," Putnam wrote.

See CHURCH, page 2A

She once sang in nightclubs, stripped for a living, but now Beverly Massegee's Crusade for Christ allows her to ...

Peel Away the Past

By DAVE COWAN
And PEDRO R. RUZ
Staff Writers

LINCOLNTON — It's part of Beverly Massegee's job to admit she's a woman with a past.

As an evangelist with her husband, Charles Massegee, she tells crowds about her life as a teenage nightclub singer and stripper in Dallas, Tex. She tells them her story of redemption after heroin nearly destroyed her life.

But there's more to Massegee's story.

There's also the incredible train of coincidence that she says led her to know Jack Ruby, meet Lee Harvey Oswald, witness the John F. Kennedy assassination, and become immortalized in the Zapruder assassination film as "the babushka lady."

The Ranger, Tex.-based Massegees are in Lincolnton this week to present their Crusade for Christ at Salem Baptist Church. While Beverly Massegee's contribution to Kennedy assassination lore isn't part of the crusade, it has become part of the movie "JFK" and the 1989 book "Crossfire, The Plot That Killed Kennedy."

Massegee, 47, now uses her singing voice — combined with a ventriloquism act — to spread her ministry. But that wasn't the case, she says, when she went to work in nightclubs at age 14 as Beverly Oliver.

"That was my way of life. I was an entertainer," Massegee said in an interview Wednesday. "It was a good living. ... I wanted to sing."

Ultimately that put her in contact with Ruby, who owned strip clubs in Dallas. And Ruby, she says, introduced her to Oswald a scant two to three weeks before Kennedy's Nov. 22, 1963, assassination.

"Jack Ruby introduced me to him as a CIA agent, or as 'Lee Oswald of the CIA,'" she said.

Later, she says, she joined the rest of the crowd at Dealey Plaza, hoping to get a glimpse of the president as his motorcade rolled through.

"I was a 17-year-old girl who just went to see the president," she said. But Massegee says she became more than a face in the crowd.

She also was the woman wear-

ing a head scarf and holding a camera who can be seen in the famous Abraham Zapruder assassination film. Finding "the babushka lady" became an obsession for investigators and researchers until 1977, she says, when government investigators identified her. Her interview with New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison became part of Oliver Stone's "JFK" film.

Massegee said her life in the clubs included a heroin addiction that almost killed her. But she was beginning to clean up her life even before her religious conversion in 1969.

After that, she left the clubs and began singing in churches. She met her husband in 1971 and began her career as an evangelist.

Today, Massegee's voice is the same, but her message is different.

Jesus "has taken the bad and the ugly in me and made something beautiful out of it," she said. "If he can change me, save me and convert me, he can change anybody."

Now she has written a book about her JFK connection, tentatively titled "A Flame in the Wind," which her ministry will sell.

Massegee says she plans to keep the book separate from her evangelism.

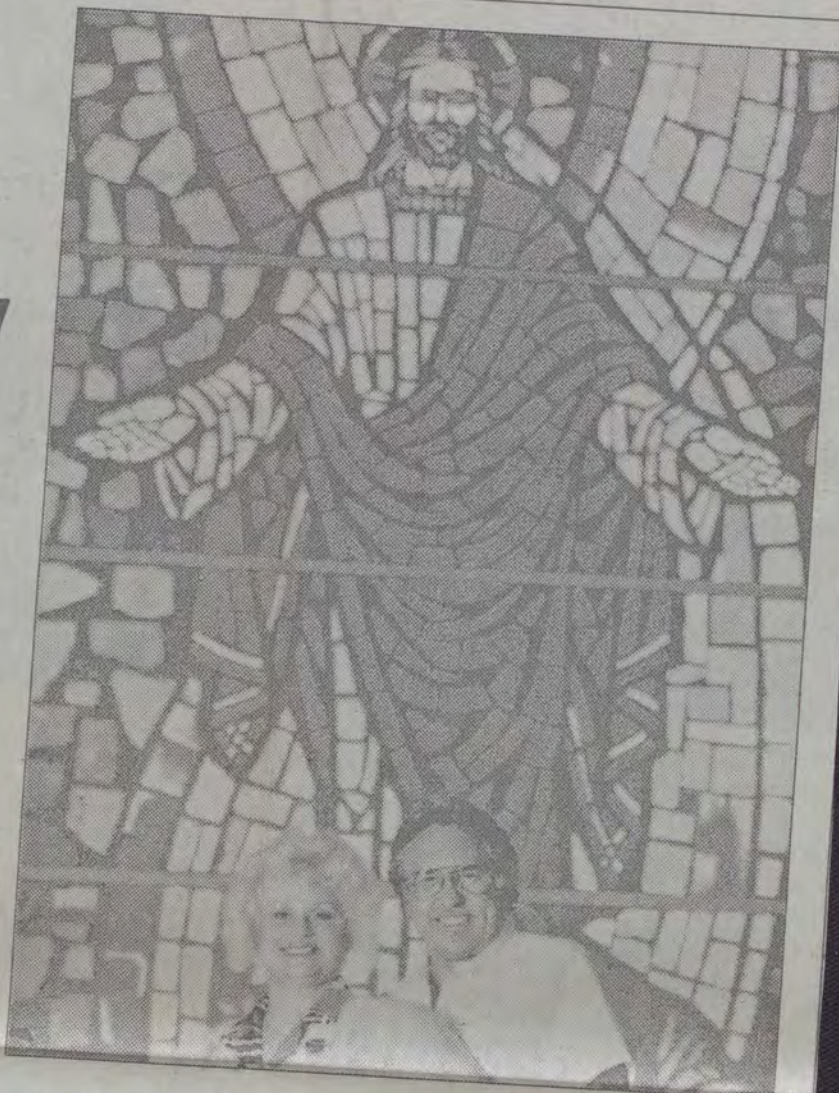
"I try not to be pushy," she said. "I want to share just what happened."

