

Transcript

A Roundtable Discussion with Dr. Rodney Harrison, Kate Flinn, Tammy Weis, & Brook Witt
18.03: "A New Home in Independence, Missouri"

Andy Braams: Today on *Biblical Perspectives on Aging*, we have another roundtable. We had a roundtable interview a few weeks ago with some of the leaders of Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] talking about, generally, the plans moving forward as it relates to some of the new opportunities that Baptist Homes has at this point. Today on the podcast, we have another roundtable and we have Dr. Rodney Harrison joining us again, the president, as well as two individuals who are from the new Independence facility that was recently acquired by Baptist Homes & Healthcare Ministries. So, we have Kate Flinn and Tammy Weis with us and we're going to just allow each of them, in turn, to share a little bit about their background and what the inclusion of the new Independence facility will allow for Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] going forward.

So I just want to welcome you on behalf of the podcast today. [00:01:20]

Kate Flinn & Tammy Weis (overlapping): Thank you. Thank you very much.

Andy Braams: Kate, we're going to start with you, if you don't mind. You are the administrator there at the new facility. Could you just share a little bit about your experience in long-term care in general and how you got involved into the industry? What attracted you to the industry in general?

Kate Flinn: Well, thank you. I originally grew up in the Kansas City area up north in Kearney, Missouri. I had a huge love for the elderly population. When I went to college, I started at Northwest Missouri State in Maryville and transitioned with a biomedical and volunteered at a local nursing home. And when I transferred down to Springfield and went to school at Missouri State, I worked for a hospitality group; and I just love people. [00:02:20]

I [am] a people watcher and love to engage and just follow the differences in how everyone is so unique. Well, when I was at Missouri State, I ended up going into gerontology, which is the study of aging. And it [is] just so unique; everyone (I hate to say it this way), but that generation or the older you get, you get marginalized.

And instead of being celebrated and promoted for the challenges and everything they've seen throughout their time and younger generations, including myself, we tend to go through the phase of, "We know everything," when we know absolutely nothing. And I just really, really enjoyed it. And I ended up getting an internship through Missouri State and a local community of care facility in Springfield, Missouri.

Then I transitioned into a skilled facility, also in [00:03:20] Springfield, and fell in love with it even more. I was fortunate enough to get a transfer back to the Kansas City area to be with my family and loved ones. And I just was lucky enough to get [the job] here at Independence and be the social services director. So overall I've been in long-term care for a little over eight years, and I just love it.

At the beginning of 2020, I had the opportunity to sit for my administrator's license exam. And since then, I have been birthed by fire into the COVID, but there's nothing better than to learn at the, what you would say, least likely scenario; but there's nothing I would trade to be a part of this in the new transition with Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries].
[00:04:20]

We're very, very excited to be a part of a new company and their vision and their values [and] the mindset that you give back to the population that has been giving their whole life. So I am just very, very blessed to be a part of that.

Andy Braams: Well, you did time your graduation or the passing of your certification, I guess, at a very inopportune time or opportune as the case might be, but yes, they're very, I mean, it's great that that did happen so that you were prepared, a little better prepared any way, I guess, for the challenges ahead (that we faced over these last 16 months or so).

Well, very good. Well, again, welcome Kate to the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries], entity and Tammy, I'm going to ask you the same question about your experience; how you got involved. What brought you to the industry in general; the health care industry and especially for helping seniors in general?

Tammy Weis: Thank you. I actually am a consultant for Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries]. [00:05:20] I'm a nurse by training. How I became a nurse? My grandmother was the director of nursing in a nursing home and I grew up running around the nursing home in the late sixties while my grandmother and my mother was the bookkeeper there for a short period of time. So spent a lot of time in the nursing home.

[I] worked clinically for many years in hospitals and that sort of thing, and was offered the opportunity in Ohio back in the mid-nineties to be the first clinical marketing person. And so really that started my foray into long-term care as I was the first clinical marketing person in the state of Ohio.

We figured out that we were transitioning at that time from nursing homes not [being] just long-term care anymore, but really they were becoming more and more skilled, higher and higher levels of rehab to a [00:06:20] home, that sort of thing. And it makes sense to have more clinicians involved in the process of helping people come in, get better, and go home.

So that's kind of how I got into the business. Over many years, I ultimately became the CEO of a nursing home company that had 16 across four states. And when the family decided to sell everything, they got out of the business and I became a consultant. And actually, I believe how I got connected to Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] was through a parishioner, someone here in Missouri [who] knew me [and] connected me to [Dr.] Harrison, and here we are.

