

## Transcript

Derek Tamm

11.03, "Celebrating the Past and Preparing for the Future at the Ashland Campus"

**Andy:** I'm glad to have Derek Tamm with us on Biblical Perspectives on Aging this week. Derek is the administrator at the Ashland campus. And Derek, before we get into some of that and everything that you have going on there, could you just introduce yourself and share a little bit about what led you to follow the path of serving senior adults?

**Derek:** Sure. I'm Derek. I'm the administrator here in Ashland. And I started in...I guess it was last June. I took over for our first administrator who retired, but I honestly had no idea I'd ever end up in a role like this. I grew up on the West coast, outside of Seattle and actually in Hawaii when I was in high school.

Growing up, I was really fortunate. Most of my grandparents and great-grandparents were alive and I ended up developing really strong relationships with actually quite a few of them. [00:01:00] Some of them are still with us, but several of have passed on by now. I ended up kind of getting started, working with seniors, actually through them.

I ended up joining the Gideons when I was in my twenties while I was working in a law firm as a paralegal. I ended up joining as probably the youngest Gideon in the area. My grandpa was a part of that organization, so I ended up working alongside of him and just ended up finding...step-by-step, my career. It keeps coming back to serving the senior community. I ended up working for a while and then I went on to seminary and served as a pastor for a while in rural Indiana. I liked a lot of different aspects of that job as well. And the thing that I keep coming back to is that it was serving the seniors.

[00:02:00] That was really the enjoyable part. I used to go visit some of the shut-ins, as they call them. I'd go travel around. Some of the best afternoons I had were actually sitting there having a cup of coffee or tea, talking with some of these folks who hadn't been to church in a long time.

[It was good] just having that wonderful conversation and experience there. Then I ended up coming to The Baptist Home and did advancement before this. I've just been nothing but pleased with working with our seniors. So very, very excited about that calling.

**Andy:** Well, good. That's great. Thanks for sharing that.

So, as I mentioned, just a moment ago, you are the administrator at the Ashland campus, and that is the newest campus for Baptist Homes and Ministries. Can you share what makes the Ashland campus unique? Obviously apart from where we're going momentarily, cause you have a lot of new things, but just in general, some of the things that makes the campus unique, across the different locations? [00:03:00]

**Derek:** Sure. Ashland is, I like to think of it, the best combination of a hundred-plus years of experience combined with innovation that we've found largely based on that experience. We've taken a lot of the lessons that we found at our other three locations and we've put them into practice here.

We've got a beautiful location, which actually isn't unique at all. If you go to any of our campuses, you get these beautiful areas: lots of space, nice homes; but in Ashland, we're right next to Columbia

and Jeff City. We're 15 minutes away from each and yet we're in a little small town called Ashland. Our next-door neighbors to the North [have] farm land.

We've got woods and creeks on both sides of our property. You can be in Columbia at Walmart or Lowe's or any place you want to go in 15 minutes, [00:04:00] and yet you can walk outside and see deer in your backyard. You've got turkeys. You got everything like that. And so my favorite thing is that my office has windows out onto a roadway and I watch the residents as they walk around the loop because we're, we're at the end of the road.

They're out enjoying the sunshine, especially today. It's just beautiful. Ashland's got this nice rural feel, even though we're right next to all the amenities you could want. And then at the same time, we're updating this campus to all of the modern access control. For instance, I just actually got off of a phone call right before this, with our new company that's going to provide access control.

It's all electronic fobs for entering and leaving buildings. Each resident is assigned to certain access other areas. [If there's an area] they don't need to be in, they don't have access to that. [00:05:00] We have staff members that can do the same thing. Our cleaning crew can get where they need to go without bothering somebody, but at the same time, if there's an area that they don't need to be in, they don't have access to that. We're excited as we're incorporating some of the technology while still keeping The Baptist Home feel. We're not, we're not going so high tech we lose our contact with our residents, but it's kind of a fun combination there.

