

**A Smaller Membership Church with a Big Missional Vision**

**Tommy Hutto, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 003**

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Chris Reinolds: Welcome to the Columbia Metro Connection. A podcast where you can go to get valuable, relevant, and quality resources for you and your congregation. The Columbia Metro Connection is sponsored and supported by the Columbia Metro Baptist Association and the almost 100 partner churches that support the ministry of the CMBA. Hosts for this week's episode are George Bullard, the Director of Missions at the Columbia Metro Baptist Association, Strategic Leadership Coach, Lead Missiologist, and virtuoso of all things church related. JayWill Wilson, Teaching Pastor at Generation Church, Urban Missionary, and Radio Host at Urban City Radio. And, I'm Pastor Chris Reinolds, Lead Pastor at Killian Baptist Church, and Founder of [www.ChrisReinolds.com](http://www.ChrisReinolds.com). And, joining us this week is Tommy Hutto, Senior Pastor at Crooked Run Baptist Church, a smaller membership church with a Kingdom-sized vision, located in the Columbia Metro area.

Chris Reinolds: Pastor Tommy, it's good to have you to the podcast, and we're so glad for you to be here this evening.

Tommy Hutto: Thank you. It's a joy to be here and to be able to share some things about what God is doing at Crooked Run Baptist Church.

JayWill Wilson: Yeah, and I'm excited to hear everything you have going on with the Millennials, and also, with your vacation bible school. I think this is something great for some churches to hear.

George Bullard: Tommy, I'm really excited about you being here because you are an excellent pastor of a dynamic, smaller-membership church. And, I use that phrase ... in an important kind of way. There are no such things as small churches. There are churches that happen to have smaller memberships than others. Because the kinds of things you've been able to do in ministry at Crooked Run and what those lay people do is just simply amazing. And, I think it's something as a story that needs to be heard, needs to be said.

Tommy Hutto: Thank you, George. And, that's encouraging because it's easy to be out in the country in a sparsely populated area, and become discouraged because we think, "What are we doing?" And, yet, after talking with you and hearing about churches in general, it's a joy to know that yes, I guess God is using us in ways I just hadn't stopped and enumerated and thought about.

JayWill Wilson: So, tell us a little about Crooked Run, and how long have you actually been there?

Tommy Hutto: I've been there ... April 1st will be 16 years.

JayWill Wilson: Wow. 16. That's what I'm talking about.

Tommy Hutto: It's a joy. It's a real sweet congregation. They're very forgiving and loving.

Chris Reinolds: A forgiving congregation is a good congregation.

George Bullard: Yes, we all need that.

Tommy Hutto: Unlike some previous churches, they didn't put me on a pedestal. They knew that I'm as human as they are, and they're loving and kind and forgiving and gracious. And, they love the teaching of God's word. They really have a heart for ministry. So, when we come up with a new program, for instance ... about 10 years ago, we started a ministry some of you may be familiar with. Faith Sunday School Evangelism Strategy. And, they just joined right in.

We started with two teams, three each, and we, in three years time, we had about 15 people going out every Sunday night, on Monday night on visitation. And, it gradually dwindled as our young people grew up, and moved away for work, and we're all getting older. But, as a general rule, when we realized we had reached our community, we had been ... had knocked on every door on the connector road, 269, 14 miles. We'd knocked on every door.

Chris Reinolds: Wow.

George Bullard: Fourteen miles.

JayWill Wilson: That's great.

Tommy Hutto: And some of the roads that spurred off of 269, and we just knocked on the doors, and God blessed. We met a few people that hadn't been to our church in a long time, and were members. And, they started coming. They're there to this day. And, we saw a few people saved. And, of course, in an area ... a rural area such as we are, the unemployment's kind of high in our county. We see people come and go. And, some move away for work and whatever. But it's a congregation that's willing to do as we see the need.

George Bullard: That's really good because God does bless our faithfulness.

Tommy Hutto: Amen. Thank you.

Chris Reinolds: Absolutely. Now, in the past 15 years ... because you guys have been really getting more involved in the community. You talk about going and knocking on doors. But, it's more than just knocking on doors. You're actually looking at doing ministry in the community. What sort of ministry is taking place there at Crooked Run?

Tommy Hutto: Well, for one thing, we're beginning to see that knocking on doors isn't as effective as it once was. So, we began asking God, "What do you want us to do next?" So, one of the things we're doing now is we have started with a Good News Club. Child Evangelism Fellowship is a wonderful, global ministry that, last year, reached 19 million children.

