

## **A History of Challenge**

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Recently our Development Team assembled to begin planning for the New Year. Jim Nelson introduced my presentation to the group as the beginning of a new chapter. Indeed, a new chapter has begun. However, this new chapter is not necessarily due to a change of leadership. It is mostly because we have entered new times.

When Dr. and Mrs. Riggs gave birth to this ministry in 1913, their services were directed to those born in the pre-civil war era. Dr. & Mrs. Riggs born in 1866 and 1868 were a part of the idealist archetype known as the Missionary Generation. Both Milford and Mary Riggs embraced the characteristics of their generation as visionary, pragmatic, resourceful and dedicated to making a difference in the world. And yet, then, as now, the Christian Community and Baptists in particular were mired in controversy.

Challenge is nothing new to The Baptist Home. In its 93 year history, it has seen five generational shifts. Each generation of caregiving staff, donors and trustees had to find ways to reach, finance and minister through the challenges of their era. Each generation had to find a way to put their hands on the plow and not look back. Denominational controversies, inconsistent regulatory and cultural pressures, and financial constraints were not reasons enough to prevent this ministry from trying to fulfill the edict on one of its cornerstones, "...to the glory of God and the service of humanity."

Perhaps the greatest surprise to Missouri Baptists is that so much of the support came from individual donors, churches and organizations who gave directly to The Baptist Home. And not all were Baptists. Each generation of caregiving staff and trustees led by their leaders, Riggs, Scott, Burney, Goodwin and Johnson have had to raise substantial financial support through direct donations.

In the 1980's the Missouri Baptist Convention, as a donor, contributed about 11% of The Home's operating expense each year. In the 1990's the contribution dropped to approximately 5%. For every \$1 contributed through the Missouri Baptist Convention, an additional \$2 dollars was needed and contributed by direct donors to pay the cost of care for needy Missouri Baptist residents. All of the donations contributed by the Missouri Baptist Convention went to pay for benevolent care. In other words, The Home's direct donors provided a return to the Missouri Baptist Convention of three times the amount contributed by them. The Home appreciated the donor relationship with the Missouri Baptist Convention, but could not be dependent on it.

In addition, The Baptist Home raised 100% of the funds needed for its properties, assets and endowment from direct donors without the help of the Missouri Baptist Convention's denominational organization. The Baptist Home has held title to those properties, assets and endowment throughout its 93 year history.

Since 2002, The Baptist Home has received no dollars from the MBC Cooperative Program and State Missions Offering. In spite of the fact that nearly \$8,000,000 of benevolent support has been provided to residents regardless of the political position of their church and convention leadership. Almost \$2,000,000 was spent on benevolent care in 2005 alone. In addition, the Missouri Baptist Convention has redirected funds from the Anniversary Offering begun by The Baptist Home in 1923, away from The Home.

The trustees and staff look forward to working through the same challenges. I wonder if the challenges can ever be completely resolved, because they are demonstrative of the very nature of human politics. But I can assure you that our dedicated staff and trustees are determined to focus on ministry to aging adults. The focus and quality of our ministry has not changed. We will continue to seek to be Christ-like in our relationships and to be good stewards of your trust in this ministry. And, oh yes, we will continue to care for all Missouri Baptists regardless of the political position of pastors and denominational leaders because that is what God has called us to do and it is the right thing to do.

We thank you and ask for your continued support. We covet your prayers. Pray for our staff. Pray for our trustees. Pray for me. Please pray to help us through the challenges of our times.