Andy Braams: Okay. Okay. So really, the fact that Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] is expanding matches part of your background since you've helped kind of facilitate, what'd you say, 16 and in multiple states. So this being a consultant is very, very helpful, I'm sure, [00:07:20] to Dr. Harrison and others at this time; so yeah, well, good.

Well, Rodney, again, we spoke a little bit about this on the roundtable that we had a few weeks ago with Ron Mackey and Joe Ulveling. But, at the time, we were talking more generally about the addition of campuses and, at this point, we now have one of the campuses that is ready to go, pretty much.

So, Rodney, would you describe in more detail about how this campus, how this particular campus, became a part of the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] ministry?

Rodney Harrison: Thank you very much. I appreciate being able to just expand on what we talked about a few weeks ago, and that is that our vision is to provide Christ-like and compassionate care education and advocacy to the aging.

And so, the opportunity to expand into the Kansas City metroplex has been something that has been on my mind really, since I became president back in early 2020. [00:08:20] Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] has had a history of expansion. And so, in our 108 years, we have seen additional campuses, but they have predominantly been rural.

And so, to miss out on, for example, the largest metroplexes, was something that was a burden on my heart. I often receive phone calls. When will Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] have a campus in Kansas City? And when will you have a home in St. Louis? Well, for the first question, I think we have an answer. We now have a Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] campus in the Kansas City metroplex here in Independence, Missouri.

When it comes to St. Louis, well, nothing to announce now. We'll focus here in the Kansas City metroplex for awhile, but we really have changed our strategy historically. We've always bought existing facilities and, partially due to COVID, this has been a tough time for the industry and nursing homes are kind of 10 cents on the dollar right now.

There's a fire sale in certain areas. [00:09:20] And so, there's just been an opportunity, a very unique opportunity to be able to acquire facilities and then invest in [the] restoration and rehabilitation of those facilities. And, you know, that's something that's on my heart. As many of our listeners know, I was involved in church revitalization focus for 10 years prior to being a church revitalization professor for almost 18 years.

So, I love watching what God does when he takes something that needs improvement and [it] is able to be restored to, not only usefulness, but to bring glory to God. So the Independence campus, is just a great facility [with] an amazing staff. The quality of care really has always been quite good; it's just that their numbers went way down during COVID.

So, we're looking forward to having a presence here in Kansas City. And this is really the first fruit of one of the board initiatives of [00:10:20] helping to expand the ministry in the state of Missouri.

Andy Braams: Rodney. Could you just share for listeners who may be curious about the details of the campus?

What is the name of the campus and where is it located in Independence?

Rodney Harrison: Well, the former name was the Truman Gardens. So, if you were to go online and try to find the facility, you would look up Truman Gardens, which originally was [a] 120-bed skilled nursing facility. It was built back originally in the 1980s.

And then there's also the Independence Chateau that is a 16-unit, residential-care apartment [complex] that is a part of our purchase. The new name will be Baptist Homes of Independence. And Baptist Homes of Independence will include both facilities; both the long-term care facility as well as the residential care facility.

But we're going to be making some changes. One of the lessons we learned during [00:11:20] COVID is that if you share a room, you share COVID. But you know what that goes back to if you share the flu and share a room, you're both going to get it. So, we're moving to a private bed model, so everybody will have a private room.

We'll have a few exceptions and that would be for married couples that would like to be able to share a room together; but we'll have private rooms. And that means that our main facility will be about 60 beds or maybe about 66, maybe, with the shared rooms. And then our residential-care facility will be going under some restoration, and that will provide 16 apartments, which are apartments with a bedroom, bath, private bathroom, living room, and a little kitchenette; just a delightful little facility that we really look forward to being able to reopen a little bit later this year. So again, if we're looking it up, this was the Truman Gardens of Independence [00:12:20] and the Independence Chateau, but we're going to be now operating them under the Baptist Homes of Independence name.

Andy Braams: Okay, well, great. Thank you for that clarification.

And so, with the transition, then, Tammy, I want to drive this question back to you, your background in helping multiple facilities (I don't know that you were in a part of helping them to acquire new facilities, but obviously as they transitioned away from it); there'd be some similarities.

You are helping Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] to move Truman Gardens and the Chateau there and bringing it to, not only into a new organization, but to a new type of organization; meaning this is a faith-based organization, it is a not-for-profit care center. What is your role in that? What are some of the challenges that you foresee and perhaps that you've already been able to guide [00:13:20] Dr. Harrison and others through at this time?