I think the most important thing, though, is even as we're incorporating some of these new ideas here, we don't want to lose what we've gained over a hundred years at The Baptist Home. I'm confident that residents would find the same level of care that they've grown to expect with The Baptist Home.

**Andy:** Okay. Well, I can, I can tell [from] the energy in your voice that you're excited about some of the new. But obviously, where you started in the first question about your background with your parents, your grandparents, and great-grandparents and such, there's a nice feel both ways on that. [00:06:00]

Besides the newness of technology, this is a new time for an old organization, if you will, and for your campus to a degree. We're recording this interview just a few days before the grand opening that's going to take place. And this will air just a few days afterwards. Could you take just a little bit of time to share what is going to happen on April 1st?

**Derek:** Sure. Yeah. April 1st is a big day for us. It's a milestone because it marks the end of the independent living phase of our campus, which is something that we've been working on actually for about five years now. It marks the start of the building of the skilled-side care for us.

What we're going to have is a ribbon cutting because our apartment [00:07:00] building for our congregate living apartment building will open up. We'll have 12 new units come online that day. Half of them are spoken for, but we do have some more room, but we've got folks moving in.

And so we're doing a ribbon cutting with the Chamber of Commerce in Ashland. And then at the same time, right after that, we're going to step across the street, into the open field, across the way. And we're doing the groundbreaking for our skilled-side. And actually, I shouldn't say skilled-side. It's the assisted living intermediate care and skilled that we're going to be building as well as the Duke Nelson chapel, which will be kind of the hub that those other levels of care are based around.

It is going to be a busy day. We've got people coming in. We have our trustees that'll be there, hopefully as many as can make it. Some are doing by zoom, but we're excited to have people come in for that. [00:08:00] We're going to have cake and we're going to make a big celebration of this, because this is a milestone.

This means, at this point, we'll have one-, two-, and three-bedroom [units] available for independent living. And then of course, this is also the first step towards getting the rest of the campus built.

**Andy:** You said five years, approximately five years on getting the current independent living section set and now completed. That is part one. How long do you estimate from the groundbreaking forward on these three different areas that you're bringing together in the chapel as well? How long do you project that to be, Derek?

**Derek:** Our best guess at this point, is about a year and a half. We're shooting for third quarter of 2022.

At least so far, things are going really smoothly for that. Our plans are into the city of Ashland. So we're working with them and [00:09:00] we're also working with the state with the certificate-of-need process. Everything in both those areas has gone really well. So we're at the point where we're ready to start actually work in the ground and setting foundations and all that.

So we're hopeful that that third quarter of 2022 date is a realistic goal.

**Andy:** Well, good, good. So obviously going forward, there's going to be some challenges that are unknown at this point that are going to come up. That just happens, but let's reflect back. What are some things, some of the challenges, perhaps, that you faced either personally or as the organization to Baptist homes that as you planned and waited for April 1st to come?

**Derek:** Yeah, that's a great question. We've been through a lot of things here, you know, for a new campus. There's been a design change that we've gone through and that's reflected because there has been a leadership change here. The original administrator [00:10:00] is no longer with the project.

He's retired, after many years working for The Baptist Home. Also, we were under a different president back then as well. And so, we've revisited a lot of the original ideas and we've taken what we hope are the really good parts of that plan. And then they've made some modifications that reflect experience that we've had at other locations.

And then also here, we've had residents living here for a couple of years now, so we've taken all those things and our whole plan has changed a little bit. Originally, we had this idea that we do a bunch of small homes, for our assisted living care. And the idea is wonderful as far as getting to know each other very well.

So we'd like some of those aspects, but then there's some other problems that we were facing. I think this winter was a great example. It was so cold and we had snow on the ground. [00:11:00] And the idea of leaving those small homes to go to a church service, the chapel, if it's a standalone building, it just became difficult logistically.

So in the process of trying to work with all this, we've been going through some growing pains. So we've made modifications to our plan and that's always a difficult thing as you're taking your master plan and adjusting it. But I think we've done well with that. I hope so.

