

**Urban Ministry**

**Ant Frederick, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 011**

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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 Columbia Metro 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 Chris Reinolds, Lead Pastor at Killian Baptist Church, and Founder of [ChrisReinolds.com](http://www.chrisreinolds.com).

 This week's episode features Antony "Ant" Frederick, teaching and vision Pastor at Midtown Fellowship at Two Notch. Midtown Fellowship Two Notch is a smaller membership church located near the heart of downtown Columbia, South Carolina. Their desire is to move out beyond the walls of the church, and engage the urban community surrounding them by building real and intentional relationships in order to reach inner city communities, neighborhoods, and schools along Two Notch Road. Where there is poverty, above-average crime rates, and below-average education, they desire to go and be a faithful witness for Christ.

George Bullard: Hey Ant, we're so glad to have you today for the podcast. I mean I really have been looking forward to having the opportunity to talk to you, because I really love talking to people who are passionate about church planting.

Ant Frederick: Amen, thank you.

George Bullard: And I really would like to know just at the beginning, where did that passion come from? How did you get connected with church planting efforts?

Ant Frederick: Yeah I feel like my story is kind of crazy. I was listening to a song by Lecrae actually. It's a song called Beautiful Feet. He just very just beautifully but very eloquently painted a picture of some of the difficulties of doing ministry in areas where you have high risk of crime, where you have higher rates of poverty. And the last part of the song is just this plea, to in his terms, plant churches in the projects. And I didn't know what church planting was at the time. I was like "You mean you can just go somewhere and just start a church?" Like I can just walk up somewhere and be like "Hey we're a church now, you guys should come out." I had no clue. I had no clue about what that was. I started doing a lot of Googling and Youtubing people at church planting conferences and I guess I learned there's this whole movement of people looking to further the mission of making disciples and join Christ and what he's doing to build his kingdom through planting churches. And that's really how I got my introduction.

Chris Reinolds: That's good, that's good stuff.

George Bullard: That's great. I really am pleased about that. But many of our listeners are not familiar with downtown Columbia and about particularly the Midtown Fellowship Two Notch, so tell us a little bit about it and how it got started in that current context.

Ant Frederick: Right, so not too long after I started feeling a burden to start a church, I was actually driving down Taylor Street right where it turns into Forest Drive right where Two Notch is, right there in downtown Columbia. Benedict College is right on your left, Allen University was on my right. And I just started really feeling overwhelmed and burdened for the suffering that comes as result of the poverty and the crime rates in those types of areas. To the point where—and I'm not much of a crier, especially back then—and I'm just driving, minding my own business, and I'm weeping in the car. Like God is breaking my heart in ways that I had not felt before. The phrase that kept ringing in my mind is people suffering without hope. People suffering without hope. There is obviously suffering everywhere and God began to grow a burden in my heart for that part of our city. Didn't know nearly as much about it then as I do now. I had heard there was some gang activity there. There was a lot of poverty there, started doing a lot of research online about the demographics. And the more I found out about the difficulties and some of the challenges that were there that people were facing, some of the suffering that people were going through, the more I felt called to that part of our city.

 One thing is that I found was that in one of those neighborhoods over there, the crime rate was four times that of the median neighborhood in Columbia. Found out from City-data.com, found out that in some of those neighborhoods over there, the median annual household income was under $7000 a year. Found out in some of those neighborhoods, less than 50% of the adults had a high school education or high school diploma. As I began to learn these things more and more, the burden just grew. My understanding of the need continued to grow. And the longer that I am there, the more that burden grows for me, the more I'm seeing the need, because then it was numbers and now it’s people, now it’s faces—all those faces, all those people that I know, that my children know, that my wife knows, that we are building with and having relationships with and sharing meals with. And so the burden just continues to grow. So as a church, we want to continue to be faithful witnesses of Christ in those areas and in those neighborhoods.

George Bullard: Wow, that’s super, that’s great.

