

“Plowing Around the Stump” President’s Report

June 6, 2006

Many of you may know that I was raised in the Kansas City area. However, most of my adult life was lived in the country. I have done just about everything on a farm; cut pigs, sheared sheep, dehorned steers, round-up livestock, bucked hay bales, branded cattle, plowed, planted, cultivated and harvested crop.

Although I think I was a good hand, my country friends were entertained by my citified ways. I’ll never forget my first sermon in a country church where I talked about how farmers climbed into their ‘concubines’ to do harvest in the fall.

I like country livin’. And I have learned a great deal about life from my experiences there. Earthy people have a way of looking at life in simple, but effective ways. Some of the things I learned on the farm are applicable to all of life. For example:

- When building fences, they need to be horse-high, pig-tight and bull-strong.
- When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.
- Don’t interfere with something’ that ain’t botherin’ you none...like snakes and bee hives.
- Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.
- If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop-diggin’.
- Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.
- Always drink upstream from the herd.
- A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.
- And...Life is always simpler when you plow around the stump.

Life is simpler when you ‘plow around the stump.’ I have met with John Burney, Ed Goodwin and Larry Johnson, expressing my desire for The Baptist Home to move forward in ministry. John Burney liked the metaphor of ‘plowing around the stump.’ While chuckling, John recalled an old mule named Jack. Back in the days when the Ironton campus had a living farm, John and Jack, plowed around several stumps. While telling the story, I didn’t dare stop John midway to ask what Jack’s last name was, because I knew he was baiting me for the opportunity.

In my opinion, some leaders of the convention have engaged in a campaign to confuse Missouri Baptists. Clearly they have adopted intimidating behaviors to evoke fear, guilt and inferiority in their strategy to claim dominion over The Baptist Home. I am tempted to pause at the stump and curse at their tactics when I hear their distortions of truth. I hesitate to recite them without emphasizing that these beginning statements are false.

- FALSE: The Missouri Baptist Convention gave birth to The Baptist Home. FACT: The Home was begun by a pastor and wife who had a heart for serving aging humanity in the face of opposition by many Baptists of their day.
- FALSE: The Missouri Baptist Convention acquired and paid for the property and ministry of The Baptist Home. FACT: The MBC gave \$0 for property and assets to The Home and have never held title to any of it, nor helped in any way to acquire property or assets. John Burney told me, the convention donated an average of 11% for operating expenses to The Home during his administration. During the Goodwin years, the support decreased to 8%; and in the Johnson years from about 6% to 4% and then to 0%. In spite of the loss of Cooperative Program support, individual, church and other organizational donors came through and abundantly made up the difference.
- FALSE: The Missouri Baptist Convention owns and controls The Baptist Home. FACT: By law, non-for-profit corporations cannot be owned. The control of The Home has always been with the Board of Trustees.
- And finally, the 3rd amended petition alleges that funds donated to The Home by the MBC was given for the right to elect trustees. FACT: 100% of the monies received from the MBC were knowingly given to provide care for Missouri Baptist residents of The Home. In fact, 100% of all monies received from church and individual donors and the endowment is applied directly to resident care.

We can all speculate the motives of our opponents until the cows come home. However, we cannot allow the un-Christ-like behavior of some to stop us dead in our tracks and keep us from doing what God has called us to do.

It is time to move on with our ministry. It is time to 'plow around the stump.' That doesn't mean we cannot cuss at it, every time we move around it. However, we must fulfill our mission; we must do our bidding. God has called us to 'serve aging humanity' with Christ-like values; and having placed our hands on the plow we dare not look back.

We will not look back as we help other people to fulfill their calling to serve aging humanity in their part of the world. In July, Margaret Woolley and Jim Nelson are 'plowing around the stump' by traveling to Belarus to conduct an exploratory trip for the purposes of helping the Belarusian people to have their own Home and Ministry for the Aged. I commend Roger Hatfield for opening our eyes to these opportunities around the stump.

We will not look back as we forge new relationships with multiple Groups.

- We are an associate member of the Baptist World Alliance. Frank Fain is leading us to develop global relationships with those who have a desire to serve aging humanity in a Christian context.
- We are privileged to be friends with those who participate in the Baptist General Convention of Missouri and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Missouri. We appreciate both organizations for standing by us in these days of controversy.
- And we are positioning ourselves to fellowship with other groups who share our Historic Baptist values. The crises of controversy have opened doors to groups we have not previously considered. Perhaps this is why God has allowed troubled times; to open our hearts to new relationships and

opportunities.

We will not look back as we invest in the Capital Needs of our campuses; making sure that our facilities is in the market place for the generations to come. Sherri, Sammy and Lynn's desire is that the campuses are on the leading edge of retirement living and aging care. We must find the capital to meet these shared goals.

We will not look back as we look for new opportunities to expand into new areas. A nice compliment to The Baptist Home is the fact that everywhere we go, people want one. We cannot go everywhere, but it is nice that we are wanted. I believe this says something significant about our ministry. We will grow and look for new places to do work. Growth is not only vital to ministry, but necessary for survival. If we do not grow, we will die on the vine.

We will not look back as we seek to open admission to folks who are of similar evangelical roots and want to live in a Baptist retirement community. We have a lot to contribute to the table of faith; separation of Church and State, priesthood of the believer, the competency of the soul, individual and church autonomy, eternal security through Christ, freedom from tyranny in Christ, and salvation by faith through grace. We must, by our example and our teaching, communicate these distinctions to the larger evangelical community. What better place to do this, than in a Baptist Retirement Community?

We will not look back as we operate with sound financial principles and within our resources. Our Accounting Team led by Karl Snider and our Development Team led by Jim Nelson are working hard to develop resources and control expenses with the highest of ethical standards. This means limiting our benevolence to a reasonable level. At the same time, we will try our best to make sure that any Baptist will find this ministry reachable as long as he or she has handled his or her funds honorably.

We will not look back as we expand our Senior Adult Ministry and Aging Education services. We discovered long ago that our ministry is more than what takes place on our campuses. Our field is global because aging is universal. Frank Fain and the Senior Adult Ministry Team are leading us in this endeavor. The fields of this ministry are plenteous and we must go where God leads us.

Obviously, I could go on and on. Remember, we don't need to pause at the stump any longer. We can and will plow around it. We have talent enough among our staff, trustees, residents and donors to get the job done; to do what God has called us to do. Thank you for being a part of this great ministry in these exciting times.