George Bullard: Wow.

Tommy Hutto: In the midlands, they're in all the counties, they were in all the counties except Fairfield. So, when I called the office in Columbia, and said, "I'm Tommy Hutto, and I'm at a church in Fairfield County. We'd like to know more about you." Miss Timms was just excited. I mean, she was just overjoyed. Miss Simms, pardon me. And, she said, "I've been trying to get in Fairfield County for two years."

George Bullard: You're the one.

Tommy Hutto: So, this tells me this was God's timing.

Chris Reinolds: Absolutely.

Tommy Hutto: So, I began to call people and ask them, "Would you be interested in doing some of this?" And, we got our 10 volunteers together out of our congregation of about 35 or 40, and started Good News Bible Club at a local public school.

Chris Reinolds: That's good. That's real good. Now, what sort of involvement in the public school does that look like? Talking about the Good News Bible Club and that sort of thing. What do you all do when you go into the school there?

Tommy Hutto: They give us ... we have an hour and fifty minutes. It starts right after school. And, we have bible stories, games, music and bible memorization. And, children are responding well ... not only to that, but we've seen a few children make profession of faith in Christ. And, one of my Deacons and I go and visit the family and give them a bible, invite them to church, and try to get them in a church if they're not in one. We were delighted, One of the young ladies, we said, "We'd like to invite you to church." "Oh, I go to church with grandma." I said, "Well, that's wonderful. You just keep going to church with grandma." And, we just have a wonderful ministry, not only sharing the gospel, but teaching children. Six weeks out of each semester, we go there and spend about an hour and fifty minutes on Tuesdays.

Chris Reinolds: Okay, great.

JayWill Wilson: And not only are y'all doing things in the school, but it looks like y'all also taking a new approach on vacation bible school, right, during the summer. What does that process look like?

Tommy Hutto: That's begun changing, and here's what it's looking like now. Some of the churches that we have been telling about Good News Bible Clubs are wanting to start a Good News Bible Club in the local church near, pardon me, the local private school nearest them. So, recently, the ladies that are on the leadership team of the Good News Bible Club, in fact that was a meeting we had this morning, stated that, those of us as rural churches are going to find a location and we're going to invite kids from all these local public schools to a big vacation bible school sometime and somewhere this summer. We're in the planning stages now, but that's the plan.

Chris Reinolds: Now, how are y'all deciding sort of where the vacation bible school is going to be held.

Tommy Hutto: We're going to look at location, mostly of where our churches are. Try to find a relatively central location, if possible, and we'll need something that either has a gymnasium or a shelter or something, and that's the approach we'll take.

Chris Reinolds: So, it's a, sort of neutral location. It's not one, doesn't have to necessarily be one particular church.

Tommy Hutto: Exactly.

Chris Reinolds: Okay.

JayWill Wilson: And also, since you're partnering with so many different churches in the area, how are y'all deciding basically who does second touch with a lot of the people you're reaching?

Tommy Hutto: That's a good question. In a rural community, often times, some of the families in this church, for instance, today, we have a member of our Good News Club who's from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Winnsboro. Another new one is coming from Lebanon Presbyterian, out in the country too, like we are. And what we do is, if we know that this child knows somebody in your church, then that's the church that'll follow up.

JayWill Wilson: Connect them based on relationships.

Tommy Hutto: Exactly. Or if we know, if they don't have an affiliation with any of the churches, the church that's most closely and geographic to that family, and somebody from their church will visit them.

Chris Reinolds: That's good. That's real good. I mean, especially just being honest, churches in some situations, they can have a tendency to be a little territorial.

JayWill Wilson: Absolutely.

Tommy Hutto: Right.

Chris Reinolds: Those are mine, that's mine. But it's good to see this mentality towards a greater kingdom impact and they're not concerned about, "I want to get this person to come to my church," and so much as, "I want to get this person plugged into a church so that they further their relationship to God."

George Bullard: What do you mean? A kingdom mindset?

JayWill Wilson: And I mean it's a beautiful thing cause you're already looking at the assets of relationships they already have. A lot of churches don't think about the asset of a relationship. They think about more attendees, but those people have relationships. They have relationships, so, yeah, that's a great multiplication idea.

Chris Reinolds: I think it's positive. And I think, speaking of what JayWill was saying there, that relationships with other people is really the connectivity that brings people coming back to church over and over again.

