

Voices: Grieving, grateful, hopeful: Logsdon past, present and future

February 11, 2020

I had the distinct privilege of preaching in chapel at Logsdon Seminary last week. For me, Logsdon has been what some call a “Thin Space,” a place where the eternal seeps into the physical. Through prayer, study, fellowship and, yes, even papers and exegesis, the realm, rule, reign and reality of God has been made more real to me at Logsdon.

I value greatly my experiences at Logsdon that have shaped my ministry significantly.

Friday, it was announced the seminary would be closing.

Deeply sorrowful

I’m grieving. I’m saddened for faculty, staff, alumni, current students and churches that will miss the opportunity to learn, teach and grow from the ministry of Logsdon Seminary.

This decision hurts, and it impacts careers, families and the larger body of Christ.

I’m also sorrowful to see another one of our seminaries, chartered to train men and women for contextualized gospel ministry, closing.

Certainly, the landscape and resourcing of denominational entities has been changing and continues to change before our eyes. What has worked in the past does not seem to be working now, and it’s OK to grieve that

reality even as we discern what comes next.

For those who are a part of the Hardin-Simmons University family and those who have benefited from the ministry of Logsdon, the closing leaves a major hole.

In an imperfect world, hard decisions sometimes are made in the context of conflicting needs and values. I believe this decision was not made lightly.

Deeply grateful

In my grief, I also find gratitude. While I grieve the reality of this loss for faculty, staff, students and alumni, I also am deeply grateful for the experiences had.

In the classroom, I was taught the Scriptures, challenged to be more like Jesus, and equipped for the work of pastoral ministry. The friendships formed, prayers shared and meals experienced certainly made an impact on my life and ministry.

Pioneer Drive Baptist Church forever is a better church because of the ministry of both Hardin-Simmons University and Logsdon Seminary. Several staff members have been trained in ministry through the seminary, and our church is proud to be the church home to students, administrators, board members, alumni, faculty and friends of the university. The light of Christ has been able to shine brighter through us because of what God has done through Hardin-Simmons University.

Deeply hopeful

To my broader Texas Baptist family and beyond, we need to do some soul-searching about the church and our future leaders.

We need our Baptist colleges and seminaries to train men and women biblically for service in God's kingdom—specifically with and for the local church.

Texas is a large state, and we need to be able to ensure theological education is easily accessible.

The realities of Christian private education are tough, and the realities of seminary education are even more challenging in these times. Our schools and universities need our prayers and financial support, and they need us to encourage our students to attend.

Together, we must make a commitment to value higher education, support that work financially and seek to value the endeavor that is an “education enlightened by faith.”

We need men and women entering, not only church-based ministry, but all sectors of society with the values of Christ.

I pray for and want to express gratitude to those who are working for a bright future for Hardin-Simmons University. I'm thankful for HSU and Logsdon Seminary and for their impact on my life. I am a different, better, more Christ-like person because of my time there.

May we all continue to hope and pray for God to work in the lives of those who are adversely affected and for God's continued work through our “fair daughter of the west.”

John Whitten is lead pastor of The Gathering, a ministry of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas, and is the chair of the Baptist Standard board. Views expressed are those solely of the author.