I feel like we have the leadership, the board of trustees, and even the convention behind us in a way where you can feel the energy and the push to complete this project. At one point, we were kind of waiting here. We didn't know what to expect. We didn't know whether we'd want to continue at full pace with building or back off, and we've had nothing but excitement for the project, which has been wonderful on my end at least.

[00:12:00] Because I get to see all the work going on around me as I look out the window, that's been tough, dealing with some of the changes there. But I feel like we've come to a good place now. A lot of just looking back over the work that was done, over the last five years, roughly, Ron Mackey, who was our director of advancement at the time, likes to tell the story about coming out and looking at this property the first time.

He was wearing a suit and it was snowing and he walked all over the place. It was perfect. And then I know that, from there, it was one step at a time. And at one point, this place looked flat as a pancake. There wasn't a tree left on the plate. No grass. And we knew it was progress, but you looked around and [thought], "I really hope this comes together."

Now you look around and it's starting to look actually quite beautiful again. So, yeah.

**Andy:** So as the new buildings [00:13:00] begin, next week, or theoretically this week with the groundbreaking, you mentioned that you're able to look out [your windows] and you're able to see, the residents walking around the circle and stuff. But the new facilities will be across the street. Is that within your eyesight out your window? Are you going to be able to get a real-time look day-by-day? Are you going to have to walk out the door down the hall and be able to see that a little bit?

**Derek:** I'm fortunate. I've got two sides, two windows that I can look at.

One looks towards the existing setup and then the other one is pointed right towards the new project swivel around behind my desk. And I should be able to get a good view of what they're doing for the day.

**Andy:** Yeah, that well, that with the (like I said earlier, Derek) the energy that you have, the excitement, you can just hear that in your voice about this.

I think that will allow you to keep a little bit of energy under others as you're able to look out your window and continue to see that. So that's great. [00:14:00] So as Ashland, as you said, you already have some people that are ready to move in. There's some more room in the facility that has just completed.

But what is this overall expansion of the Ashland campus mean for current residents and or prospective residents at that location?

**Derek:** We will go from 20 residents to anywhere from 30 to 35 residents, probably as we fill this new building up. And when you start to think about it, you realize you're almost doubling your population.

So there'll be growing pains there too, and hopefully in a good way. Actually, I'm finding a lot of the new residents already know somebody here. Because word of mouth spread enough that they're inviting their friends to move in, which is a wonderful thing for us, because we know they get along already. But as this is growing, it also means we can [00:15:00] expand our staff a little bit. We're

actually in the process of looking to hire a campus pastor and we're working on the details, but we're hoping that they can come on board sometime in the summer. There would be an element where they might also do activities for our residents as well. Right now, because we've been small, I've been doing a Bible study once a week, which is really nice to get together.

But it's not the same as having a campus pastor here. And so, I'm excited for that because that means that the level of spiritual care is going to take a step up as we go through this. And then also we've been trying to do a once-a-month social activity, which has been lots of fun for everybody.

But I'm excited to see that grow as well. Especially now that the weather's gotten better, people are getting out more. I'm excited to see how that plays out. We have lots of space at our office, so we have folks come in here. But in [00:16:00] this new apartment building that's opening, we have a large, common living area and kitchen that's available to residents to use, like if they have a family come in or if they just want to go out and visit. But I also see that occasionally we may do activities there and go enjoy. We did St. Patrick's day, for instance, last month. So go do an event there instead of at our office.

So I'm excited to see what that looks like. As we start to add in some more staff, then we can do that.

**Andy:** Okay. Okay. So before we jump ahead and see what else might be next, I want to go back. Obviously, like you said, your number of residents is lower. It's about to double almost, but certainly you are not immune from COVID. Could you just share a little bit about how your campus [00:17:00] delayed some of the work that was being done?

Could you share a little bit about how COVID impacted, or is even potentially still impacting, the Ashland campus?

