

Southeastern News

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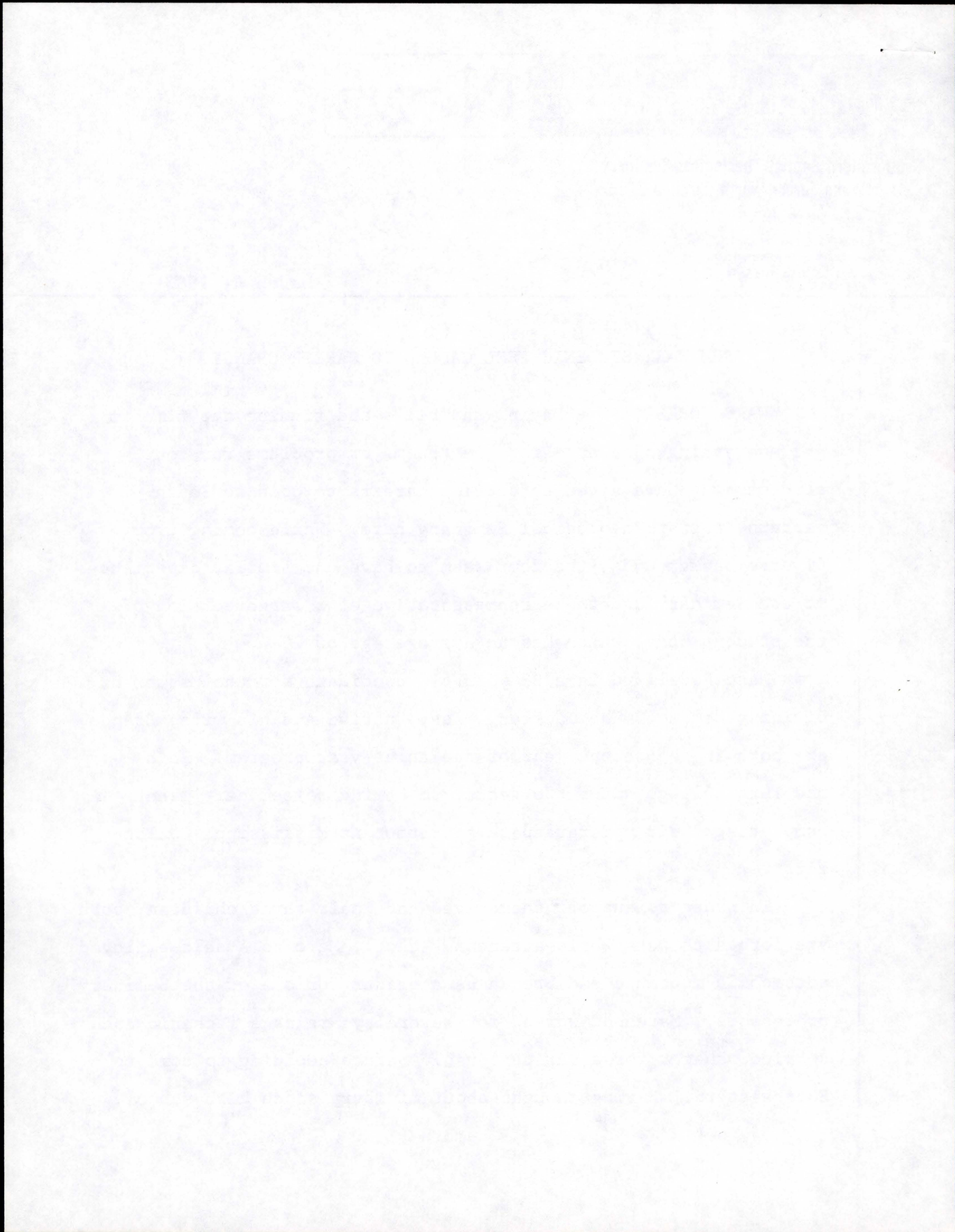
SEMINARY STUDENTS FEEL CALLED TO CAREER CHANGES

WAKE FOREST, NC - Paying the bills and finding the time to get everything done appear to be the major problems for four students who have given up secular careers to come to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here. While coming from diverse backgrounds, the four seem to have had similar experiences at the Seminary and to be representative of a large portion of the student body, which has an average age of 29.

