

The Future of Fundraising for The Baptist Home



Every four years, the winter Olympic Games is broadcast into our homes to provide a break from the boring mid-winter television programs and lift our spirits from “cabin fever.” Alpine skiing, figure skating, ski jumping, speed skating, cross-country skiing, bobsledding and ice hockey have been played at every Winter Olympics since its beginning in 1924. New games have been added; such as the luge, short track speed skating, freestyle skiing and; oh yes, there is the game of all games, curling.

Thanks to NBC and its many sister stations, I have probably seen more curling events than ever before. Nothing is more relaxing than going home after a hard day of work, sitting down with a sparkling iced 7-up and watching teams of four men or four women sliding large stones of granite down a runway of pebbled ice toward a target area (aka “the house). It is my kind of game. It is age and gender friendly. Although players shout a lot, their opponents don’t try to harm each other and might even say “Bonspiel” after a good play. It’s hard to imagine a curling player making the news after his wife smashes one of his brooms through the rear window of his car. No...curling just doesn’t draw that much attention.

And yet, curling is as much a game of the mind as it is of the body. It is about skill, technique and strategy. One reporter said, “Take the strategy of chess, the use of angles in billiards and the shot-making of golf...put them on ice and you have curling.”

The game is appealing to me because it is played not only for the moment, but for the next turn and the turns thereafter. If a team’s strategy is only knocking their opponent’s stones out of “the house,” the team is sure to lose. If the team is to have a chance to win, the comrades must also think about the next shot and the shot thereafter before curling the first stone and releasing it at the hog line. After both teams have slid and brushed 16 stones (8 each) toward the house, the team with the stone closest to the tee (center) wins the round. And the team, who wins the majority of 8 rounds, wins the game.

And such is the work of The Baptist Home. It is focusing on the current effort and yet planning for the next at the same time.

Let’s take fundraising as an example. Like any arena, fundraising is in a constant state of change. What is working today, may not work tomorrow.

I can’t stress enough how important fundraising is to The Baptist Home. It is a primary source of funding for The Baptist Home’s benevolent approach to meeting aging needs. The Baptist Home has a long tradition of not receiving government funds to support its mission. We believe this strengthens our ability to promote our philosophy of care and Christian values. It also provides distance from the roller coaster of government influence and dependency for financial support. The Baptist Home is one of the very few doing charity care for the elderly without government support. And it becomes increasingly difficult from a regulatory and financial perspective. Last year, donors to The Baptist Home provided nearly 1.6 million dollars of benevolent care. In the last decade, it has been closer to 2 million dollars each year. Some of the money came from current, on-going gifts and some from

earnings invested from gifts given many years before. Again where others rely on government support, The Home relies on the contribution of its faithful donors to make this ministry possible.

While we are doing everything we can to maintain and grow current giving, fundraising will change dramatically in the near future. Futurists who focus on fundraising are predicting major changes in the near future due to sociological and technological advances.

As we have become accustomed to, in our day and age, change is an ever-present challenge. We shouldn't fear it. We should accept it and seize the opportunity it presents to make us better, not in a worldly way mind you, but better at doing what we believe God wants us to do. There are some changes we may not want to accept because they run counter to God's direction for this ministry. Other changes we will want to embrace to help us to do God's will for this ministry even better. By the way, Mark Twain said, "I'm all for progress, its change I can't stand."

According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy, we need to prepare for some of the things in the arena of fundraising.

We need to prepare for an older America with older Americans. In the next 10 years, those over the age of 65 will rise sharply. This will be both an opportunity and a problem. On the one hand this will potentially create a windfall of new contributors, wealth and volunteers for non-profits, but on the other hand it increased demand for health care and other assistance. The US Census Bureau estimates that 13% of the population is 65 or older. It will likely rise to 16% in 2020 and 20% by 2040. There will be more competition in providing aging services as society attempts to meet the demand.

Unfortunately, long-term care services do not receive a lot of good press and as a result technologies and services will develop to keep people in their homes longer. In spite of the recent economic downturn, the most populous generation in history, the Baby Boomers, are already starting to retire. As disease management and medical advances continue, the emerging seniors are expected to be healthier and more

active than previous generations. There may be an opportunity for The Baptist Home to accommodate a new wave of expertise and volunteers to help in its mission from the boomers who still may have many capable years left. Also, even though the recent downturn has changed many portfolios, the boomers by numbers alone are expected to pass on massive amounts of money to their heirs, an estimated \$41 trillion dollars. Boomers are their own unique generational cohort and the challenge for us is to discover ethical and honorable ways to obtain their support for this ministry.

Technological advances are changing how money is being handled and acquired by non profits. New communication devices from iPhones, iPads, and other computer technologies will present opportunities for new competition in fundraising efforts. These devices and social networking through facebook, twitter and the like has already raised massive amounts of funds for relief efforts in Haiti. Arianna Huffington, founder of the Huffington Post, predicts fund raisers will rely heavily on “leveraging micro-donations from large groups of people” through text messages sent on mobile phones. In addition the internet is already growing a number of charity watch services to make sure charities are honorable. I did not think too much of all of this until a few weeks ago when I learned the banks of England will phase out paper checks after 2018. Do you know how important paper checks are to fundraising efforts for The Baptist Home? How is The Baptist Home prepared to receive donations if paper checks are eliminated in our country? It appears the question is not if, but when.

Non-profits are quickly falling out of favor with the public because of abuses in which a lot of tax-exempt money is being raised and hoarded. Many are questioning the tax-exempt charities’ ability to improve social conditions because of large amounts of massive endowments that are allowed to grow with little earnings applied to human needs (Senator Grassley’s mission). Some are predicting a new corporate consciousness (a.k.a. conscious capitalism) will change how business is done because of recent Wall Street scandals, high executive compensation and large bonuses. Serious thought is also

given to a blending of business and non-for profit or low profit companies (a.k.a. L3C) which will make money but embrace a social mission (actually six states already allow for the establishment of these companies which give protection to someone wanting to operate a business and have a social mission without getting sued by shareholders for not making the maximum amount of profit.) All of this impacts the work of The Baptist Home in many ways; seen and unforeseen. Tax-exempt status may be disallowed or seriously challenged in the future. There may be an increase of competition from for-profit businesses with greater resources to provide social needs. And there is definitely more government regulatory oversight on the horizon.

These are not bad things unnecessarily, but they do impact our work and if we intend to be viable we must be prepared to meet the challenges ahead of us and to seize the opportunities to make this ministry better.