JayWill Wilson: Yes.

Tommy Hutto: Exactly. Exactly.

Chris Reinolds: That's good. That's real good. Now, you are taking these approaches to reach children, you're getting into schools, you're looking at different approaches to your methodology, as far as vacation bible school goes. You really seem to be gearing a lot towards the younger generation. What sort of transpired, that caused Crooked Run, to begin looking at this younger generation and say, "Hey. We really do need to make a change." What spurred that on?

Tommy Hutto: The church sent me on a missions trip to an orphan home in Thailand. While I was in Thailand, I met a young lady named Emily, she was on a World Race Team, and she was a millennial, she was 21 years old. And, I saw her outside on the patio, having her devotions, and waited. When she closed her Bible, I walked out and I said, "Emily, our church would love to reach young people, but we don't know how. Do you have a few minutes you can talk with me about reaching millennials?"

Chris Reinolds: That's some openness and honesty, right there.

Tommy Hutto: So, she said, "Sure. I'll be glad to." So after, probably an hour conversation with Emily, I had some ideas and furthered the burden. And another thing that helped was, you know, different churches worship different ways, and some people, very honestly, quite often older people, are not open to different ways of worship styles and so forth.

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Tommy Hutto: So, I began sharing with them when I was in Thailand, I said, "The worship was beautiful. It was totally different than ours, but it was beautiful." And I'm thinking, but I'm in another culture. And then it occurred to me, millennials are another culture. They grew up right where we grew up, but they have another culture.

So, I began sharing that with the church. We want to reach another culture in Thailand and many, many other countries through our North American Missions Board and International Missions Board. Why wouldn't we want to reach another culture in our backyard.

Chris Reinolds: Wow.

JayWill Wilson: Yeah.

Tommy Hutto: So, to do that, we're going to have to make some changes. And they were all ready and willing to say, "Well, Pastor, if that's what we need to do, let's do it."

So, we're in the process now. We tried, me made one effort at reaching millennials, it was not successful, but it was, you may have read, Rick Warren says, "Don't look at that as a failure, look at that as a trial."

Chris Reinolds: Right.

Tommy Hutto: And that's what we did, so, we're in the process of now learning some more, reading some more, listening to some more pastors who are working with millennials, so that we can discover how to reach the millennials in our area.

Chris Reinolds: That's good, yeah. I think that every time you try to do something, not looking at it as a failure is key. It's just one more way in how not to do something. And, it's just part of the journey to get you where God would have you to be.

Now, from your years in ministry, and your experience in ministry, and Crooked Run, specifically, if you could go back in time, what's one thing that you would tell a younger version of yourself who's just starting out?

Tommy Hutto: I think I would think about and appreciate the education I just received, and think about the things I'd learned in the past. But when I go to the new church, understand, ministry is not a one size fits all. And ask questions, and listen, and try to determine where this church is culturally. Where is this church spiritually? And then, ask God what needs to be done?

I mean, when you think about ministry, I think about the Apostle Paul, when he went to Ephesus, he went door to door. When he went to Athens, he set up his soap box at the marketplace. He just went in and did what needed to be done, according to that church's church culture. The surrounding culture, really.

Chris Reinolds: That's good. It's Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul will give the instruction to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, but he never specifically defines to an exact tee, what the work of the ministry is.

Tommy Hutto: Exactly.

Chris Reinolds: It's really based on the context there.

George Bullard: Tommy, I want to go back and pick up something. You just kind of went by it when you were talking about Emily. But here you are, a church, a smaller membership church, in a rural part of Fairfield County, which is a small county, small town county to rural county, and, you go to Thailand at least once a year? Your church sends you on mission trips to Thailand?

Tell me more about that and what's going on there.

Tommy Hutto: Well, I won't be going this year because they have a number of bible teachers available, but, however, three years ago they sent me to Ethiopia. And I was thrilled to see that to a missionary that we help support there. Last year, I went to Thailand and what we do, now we do our 11% to the cooperative program and 4% to our Association.

George Bullard: May God increase your number.

Tommy Hutto: Right. And, we also exceed our goal for Janie Chapman and Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong, but in addition to that, over the years, people have come and gone and wanted to go into the mission field, and they went with a mission board other than one of ours.

So, we were supporting a missionary in Ethiopia. So, I went over there to, really, I went to encourage the missionary, and he encouraged me. And I learned a great deal from staying in a mud hut, three days and three nights, with a thatch roof. And then, a friend, that I had that I knew many, many years ago, Dr. David Atkins, had begun an orphanage home eight years ago in Thailand.