Marc Padelford is a 32 year old candidate for the Master of Divinity degree. The Jackson, Miss., native and his wife, Brenda, are both in the second year of the three-year program. Both had left college after two years, so coming to seminary meant completing their undergraduate education at Mississippi College first.

In order to support themselves and their three children, both are forced to work while attending school, Marc as a self-employed automobile mechanic and Brenda as a grader for one of the Seminary's professors. Marc had worked for several years as a mechanic and service manager for a car dealership before deciding to come to Southeastern. Having thought about ministry since high school,

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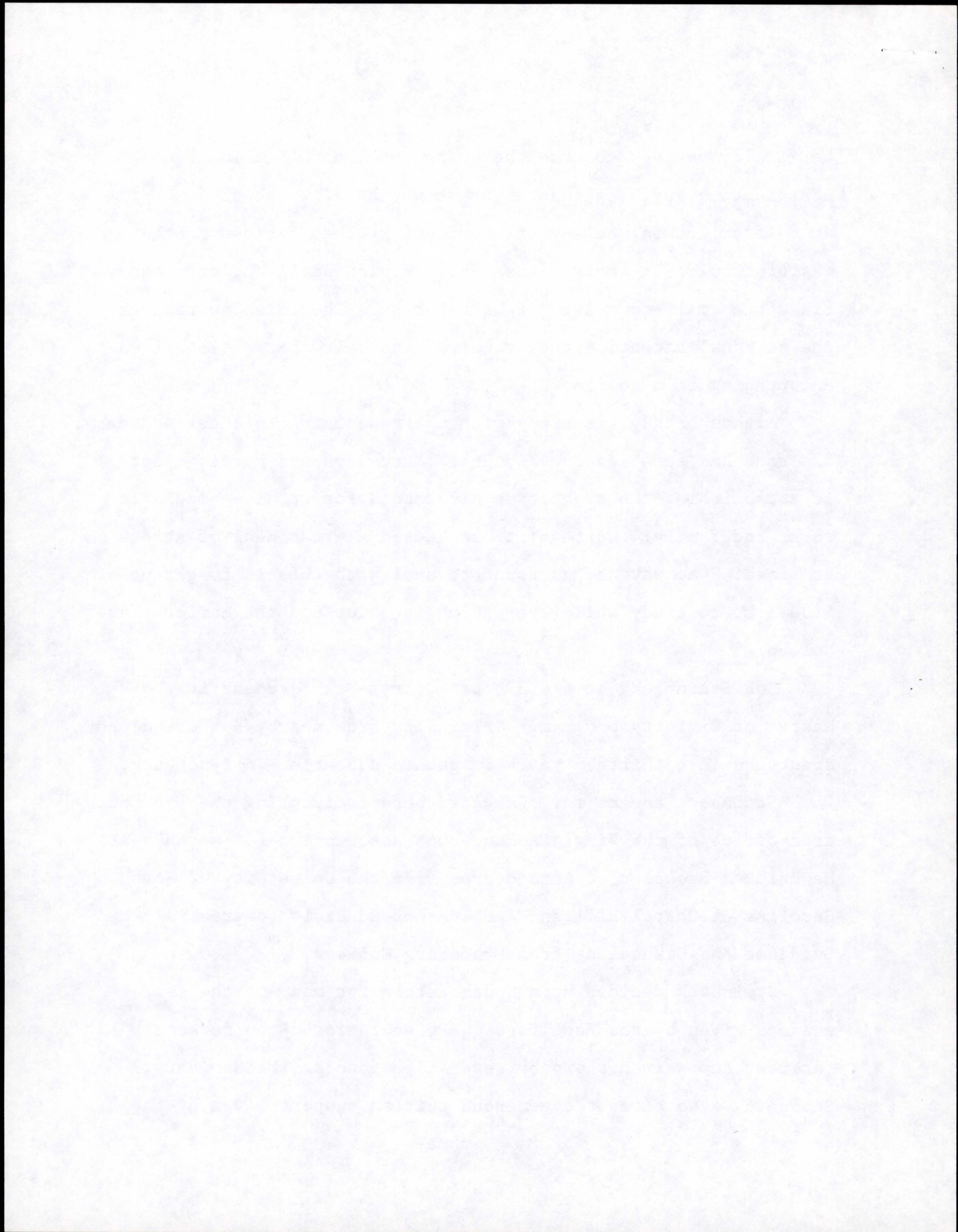
he finally decided to make the change. "I didn't think I was contributing anything that might be worthwhile," he says.

