

“Oh What a Difference...”

....a week makes! I mean, a lot can happen in a week, right? You can go from being unemployed to employed in a week, or from unmarried to married or from being a parent to being a grandparent or from...yeah, you get the point. Literally, sometimes a lot of life can happen in a week! And as most of us aging folks know, a day isn't as long as a day used to be and a week isn't as long as a week used to be.

I used to think I would never say the kind of ridiculous stuff that I would hear older folks saying, like about how time goes soooooo fast. But, now I get it! To a kid, an hour nap seems like a torturously long time, but to that child's grandparents, that same hour barely allows for downing a cup of coffee and then poof, the grands are up and the breaks over. Time is different for everyone, depending on your stage of life, but for those young folks out there who think you have all the time in the world to plan financially for retirement or to do all the things you want to do...think again. An epitaph for a ninety year old lady, written on her head stone at her request, read, “I was born, I blinked, I died.”

My year has been pretty much a normal year for the most part. To use the term “normal” in reference to most of our lives is a misnomer, because really there is no normal to most of our lives, especially in ministry, where your plans can change instantly based on someone else's needs. But for the most part, normal has been normal for me for most of this year, with no major catastrophes in our churches, no major splits, no violent out bursts, all of which happens from time to time. Fewer pastors have left their pulpits this year than in previous years, no lawsuits, yep, good things are happening in many of our churches, etc. So yeah, it's been kind of a normal year for me...up until a week ago.

Then in a matter of a week, it seemed that everything changed. It all started with our big “Building the Future Together” kick-off BBQ last Monday to showcase the plans for the new office. We had over two hundred present, at least one person from 70% of our churches. And there was a sweet, sweet spirit in that meeting. There was delicious food prepared by some of our guys, Abney Memorial rolled out the welcome mat and the red carpet all at the same time. Abney's sanctuary was beautiful and the place was literally packed out and excitement was in the air.

Up until then, there had been some public acceptance of the gift of land from Abney to the association on which to build a new office facility, but for the most part, most of the work over the last year with lawyers and surveyors

and the architect and others, was done behind the scenes...until Monday, when the Associational Leadership Team unveiled the proposed new building. I wasn't sure what to expect, but by the end of the night, my heart was glad and proud of those in attendance and for this association. The meal was a gift to those who attended. We didn't have a donation box nor did we take up a collection. But by the time the doors closed on the event, with folks not letting their right hand know what their left hand was doing, nearly a thousand dollars had been handed to my secretaries. Unbelievable!

But that was only the start of an unbelievable week. When I walked into my office the next morning, the phone rang and it was a gentleman from one of our churches who had been present at the BBQ. He basically said, “Hey, my wife and I were so impressed with your presentation last night, we want to be a part of what God is doing here. We want to commit to give \$25,000.00 a year for the next four years to help this project become a reality for the association...yep, that'd be a \$100,000.00 commitment! And furthermore he said, we want to challenge individuals in our association to give generously to this associational dream.” Wow!!! My heart was so grateful I was literally beyond words. I literally ran into Sherrie's office and said, “You won't believe what just happened...!”

And that was just the start of that week. Before the week was over, I stood in utter amazement at God. At the BBQ, I shared that selling our existing property might be a difficult thing due to its location. But, in this same week, someone told someone who told someone that we might be selling soon and they have already come and looked at the property twice and are very interested in it. So in a strange twist, due to a previously agreed upon first right of refusal, we now have two potential buyers and we haven't even advertised the property for sale yet. And that's not all! Two folks from two different churches stopped me in various places this week and told me that if the office sells before the new office is completed, they have space in their church to house the associational office temporarily while the new office is being built. My oh my...what a difference a week makes!

But this was only the first week in a very long journey. I am asking every pastor and every church and every member to pray about how God might be leading you to be a part of the joy of literally building the future of the Lakelands Baptist Association together. It will take every church and every pastor leading their church to do their part in making this future a reality for this association in the next few years. If God did all this in just one week, imagine what He can do over the next year if we all put our hands to the plow and dream big for His name sake.

Danny Polatty after the BBQ last Monday, came up to me and said, "Don't build this building too small!" In my mind Danny was saying to me, "Don't dream too small!" Thank you Danny, for such wonderful words of encouragement! Wow, indeed, our great God is too big for small dreams! Let's dream big and work together to git-r-dun! Indeed...oh what a difference a week makes!