□□□

Staff writer Chip Wilson contributed to this article.

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This article appeared in The Gaston Observer, the Gaston and Lincoln counties and Kings Mountain edition of The Observer.



ROBERT LAHSER/Staff

Colorful past: Beverly Massegee and her husband, Charles, are leading a crusade at Salem Baptist Church in Lincoln County.

Evangelist Turns Hangouts To Pulpit

By RANDY HAWKINS
T-N Staff Writer

Main Street cruisers may be in for a shock Friday night when one of their parking lot hangouts becomes a pulpit for a nationally-known evangelist.

A Southern Baptist minister who believes in "taking it to the streets," Rev. Jack Hazelwood plans to set up shop in the vacant Winn Dixie parking lot around 10 p.m. Friday.

Hazelwood, who witnesses for Christ at rock concerts, communes, nightclubs and bars, is delivering his message nightly at 7:30 this week at Salem Baptist Church. He also will be speaking at local schools and wherever else he gets the chance.

Hazelwood, originally from Houston, Tex., now works out of Little Rock, Ark., the base of the Jack Hazelwood Evangelistic Association. He has spent the last 12 years in evangelism and estimates that in the last five years he has delivered his nonsectarian talk to about two million students.

Because of his own drug use as a senior in high school, Hazelwood claims to have lost two football scholarships. But he tries to "play down" his drug use, trying not to "glamorize" it. Yet, as a result of his background, he feels he does have something to offer to young people.

Hazelwood believes that "there is a bigger problem with

drug abuse today than we've even had. There are more drug abusers and teenage alcoholics today than ever."

But not as much is being done about it, Hazelwood says, because "it's not news copy anymore." When the problems were first recognized several years ago, many groups became involved, Hazelwood says, but because drug abuse is not on the front pages everyday, not as much is being done now to combat it.

Hazelwood offers young people "the respect and responsibility of your body" as an alternative to drug use. He also offers them "the Christ experience—not the church experience." In the schools,

Hazelwood does not bring religion into his message, but he tells students where he will be delivering his religious message in order to try to get them on "Jesus turf" as he calls it.

Responding to the criticism that he has replaced one crutch for another—drugs for Christ—Hazelwood says, "If it is a crutch, give me another one. I wish I could get an overdose. It's free—I always had to pay for drugs."

He says, "I took a trip with Jesus and haven't had to worry about the next fix since. I don't have to worry about the cost. The first dose was so great that I've been tripping with Jesus ever since."

Hazelwood has appeared in several states to argue against the legalization of marijuana. He says that the argument that marijuana is no worse than alcohol is absurd because alcohol abuse cost this country \$60 billion last year.

"Young people hear rock music and read Rolling Stone and Head, but they don't hear what Duke University, what medical research and psychiatrists are saying about marijuana. I try to communicate that in a way young people can comprehend."

Hazelwood is a Baptist "by choice, not by coercion." When he was growing up, he says, "I didn't know the difference between Baptist and Buick, Catholic and Cadillac."

"I don't want young people to become like me—to walk like me and talk like me. I point them to the Christ of the Bible and tell them to read it and Christ will lead them."

"Too many people are majoring on minors and minoring on majors. Differing denominations believe differing things. But what you wear on your namebrand doesn't count. What you have in your heart is what matters. Follow Christ."