JayWill Wilson: Now when you describe that type of ministry, that's urban ministry. Let's go ahead and put a name on it. Most people when you think of urban ministry don't think of South Carolina. They don't think Columbia. That's not something that's on their mind. They think big cities and not Columbia, where usually it’s rural ministry ... What exactly does urban ministry look at Two Notch in your area?

Ant Frederick: Yeah, that's a lot ... You mean more so what we do outside the walls of the church building or inside the walls of the church building?

JayWill Wilson: Both. You got to kind of intertwine.

Ant Frederick: Yeah. So well we started out just doing ministry outside of the walls of the building. Once we ... the Lord opened the door… We were talking about trying to be in that part of the city. We didn't have a specific part of the neighborhood we were in. We said intercity Two Notch Road. I got an email from a brother at our sending church, Midtown Fellowship Downtown. And he said, "Hey, I actually grew up in the church that's over there. That church has been decreasing in numbers for a while now. I think they will let you use the building." And so he put me in contact with some of the elders there. They were great and they were like, "Hey, if you want to start using our building for stuff, we are 100% open to it. We want to see the gospel continue to go forward in the neighborhood that we're in."

 So we started out just having cookouts. Cookouts, the fellows, we bring the football, we throw the football. Obviously the boys in the neighborhood, they coming out now. They know us, right? We're doing hot dogs, hamburgers and football. That's about all we had, a little bit of music. Our speaker system wasn’t even that great. You could barely hear the music. So we started doing that, started meeting people. We would do that at about 5 p.m. on a Saturday at first and started meeting people that way. Once we started having our Sunday worship services, we were meeting in the afternoon at about 3 o'clock. So we started having to do cookouts after our Sunday services were over with, so that's about 5 p.m. It's about dinnertime anyway. So we got the neighborhood coming through. People coming, getting to know who we are more and more. So that's how we got started.

 For us, when you talk about urban ministry, for me, really whether it is urban or no matter where it is, is about building relationships with the people who were there, establishing trust. In that neighborhood, there is a lack of trust I would say for churches, for Christians to some degree, coming in to do ministry. So it's about being faithful in your attempt to build relations with people more than just a weekend, more than just 6 months, more than just a year for us. And we've seen their trust grow over time. When people ... had a guy about a month ago tell me—he came on a Sunday—he was like, "Man, I notice that you guys are always doing stuff for the people in the neighborhood, always doing stuff for the children. I just had to come check it out and see what it's like on a Sunday."

George Bullard: Good relationships.

Chris Reinolds: Whenever it comes to obstacles, would you say that sort of faithfulness within the context of the community, is that your biggest obstacle or what other obstacles did you guys have to overcome?

Ant Frederick: Well, the biggest obstacle at first I believe was that lack of trust. That has taken time to build. For what I've been told, there's been churches who come in, do a some type of camp for kids or do a giveaway of something, and you never see them again. Right, so-

Chris Reinolds: Like a shot in the arm sort of thing and runaway.

Ant Frederick: Yes, and so I believe that was what people expected of us. Since then I think we are making progress in that area. Since then the transiency makes it difficult. A lot of people ... So the street that our church is on, our church building is on, is a schoolhouse road, very transient road, very transient area. Sometimes I feel like Midtown Two Notch are the only people trying to stay on schoolhouse road, I feel like everyone else is trying to get off. It's like we are the only ones trying to be here, it feels like sometimes. That's not actually the case. Some people want to stay there. People were just leaving so frequently. I mean I would say probably out of the ten most consistent attendees from the neighborhood, I would say seven of them have either passed away or moved out of the neighborhood since we got there.

 So that's the biggest hurdle, and that causes us to need to continue to do events that put us in front of the people and the neighborhood, so we can continue to reintroduce ourselves because of the transiency. That's one of the reasons we do as many events outside as we do is because I feel like we kind of have to stay in people's faces, that's what I called that. People who know who we are might invite people because of the transiency. If we go a year without doing anything, a lot of people in the neighborhood don't know who we are anymore. So we have to just stay pretty relentless with that.