**Derek:** Okay. Yeah, that's a great question. For the most part, because our residents live in their own homes at the in Ashland, we haven't had a direct impact with our residents.

We haven't had anybody who's caught it here, thankfully. We've taken all the precautions. Of course, we've socially distanced, we've worn masks, and actually our residents have been able to be vaccinated as well. And our staff's been offered that as well. But the hardest thing is everybody's stuck home.

And so, that's been the big thing for me. We've had these occasional social events, and it started out in October was our first and we happen to have a beautiful day [00:18:00] and we were dedicating our new flagpole that day. We found we'd gotten it installed at the office. So we barbecued outside, you know, so we've adjusted to meet some of these changing conditions.

But we've tried really hard not to lose our community in the process. The biggest way we've really faced COVID is [with] our contractor, who's building this apartment building. [He] is dealing with lead times and expenses that we haven't seen before. And he's juggled them like a pro. He is a pro, but he's done an excellent job with that and [we're] very thankful for that.

But we've had things that are unexpectedly a month and a half late, and the answer is just, "Oh, it's, COVID." It's like a catch-all on anything goes wrong. It's COVID and I know they're right. I know that's what's caused it. But it [has] taken a lot of very careful management and being very careful about who we're [00:19:00] around and how we protect our residents.

So we've kept that at the front.

**Andy:** Well, and again, as you said, you have separate facilities, which makes that a lot easier in your location than some of the others and general nursing homes. Well, I guess from that perspective, so, just to stay on that for one more moment, then Derek, obviously April 1st is a great time. Not April Fool's Day, obviously, but it's a great time: Spring; there's a newness of life; there's the warming of temperatures, the greening of grass, all of that, that we think of. And so that is how your recently completed campus will now launch forward the newness, the groundbreaking.

Was there a delay (you mentioned some of the delays), from your contractor? Was the original intent for this to maybe even be as early as last fall or over the winter? [00:20:00] Or was it always kind of set as April 1st but you just had less margin for error.

**Derek:** It was originally for March 1st. So we did have a little bit of a delay, but considering everything, not too bad.

It's a good thing that he ordered some of this stuff in advance. There were things we started in September and we didn't get them delivered until last month. It was that sort of lead times where I was very thankful for (PCI is our contractor) their foresight in some of their site management work.

**Andy:** Okay. Well good. Because that can be (again, your energy, your excitement, and obviously there's a lot going on this week), but that can limit some of that, that can take away some of the excitement when there's continual delays. So one month in a building project, that's a good thing.

So obviously [you have] the groundbreaking this week and you mentioned a little bit about the new facilities going in [00:21:00] (the chapel and all of that), but what do you see as next for Ashland campus? How, when all of this is complete, all of this is together, if that's a year and a half from now or longer, whatever that might be, what do you see the campus looking like at that point (the opportunities for the campus at that point and, or project out three to five years, even if you wish)?

**Derek:** Yeah. I'm so excited for the next three to five years here in Ashland. Because one of our biggest promises to people is that we want to care for them.

We always like to say, "Once you move in, we want to keep you there until you go home to heaven to your permanent home." And I'm excited we can do that here. So what the biggest thing for me is seeing the next levels of care built; having that assisted living intermediate care and even skilled nursing available.

[00:22:00] Because you just never know when you're going to need those levels of care. And thankfully, most of the time, we have people who are out here, they're absolutely fine. But if you do need that next level, I would love it when we can tell them, "You don't have to find somewhere else to live. You can just move across the street. I've got a place for you there, and you already know the campus pastor, you know some of the staff, and you're already comfortable here because this is home." And so that's what I'm so excited about here. You can tell the sun's out today and I'm thinking outdoor stuff. We've got these wonderful ideas of having some parks and walking paths out here.

We stocked our front pond last spring, so the fish should be biting pretty soon. [With] some of those sort of activities, I'm excited to see how those are taken advantage of by our residents. Right now, they've been limiting themselves to walking around the loop, our [00:23:00] drive here, which is a nice, safe place to walk.