Hazelwood says that he was returning from eating out in Gastonia this past weekend and missed the turn to go back to his motel room, winding up in the Main Street traffic. He was amazed by all the cars lined up, creeping through town.

"I know that probably seems freakish to the church people. The pious crowd is probably really down on the kids cruising through town. But have they ever done something to reach that crowd? We want to do something to alleviate the situation."

Hazelwood plans to have a blue grass group and some other groups with him in the parking lot Friday. He plans mostly singing—not a lot of preaching.

The man whose "outreach is to the unreached" and who believes in "getting out of the four walls of the church" plans to do just that.



HAZELWOOD

Lincolnton: Lincoln Times-News
Littleton: Observer
Louisburg: Franklin Times
Madison: Messenger
Maiden: News
Manteo: Coastland Times
Marion: McDowell News
Marshall: News-Record
Marshville: Home

MAY 2 1979

Lincoln Times - News

Lincolnton, NC

D - NO DATA S - NO DATA

Dec. 13, 2000

Carolina Clipping Service
Raleigh, NC 27603

South Fork
BA
he's
my daughter," said the Rev.
Charles Cranford, who has
served as the church's pastor for
36 years.

He said he knew nothing
about the missing money until
his daughter came to him and
confessed. Putnam, who suffers
from rheumatoid arthritis and
whose husband is disabled,
spent the money on medicine
and food, Cranford said.

"That's what it went for, but
that doesn't make it right."

The church had planned to let
the congregation decide whether
to allow her to pay the money
back privately, Cranford said. In
her letter, Putnam wrote that she
and her husband had agreed to
sell their home to make partial
restitution.

A vote by the congregation
was canceled, however. Dellinger
wouldn't comment on the
decision, but another church official
said leaders were worried
a vote would seriously divide
the membership.

"It's been sort of devastating,"
Dellinger said, "but Sunday we
all pulled together again. We've
turned it over to the sheriff's
department. It's time for the
church to move on."

Staff writer Randy Hawkins
can be reached at 735-3031 or
randyhawkins@ltnews.com.

///



WATSON



KERR

Salem Observing Baptist Men's Day

Salem Baptist Church will feature a Baptist Men's Day Sunday sponsored by the brotherhood of the church.

The featured speaker for the morning service will be Buck Watson, director of data processing for Heafner Tire Co. and a church layman. Also featured will be Keith Kerr, a

pilot for the Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) of Waxhaw, a division of Wycliffe Bible Translators.

At Sunday's 7 p.m. service a film and slides of Kerr's missionary work in Bolivia will be shown.

Kerr is a former captain for the Canadian Pacific Airlines.

Lincolnton: Lincoln Times News
Littleton Observer
Louisburg: Franklin Times
Madison Messenger
Maiden News
Manteo: Coastland Times
Marion: McDowell News
Marshall: News-Record
Marshville Home

5.
Fork

JAN 20 1978

CHURCHES IN NORTH CAROLINA

As named by Morgan Edwards, John Asplund, G. W. Paschal or others

NAME
MIN

1. Name*** Salem Date of Constitution 1849 ML

LINCOLN RT 3

2. Name _____ If changed. Date of change _____

3. Location. Name of County when Constituted Lincoln 1779

4. Location. Name of County at present time _____

5. Name of Association with which originally affiliated Cat River 1826

Name in 1960

South Fork 1880

6. Type of Church; General Baptist, _____ Particular, _____

Separate, _____ Regular, _____ Other, _____

7. Is the church by either name listed in Convention Annual in 1959 or 1960?

YAS

(See Notes Other Side)

Carolina

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TIMES NEWS
LINCOLNTON, N. C.

JUL 18-83

Church Offers Visual Ministry

By TERRY BRAY
T-N Staff Writer

Video church has come to
Lincolnton.

Salem Baptist Church, in
conjunction with Lincoln
Cablevision, began
telecasting church services
via TV this weekend as a
way to bring Sunday morn-
ing worship to area han-
dicapped and shut-ins. Ac-
cording to Salem pastor
Charles Cranford, the new
service is, "just another
way of reaching out to help

people."

Cranford says the
Southern Baptist church is
involved in a number of
evangelic programs.

"We sponsor two church
missions in West Virginia.
We sponsor three
evangelists through the
Jungle Aviation and Radio
Service (JAARS) and we
sponsor a building pro-
gram in Central America."

But the taped services
which are filmed live at the
church is the church's first

step in to the field of video.
The credit for the project,
according to Cranford,
goes to a layman, David
McSwain.