After looking at several seminaries, they decided Southeastern would fit their needs best. Having small children, they liked the small-town life of Wake Forest. They also appreciated the personal attention they received and felt that the staff was encouraging them to come.

Although they are happy with their decision to enter seminary, the road has not been an easy one. Marc says the hardest part is establishing the right time allotments for studies, mechanic work, and family. He says it has caused a great deal of stress at times. One way he has found to deal with this is to get up at 5:00 a.m. to study while everything is quiet and the children are asleep.

Bob Stainback, at age 37, is a first-year student in the Master of Divinity program. Originally from nearby Henderson, he spent the last thirteen years in public education in Lynchburg, Va. Stainback taught for six years before directing the Lynchburg-area office of the Virginia Education Association for seven years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Education degree in Guidance and Counseling from Lynchburg College.

Stainback decided upon Southeastern for many of the same reasons given by the Padelfords. He appreciated the personal interest and warmth shown by several persons at the Seminary. Stainback also cites the generous tuition support given by the



Southern Baptist Convention as an important reason for his choice.

With themselves and two children to support, the Stainbacks also feel the money pinch. He works part-time for the Seminary's Communications Office, while his wife, Patsy, is a teacher of emotionally handicapped students in the Durham County schools.

Like Padelford, Stainback also finds it difficult to balance work time, family time, and study time. He, too, has taken to rising at 5:00 a.m. to make extra study time.

Lewis Ray (Chick) Howard, of Cornelius, N. C., is in the first of two years in the Associate of Divinity program. Prior to coming to Seminary he was a truck driver and owned and operated his own service station. A part-time professional photographer for ten years, he was able to secure a part-time position as seminary photographer. He and his wife, Carolyn, a registered nurse, have two sons.

Howard's grandfather was a Baptist minister for thirty years. Last March he began thinking about his own life and career. Having been active in virtually every lay position in his home church, Howard says he felt called to the ministry for some time, but he kept putting it off. Last summer, at age 34, he made the final decision and gave his resignation to the trucking company.

Fred Byrd, of Louisa, Va., has been able to use his savings and other income to pay his living expenses at the Seminary. He and his wife, Elaine, a nursing student, have one child. Like



Padelford, Byrd had attended college before deciding upon ministry, but had not graduated. He completed several semesters at Benjamin Franklin University. Byrd originally entered Southeastern in the Associate of Divinity program. After completing one year, he entered nearby Campbell University to finish work on his Bachelor's degree. Now he is back at Seminary and is in the first year of the Master of Divinity program.

Of his call to ministry, Byrd says, "Life is a changing process, itself. I just came to the conclusion I couldn't be satisfied doing anything else." The forty-year-old Byrd had been successful as a businessman, owning a grocery store, a tractor dealership, and a furniture and paint store in Louisa. He also built houses and some commercial buildings before feeling called to the ministry.

Of his courses Byrd says, "It is a lot of work for me, but I like it. It's an opportunity that a lot of people don't have. They just get too tied-up in other things. The intensity of some of the courses has been the hardest part for me. But I haven't had to work outside, so it has been easier for me than for some others."

With all four students having more than a year of studies remaining, none are totally sure of what they will be doing upon graduation. Howard and Stainback lean toward the pastoral ministry. Byrd says he feels "led into Old Testament studies" and would like to work on a Master of Theology degree upon completing his M.Div., necessitating an additional year of

coursework. Marc Padelford would like to work in the foreign mission field, but is also interested in bi-vocational ministry in a small church. His wife is interested in foreign missions and in the possibility of continuing her studies with an eye toward some day teaching in a seminary.

While acknowledging the difficulties involved with changing careers in mid-life, all four students are happy with their choices. All feel called to do what they are doing and doubt that they would be happy doing anything else at this point in their lives.

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