And, when I knew him, 30, 35 years ago, he had just started his first Christian camp in Ohio. And he called me, we served in a ministry in South Carolina for a while, and he moved back to Ohio, I moved to Tennessee. He called me and said, "I'm starting my first Christian camp, I want you to come be the Bible teacher." I said, "Oh, Dave, I'd love to." So, I went up there and for a week, I was a Bible teacher.

Now, 30, 35 years later, he finds me on Facebook and ... and he said, "I'm starting this camp ministry in Thailand, and I want you to come be my Bible teacher."

Chris Reinolds: Oh, wow.

Tommy Hutto: So I present this to the church, and ... if I can go back a year, he had come and presented his work there, and our church, in addition to what we're doing for missions, we'd like to support one of those orphan girls. So, we took in, one of those little girls to support.

So, now it was Thailand and Cambodia, right now it's Thailand, and so, when I told them I wanted to go be a Bible teacher, and they said, "How much is it going to cost?" I said, "It's going to cost, for plane fair and the room and board, and so forth, $2,500." So they took up a love offering and got $2,700.

Chris Reinolds: Wow.

JayWill Wilson: That's great.

Tommy Hutto: And sent me to Thailand.

Chris Reinolds: That's great.

George Bullard: And again, tell me, this church has 35 to 45 people in attendance?

Tommy Hutto: We generally have 35, 40 people on Sunday morning.

Chris Reinolds: Wow. That's incredible.

Tommy Hutto: And they're just wonderful loving people, and, if they see a need, and we're not bringing things before them all the time, but if they see a need, they just dig deep and see that need is met. And, that was a wonderful opportunity to teach, through an interpreter, those girls in Thailand. And, there were 40 girls, 5 staff members there.

And, to just be there and hear them sing, they even, they speak Thai, of course. Actually, they speak Korean, this travel group there, and they ... they memorized a couple of songs in English so they could sing to us Americans over there from Oregon and Ohio, South Carolina, Texas.

Chris Reinolds: I bet there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Tommy Hutto: Oh man, it was just awesome. And then, afterwards, the little girls run around, you get at least 20, 25 hugs every morning from girls anywhere from five years to fifteen years old, just so thankful that Americans care enough about them to support them so they can have a better life, and learn about Jesus.

JayWill Wilson: Do you think, because you have been doing this missionary work, you have been overseas a couple times, it's made you more aware of missionary work that needs to be done here?

Tommy Hutto: It definitely has. I would encourage anybody, if you have the opportunity, to go on a mission trip. If you go every year for six years, or if you go for just one, it's an eye opener. It made me appreciate what we have here, but it also helped me see the need.

And I think that's one reason that our church is so missions minded. They were when I got there, cause we have an outstanding WMU Director, and she's continually having missions before us, but coming back and seeing those pictures of Cambodia, pictures of Thailand, pictures of Ethiopia, and how grateful they are for what little bit they have, it gives you a new outlook on missions, and I think, a greater desire to help people that really need help.

George Bullard: That's fantastic.

Chris Reinolds: That's real good. That's good. Well, Pastor Tommy, one last thing, you know, we have a lot of guys in our Association that, they may find themselves in some rural areas, serving in churches that are very similar to where Crooked Run is, if those guys wanted to reach out and connect with you, what's the best way for them to be able to do that?

Tommy Hutto: Oh, I'd be delighted. My email address.

Chris Reinolds: Alright, we can put that in the podcast show notes, so that people can have that.

Tommy Hutto: And my phone number.

Chris Reinolds: Alright, well ...

Tommy Hutto: Text, or call, or email.

Chris Reinolds: Alright. Sounds good. Alright, well our time really is up, but if you're interested in connecting with Tommy Hutto and Crooked Run Baptist Church, and the ministry that's taking place there, please feel free to check out the show notes, that way you can get a copy of his email address, and possibly make some contact with him.

If you're interested in connecting with any of us through Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, make sure to check out today's show notes, and all the applicable links will be there. Also, if you found this podcast helpful to you or your ministry, could you go over to I-Tunes and leave a review and a rating so that we can get the word out about what God is doing in the Columbia Metro area.

Until next time, from all of us at the Columbia Metro Connection, we thank you for listening and urge you to share this podcast with everyone you know. It's the good news about the Good News in the Columbia Metro Baptist Association.