McSwain is a 37-year-old
businessman who first
became interested in visual
ministry after visiting In-
dia a year ago. He was so
impressed by the poor liv-
ing conditions and harsh
climate of the country, that
he wanted to share what he
saw with other Christians.
The result was that McS-

wain developed a short
documentary on India
(that tape was aired on Lin-
colnton's cable TV station
last week).

McSwain is quick to play
down his involvement with
the video church project,
but it was he who first ap-
proached Rev. Cranford
and the church members
with the idea. He also con-
tacted the local cable TV
station to arrange air time
and schedule the pro-
grams. And it is McSwain

who does all the filming for
the programs.

"I'm not in this for
myself," says McSwain,
explaining why he prefers
a "low profile" in his work
with the project. "I'm just
doing this for my church,
and for spreading the
gospel. That's what I'm in
it for."

Besides regular Sunday
morning worship services,
the church plans to telecast
special features such as Bi-
ble studies, revival ser-

vi-
ces and other documen-
taries. One such documen-
tary planned for the near
future is a special on
Charles Massagee, a
Texas-based evangelist
who visits Salem regularly
during tours throughout the
Southeast.

Salem's church pro-
grams will differ slightly
from other TV church pro-
grams, according to Rev.
Cranford. The 45-minute
programs will not include

(Continued On Page 5)



Man Behind The Camera

Ministry

(Continued From Page 1)

any type request for monetary support. Cranford says the project will be wholly subsidized by church members.

The program will also offer translation for deaf members of the audience.

In addition, following each Sunday's program, counselors from Salem will be on hand to answer questions and provide advice by telephone from the church. Cranford says that will strengthen the program.

"We're real excited about it," he says. "We believe this will be a very good way to reach handicapped and young people in our community."

As for the cablevision station's involvement, systems manager Walter Melius says his company offers air time to any church as a public service. Usually, however, the service consists only of providing a written announcement. This is the first time the company has given time for a locally filmed and produced video segment. He also says it is the first time a local program has been linked into the Christian Broadcast Network system to which Lincoln Cablevision belongs. The link up means Salem's programs may be seen on other Christian stations.

Although the church has been working on the project for nearly six months, the first local service aired will not be seen for about two more weeks. In the meantime, the church is showing a film strip provided through the state Baptist Association.



Dedication Ceremonies Sunday

Dedication services and open house will be held Sunday at 2:30 p.m. at the Salem Baptist Church on the Salem Road for the new addition just completed. The addition, shown from the exterior and interior, took about 14 months to

construct and, with furnishings, cost about \$225,000. It contains 9,600 square feet of floor space. Dr. Robert A. Cantwell of the First Baptist Church will make the dedication.

(T-N photos by Campbell)

Lincolnton: Lincoln Times-News
 Littleton: Observer
 Louisburg: Franklin Times
 Madison: Messenger
 Maiden: News
 Manteo: Coastland Times
 Marion: McDowell News
 Marshall: News-Record
 Marshville: Home

OCT 15 1976



Discussing Mexico

Salem Baptist Church pastor Charles Cranford discusses his most recent trip to mountain villages located some 350 miles across the Mexican border. Accompanied by missionary Ron Hamilton and church member David McSwain, the reverend held sermons, ministered to health needs and visited the homes of Mexicans in tiny villages nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Madre and other riverside hamlets.

By TAMMY PRICE
T-N Staff Writer

Impoverished mountain villagers lying 350 miles across the Mexican border may have been almost forgotten by officials of their own government, but the congregation and pastor at Salem Baptist Church have laid a humanitarian pipeline into the remote area south of America.

Salem Baptist Church pastor Charles Cranford says God has opened doors for him, doors that have allowed the reverend to spread the gospel to impressionable people in parts of

the world.

Cranford, the minister at Salem Baptist in southern Lincoln County for 22 years, has made two trips into Mexico and is planning his next visit in September. He came up with the idea to enter Mexico as an evangelical tourist after talking to a missionary with United Indian Mission, Inc. (UIM) in Flagstaff, Ariz. Salem Baptist is the only local church affiliated with UIM.

The latest trip into Mexico was made in April, when Cranford, church member David McSwain and

Arizonia missionary Ron Hamilton were flown into the sea coast town called Guaymus.

Located in Guaymus is the "Temple Bautista," Baptist Temple, where bible school students studying mission work are required to spend one week ministering to the Mexican mountain villagers.

Through individuals, churches and companies, \$300 monthly payments are sent for missionary plane trips. Salem Baptist provided \$1,500 last year to pay for construction on the roof of Salem Baptist Mission, which

the church sponsors in Sasabe, Mexico.