Tammy Weis: Thank you. I think one of the biggest challenges...and yes, in a previous life prior to my CEO role, I was responsible for development, so I was on the other side of a large, long term care company where we bought things...one of the big challenges, I think, is, somewhat unforeseen if you're new to the arena, that the facility itself maintains the license and the Medicare certification and all of those sorts of things. So, when you think about selling a business and you say, "I'm going to sell you my store." And so, we close

Friday night and we inventory everything. And Monday, you open up with your new sign on the roof and [you're] done. You know, it's an asset transaction and that's the end of it.

Well, this is nowhere near that simple because the asset part of it is the simple part, [00:14:20] but federally, the licensure belongs to the building, regardless of who's operating it. And so, we have to work with the seller to complete copious amounts of forms to both the state department of health [and] the centers for Medicare [to] make sure that we've got all that documentation so that that number can then be redirected to Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] from the seller.

And so, it's making sure that you have [that]; and everything is computerized today. So making sure that we have all the computer systems that point to the right place and get them back over to the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] funds, for example; most people don't know that the funds go to the person of record for the number from the federal government.

So for several months, the seller collects that and we have to have documentation and contractual things to help us make sure [00:15:20] that Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] is getting what was due them and that the seller is getting what is due to them. So there's a lot of behind the scenes work that goes into making the transition go smoothly (and it never goes smoothly); so it's a matter of making it go as smoothly as it possibly can. That's what we really try to do.

Andy Braams: Sure, sure. Okay. Thank you for that. Kate, I'm going to direct this question towards you. You are brand new as an administrator; 18 months in having passed your exam, your certification [and] such.

There is not only a new job responsibility, but you are now a part of a new organization. What are you excited about? What are some things that you've already experienced in these last 18 months and in these last few months with Baptist homes and, also, what are some hopes that you have in moving forward as this transition is complete?

Kate Flinn: Well, I have definitely had to go [00:16:20] through my own self-confidence within the last 18 months, but I know what I've learned is there's so much cooperation and support [in] different areas of the facility as well as the company above us. We have the running pieces within that to function appropriately for us to take care of our loved ones and the residents within the facility.

Of course, the flexibility has to be there and we're meeting a lot of that. [We're] very hopeful for the support and the compassion that Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] brings to Independence. Not to say anything negative about the past, but I believe we will have a higher system in place with the Christ-like care and getting back to the roots of why we're in long-term [00:17:20] care; why we do what we do and to live for the residents as well as staff and just to be a humble facility.

Andy Braams: Okay. Okay. Well, Rodney, before we ask the last question, which I ask of each guest, let me just ask, is there anything else that any of you would like to share that I have not asked, as we move towards the conclusion of the interview?

Rodney Harrison: Well, you haven't asked if we're taking applications and the answer is yes, we are here at the campus.

You know, there's also several new faces. Pretty soon, we'll be looking at the website. They'll soon see the Independence campus represented and reflected on the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] website. Here in the room today, we have our newest employee, having started this morning. Her name is Brook Witt. She is going to be our specialist in the building helping us with the Medicaid, the Medicare billing, and [00:18:20] with things like accounts receivable and communications.

Not only does she come from Minnesota, which is where my wife and I enjoyed so many years. But she has such a heart; just the journey that God has had her on over the years just really reflects, again, [that] this is the heart of Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries].

And so, if it's okay, I'm going to take a quick segue and let Brook say hello to everybody.

Brook Witt: Well, good morning, afternoon, I guess. Hi. I'm Brook Witt. And yes, I'm the new business office manager, cannon-balling in and excited to see what we can do. I'm not sure. Yeah, I'm on the spot.

Rodney Harrison: For those that are looking at a fear of Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries], day one is overwhelming. It's overwhelming.

And so, Brook will be working with us and we're just so excited to have her [00:19:20] experience in long-term care. She was working with a care facility in Carthage, Missouri, just down south on interstate 49 and came highly recommended by some of the folks in our network.

But you know, this is what's exciting about Baptist Homes right now is that we are seeing the opportunity to care for the aging in various places. Many people still remember the day of [what] they'll call the Ozark campus. And they'll say, "Do you have a place for mom or for us (maybe it's a couple calling)?" And they'd say, "Well, no, we're actually full."

