

FIVE MINUTES WITH TOM MOOTY

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"WE ARE EVERYWHERE"

I was preaching in Raleigh, North Carolina many years ago (more than I care to remember); and 'Nita and I were staying in the home of an executive with IBM and his wife. I remember one of the things he said during that two days: "We Christians might be in a minority; but, praise the Lord, we are everywhere".

I thought of that as I was sitting in the lobby of our hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina; waiting on the rest of our "audio-video team" to go over to the site of the annual meeting of our Southern Baptist Convention and go to work. This place has been like a zoo today; as more and more of the various Baptist messengers (you may call them delegates) to the convention are arriving by the minute. They are all shapes and sizes; some dressed up and some dressed down; some alone and some with families; some with lots of luggage and some with a briefcase and lots of deodorant and breath mints.

In this corner is a man who sees a friend from days gone by; and in that corner is a preacher who has made a new friend. They are discussing all sorts of things - you know "preacher stuff" - and I love to listen in to their conversations.

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Some of these guys serve in remote locations where the nearest church to them might be forty miles away; others serve where there are churches on every corner. Some of them long for these conventions to meet old friends; go to the book stores; listen to preaching; or just fellowship with people who have many of the same problems as they.

There is a fellow who is wandering around, wondering where he is supposed to be; and a good Samaritan helps him out by pointing "over there next to the escalator". Those big guys in the blue blazers with ear buds in their ears are security guards. One of them helped me up off the floor this afternoon after my feet got tangled up in a sea of humanity and I fell all over that beautiful - and very hard - tile floor. He was right there looking down at me within nanoseconds of my spectacular fall. "Are you all right?" he asked me. "Yes", I said, "Everything is ok, just a little embarrassed". It is not cool to fall with a thunderous crash of boundary chains and border ropes in front of a couple of thousand Baptists. It was funny, now that I think back on it - but not cool.

Our waitress this morning was originally from Hungary; and she attended the "Evangelical" church. Yesterday's waitress was from the Czech Republic and she attended the Catholic Church. Another one was from "here" and she did not attend any church. My security guard outside the door of the press room "is a Southern Baptist" from a little town near Greensboro. Willie out on the gate is a really nice guy; but

he has been so busy getting us in and out of this huge coliseum complex that I have not yet been able to talk to him about important stuff. I have befriended him; and I will make it a point to communicate with him as soon as possible.

These people are from all over; I even made a new friend from Tennessee - Benny Proffitt's cousin (I think) - his name was (wait for it) - Ben Proffitt!

We had church in the press room this past Sunday. I preached the message after preacher Mike Winters (formerly from Newport) gave his testimony about the night he was saved at West End Baptist Church in Newport. My two "teckies", Adam and Lance Lloyd, are from First Baptist Church in Wartburg; and they sang and played the keyboard and fiddle. "Victory in Jesus", "Amazing Grace", and "Oh, How I Love Jesus" rang out loud and clear from Baptist press people from all over the States.

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The receptionists are from California, Florida, Georgia, and maybe one from Kentucky; the boss lives outside of Nashville. The photographers come from North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and maybe one from Kentucky. (We throw them red raw meat every once in a while to keep them happy). The reporters live in Oregon, California, Alabama, Arizona, Tennessee, Missouri, Texas, and maybe one from Kentucky. They live there; they work all over - where ever Baptist disaster teams, mission teams, evangelistic teams, etc. go. The

production teams come mostly from Nashville (a whole 'nuther country) and Dallas (don't mess with Texas).

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Remember, you are a Christian (if you are) because someone cared enough to communicate with you about Jesus Christ; and you had the good sense to accept Him as your personal Savior.

Tom Mooty serves as Pastor to The West End Baptist Church of Newport; and writes this column for the Wednesday and Weekend Editions of The Newport Plain Talk. Please contact Mooty at tommooty15@gmail.com or P.O. Box 851 in Newport with your comments; and (psssssst) a word to the Editor would be appreciated (if it's a good word) to let the paper know if this column is wasted very valuable inch-space or not!