But last year, when the weather got really nice, everyone saw [that] somebody would venture out into some of the actual grass and go enjoy exploring what we've got around here. So we'll have some of those opportunities, of course. And then again with this, the campus pastor side of things, not to harp on it too much, but that spiritual care is what really sets The Baptist Home apart. We know we can care for your physical body and we can make it interesting for you, and we can try to entertain you, but one of the really big things (and I'm big on it); I know The Baptist Home in general is, just because you get to a certain age or a certain level of health, it doesn't mean that God's done with you.

I think every one of us [still] has a mission from God and it looks different [at] whatever stage you're at, but a big [00:24:00] part of what The Baptist Home is about is helping you to find what your spiritual mission in life is; [to see] where you're at, [to] see what God's still doing with your life. And sometimes it's just being a good neighbor with somebody who's across the hall from you, but you never know [if] God's got you there for a reason.

I'm so excited to start seeing that develop on this campus. You see it now, but I think we'll really see that start to develop as we continue to build.

**Andy:** And more people to be able to interact with and such as well. Certainly, certainly. That's wonderful. Well, as we move towards the end of this interview, then, today, Derek, I've asked you several questions, some scripted, some not, but is there anything else that you wish that maybe I'd asked you or just anything else you'd like to share with the audience today?

**Derek:** The one thing I was thinking about and this is totally random. Too many people [00:25:00] delay addressing aging. I wish people would address it earlier. It's a difficult topic, but there are so many resources out there. But we see this a lot of times where people put off addressing this either with themselves or with a loved one; either they haven't prepared their estate plan, their will, and/or their legal documents; maybe who's going to care for them with the power of attorney, or they haven't really addressed needing to move somewhere like The Baptist Home, until they're pretty far along. [That's] not to say that there's a specific time; each person is different; when they're going to be ready to move somewhere; or maybe they never will have to.

But if you start addressing that earlier, I think that really helps the process along. Because if you wait until it's an urgent need and you wait until you're desperate, then it makes it a lot harder. And then it just adds that level of anxiety [00:26:00] to it. [It] wouldn't be a difficult process.

**Andy:** Well, and you know, that's such a great thing for Missouri Baptists in particular, that there is the living aspect of the facilities that are available with Baptist Homes and Healthcare Ministries on that hand.

But also the Missouri Baptist Foundation. [They] do a lot of that work and help with wills and various end of life documentation type thing. So for those that are listening, there's no give back to me. This is all for you. If there's any need that you need help with, contact the Missouri Baptist Foundation.

I think it's [mbfn.org](http://mbfn.org), if you need the financial help. Obviously, [go to] [thebaptisthome.org](http://thebaptisthome.org), if you need assistance from the facility side and living side. So well, Derek, I greatly appreciate your time today and sharing, again, your [00:27:00] excitement. And obviously, this will air after April 1<sup>st</sup>, so I would love to have people praying for that day, but they can pray in retrospect, I guess. But [is there] anything else that you would request prayer for, as we close today?

**Derek:** Mostly it's going to be about April 1st and our new residents moving in. A lot of them are juggling a lot of different things and we're still putting the sod in.

So, you know, a few little details like that, that are coming together at the last minute, but we're going to be okay. But then also, I did have, one of my residents is in the hospital. If people would just be praying for her. And I won't go into any more detail than that, if that's all right with you.

But, I would sure appreciate that. Thank you.

**Andy:** Okay. Okay. Well, again, Derek, this has been a pleasure. I love the enthusiasm, the excitement. That's pretty common amongst all the [00:28:00] administrators that I've now had a chance to interview, with The Baptist Home, but you have an extra reason for that excitement with everything that's happening later this week. So we wish you well. And, I'm sure that people will be praying over that. So, hope hopefully down the road, we'll have you back on and you can give us a little bit of an update on how things have gone over the last year.

**Derek:** Well, I'd love that. Thanks. Appreciate talking to you too.

**Andy:** Okay. Thank you, sir.