And so, it's so exciting to be able to say, "We have openings. We have availability." We can provide that care for someone in that season of need. And so it [is] just really a privilege to be here in Independence. [It's] just a very accessible location and we are looking forward to a great partnership with, you know, the association and the churches in this area. [00:20:20]

Andy Braams: Well, Rodney, since you mentioned that you are receiving applications at this time, or you're welcome to receive applications, is that information on the website for the Independence facility or is there another way that they should inquire about such things?

Rodney Harrison: As of today, they can go and there'll be a link where they can call the phone number and they can call this campus. And you can also just e-mail **desk@thebaptisthome.org**. And just ask for information about the Independence campus and we'll get that to you. That is kind of our catch-all e-mail: **desk@thebaptisthome.org**. And we'll send you information about this campus.

Andy Braams: Okay, well, thank you very much.

Well, Rodney, let me close with you at this point; and obviously this endeavor, the opportunities that have come up, the 10 cents on the dollar, as you mentioned earlier, are all because of a variety of things, [00:21:20] prayer [being] not the least of which of one of those things. How can churches, families, support this [and] pray for Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] in general, but specifically pray for the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] of Independence campus, in the days, weeks, and years ahead?

Rodney Harrison: Our industry continues to be affected by the coronavirus. People are scared to place their loved ones in a care facility. They are wondering, "Is it safe? Will my loved one be isolated?" We will soon have a full-time campus pastor here. You know, I think about the Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] system and in the last 18 months, never a week has gone by where our residents didn't have soul care.

They didn't have church services. You know, that can't even be said about us, as a pastor yourself, you know, when you had to go to remote delivery, And, you know, that's something that's unique about Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries], because we truly are able to be a little bit different. [00:22:20] And so, continue to pray for our residents [and] pray for the transition in this campus.

I think Tamera said it so well when Tammy was saying there's just so much that is unique about our industry. It has been said that the long-term care industry is the second most regulated industry [behind] tiny nuclear power plants. And in this transition, that has become very clear. Okay. So pray for us as we make all of these transitions. Pray for our staff.

You know, there was one thing I could say, we might say, well, why not pray for the residents? Because, well, the staff are going to be the caregivers. I think if we pray for them, we are praying for them to be the hands and feet of Jesus as they serve in Christ-like love.

So I would like to close this podcast with a request that people would pray, the churches would pray, for our caregivers here at Baptist Homes of Independence. [00:23:20]

Andy Braams: Rodney, I'm going to do something that I normally don't do as a part of these episodes. Let me just entertain that prayer now. As a prompt, hopefully, that others will [also] do that upon listening to this episode in the coming weeks.

[beginning of prayer]

So Father, we do thank you for this growing opportunity; the growing ministry, a 100-plus-year-old ministry that is continuing to expand and the new opportunities, which means new

people, which means new souls, which means opportunities to serve in so many ways, some of which have spent a lifetime serving you and just giving back to them. So God, for those that are leading this, people like Kate and like Tammy and like Brook, and certainly Dr. Harrison and others, we pray for them as they oversee this transition as they work through the details, all the logistics that are involved; [00:24:20] that you would guide them, that you would provide them wisdom that the team, the rest of the staff that is involved in caring for the residents at all the facilities.

But Lord, particularly here at this Independence campus or these two campuses, at this time that you would see that they receive the care that they need as well, that as they are serving others, that the staff and all of those that are involved in caring for others are taken care of mentally [and] taken care of physically.

But Lord, [that they] receive spiritual nourishment as well, from their leaders, from Kate and others within the facility, from Rodney and others as a part of the overall administration, [but] Lord, just in general, that their families would be supportive and that they would support one another in providing the kind of care that ultimately you would want to provide; again, as Rodney said, being the hands and feet of Jesus, to those who receive the care. [00:25:20] So God, we know that this ministry is about serving the residents. And so, we certainly pray for the residents. We pray for the safety overall of all of those that are involved with Baptist Homes [& Healthcare Ministries] continuing growing network, for COVID, and for all of the other challenges that that might be a part of that. But God, especially here for this campus in these coming weeks and months ahead as they continue this transition and welcoming new residents. Let that care, those residents, see Jesus through those that are a part of this interview today and all those that they will impact through ministering to those who will be ministering ultimately to the residents as well. In Jesus name, Amen.
[end of prayer]

Well, thank you all for joining us for this little round table today. And perhaps down the road, we may have each of you back or a partial collection of you back to see how the process is going somewhere down in the future. [00:26:20]

ALL (overlapping): Great. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Andy Braams: Thank you.