Cranford said a portion of the money raised by Salem's Easter production of "Is It I?" was used to fly a ton of food into the Mexican villages. When the Mexican government realized what they had done, it donated four tons of food but left it up to Salem Baptist Church to pay for airplane transportation into the isolated communities.

Transportation into villages such as Nuri, with a population of 250, is

(Continued On Page 12)

L211

Door Opened To Village Ministry

Door Opened To Village Ministry

(Continued From Page 1)

by a four-seater aircraft, which missionary pilots are forced to land on short, rough, handmade airstrips. The other means of entry is a two to three week journey on foot, Cranford said.

During their last trip, Cranford and McSwain visited three or four villages.

"We spent the nights sleeping on dirt floors in grass river bank huts or mud stucco-type houses with one or two rooms and a pile of corn in one side of the room and hens roosting overhead..." Cranford said.

Food, usually pinto beans, eggs or corn tortillas, is prepared over a barrel since there are no modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing, refrigeration or stoves.

"When you drink out of a river, you try to be careful to drink upstream from where the cows and pigs are watering," Cranford added.

Life is primitive in the poverty stricken districts. Illiteracy is high among the two groups of people with which Cranford has come in contact — one of Mexican nationality and the other a tribe of Guarijia Indians, who were still raiding each other up until the 1940s.

"In one village I visited there was an 18-year-old girl who had never seen a white man. She marveled at my bald head," Cranford said.

The only village occupations are ranching and corn production. Contact with the outside world, said Cranford, is limited to a battery radio for those wealthy enough to own one.

"You have to be careful not to admire anything they have because if you do they give it to you and expect the same in return," said Cranford, who was given a hand-carved wooden violin and a handwoven sombrero.

Cranford said when all a person has known in life is poverty, it is much easier to be humble like the people who inhabit these villages sometimes 5,000 feet above sea level.

"What we try to do is go into villages presenting the gospel. Some can read and what I do is through an interpreter. You can't speak loud or laugh loud because they take offense...The people though are friendly and receptive. They may walk 10 to 12 miles to a village when they hear a plane come in because they know they're going to have services. There are no church buildings. Sermons are held in peoples' front yards," Cranford said.

Since his first visit two years ago, Cranford said he has noticed an improved change among the villagers, whose attitudes are good despite their low poverty level.

"When you realize what we have here," said Cranford, "even the poorest of ours is wealthy compared to some of theirs...There's no way we can touch all of it. You just do what you can and wish you could do more."

But Salem Baptist's missionary work does not stop in countries abroad. For approximately nine years, the church has physically, spiritually and financially helped to support two Southern Baptist congregations hidden away in the West Virginia mountains.

Why would a relatively sophisticated church in North Carolina want to take worshipers in West Virginia under their wings? "Why West Virginia? West Virginia has possibly the lowest employment rate of any state. It's mainly mountainous, cold,, no work in the mines and in the winter money is just not there," Cranford explained.

Missionary work in West Virginia is harder because the fatalistic people, toughened by their hardships, are not as evangelistic as the slower-paced Mexicans.

Cranford said miniscule pay attracts few preachers to West Virginia towns but the thing he admires most about those who do find their calling there is, "the love and devotion those fellows have for the church and the people to stay there on meager salaries and never complain..."

Cranford, originally from Albemarle is serving on the general board of the Baptist State Convention for his second term. In addition to his many other roles, he has filled almost every seat at the South Fork Baptist Association Pastors Conference and has been invited by Dr. P.E. Kurin to conduct three crusades with an attendance of some 10,000 worshipers in India.

"I've met governors, congressmen, senators, a lot of influential people. I've met Billy Graham and others, but still I think the most influential people I've met are the pastors in Mexico, Arizona and West Virginia. I just admire them. They don't have a lot of worldly goods. They're happy. They're devoted. It takes a special breed of person to be involved in mission work," Cranford said.

Salem Ch, South Fork Assoc

Bible Rec Aug 18, 1951, p. 19.

Salem Ch, South Fork Assoc

Bible Rec Sept 8, 1948, p. 8.

Plans for new church

building

Salem - 1849

Lincoln Co

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1876 -

1877 -

1878 - Charter member of South Fork for Catalina River. ~~John C. Dyer~~

1879 - Wagon for Catalina River

1880 - Lighthouse

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Salem - 1849

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1878 - *Charter member of South Fork for Cataraugus River. ~~John Cataraugus~~*

1879 - *Town for Cataraugus River*

1880 - *Lisbon*

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