George Bullard: You know in a lot of churches I've been in my life, there will be somebody who will say something or I've even seen signs in churches that says as you leave worship, you are now leaving the mission field. What I was impressed by the day that I was worshiping with you recently was that there were people with these T-shirts on, I don't remember the exact wording, but it was, "How can I pray for you today" or something like that. And so you all were leaving worship to go into the mission field, to go door to door to ask people how you could pray for them. Tell me more about that and how that has allowed people to connect with you.

Ant Frederick: Yes, this is my new favorite thing. So I'm going to get excited about this. This is my favorite thing. This is my favorite thing. So we wanted to find a way to continue to connect with people in the neighborhood. We didn't want to just be on our turf and on our terms because sometimes that's a barrier for people just to come on to church grounds. It's a barrier for people to come sometimes. And we were just throwing events on our turfs, so to speak, and invite everybody to come. The food was free, but still they had to come to us. And so sometimes we've had smaller groups, groups of two, four, maybe five people walk around the neighborhood, knocking on the doors, just trying to meet people. In my experience, people open up a lot faster and are willing to have conversations deeper than just the surface level, when you ask how can you pray for them. So that just became my go-to phrase when I'm meeting people. How can I pray for you? They start sharing about their family, start to share about the challenges that they have. And then even after you pray, they're open to further conversation about it. I get to pray for people and minster to people in that way and serve in that way, and I get to build relations with people just by asking how can I pray for people.

 So at the beginning of the year, I did a sermon on the need for us to be sharing our faith specifically in the neighborhood that we're in. And I said at the end of sermon this is what I will be doing this year. After our service is over with, after I get to kind of meet and talk with people here, about 20 to 30 minutes after service is over with, I'm going to be walking around the neighborhood meeting people and asking them how can I be praying for them. And I would love you to join me. And if you join me, I'm going to give you a free T-shirt. The T-shirt just says, "How can I pray for you?" So it helps to establish what we're there to do.

 It's kind of been a rallying thing as well for our congregation. And so we do it pretty much every week that the weather allows. And so now I have a guy in my church, who's great with databases. He's actually an IT guy for a company here in downtown Columbia. I asked him could he make us a Google form that we could fill out with every house that we go to. It's just address, name, prayer request and whether or not they were receptive to us coming again. And he was able to do that. And I asked him could he send it from that Google form to ... He said he could send it to a map, so now we have indicators on a Google map. I can show on my phone right now, and you can see every house that we've gone to in the neighborhood and whether or not they were receptive to us. And so we're trying to be faithful to every house that said they would welcome us to come back. So we have two phases. We have the canvasing phase, which we're in now. We're finishing up. We're trying to get to every door in the neighborhood. Every door we knock, how can we pray for you? If they're open to us coming back, we need to indicate that.

 And then it's the follow up phase, in which we just build relationships with the people who said, "Yeah, you can come back." So I feel like we need to be good stewards. We have been praying for open doors for the gospel and we have already over 30 houses in the neighborhood that have said, "Yes, you can come back to us." And I feel like we need to be good stewards of every open door that God is giving us that we pray for.

 So once we've finished with the canvasing phase, we're going to be spending probably about six months. It's just all follow up. Continue to go back to those homes, meet people, build relationships, and look to have gospel conversations with people in the neighborhood and invite them to hopefully be involved in the life of our church. So that is my new favorite outreach strategy. We have it mapped out. I can tell you every house that has said, "Yes, you can come back to us," in the neighborhood. And now it's about continuing to rally our people more and more. We got about 12 to 15 people there that are involved in some amount of consistency. They might not do it every week, but probably twice a month will be doing it. I'm trying to increase that number. I want it to be half of our members.

George Bullard: How many people? Tell me that number again?

Ant Frederick: We got 12 to 15 people there that are involved with some amount of consistency, doing this prayer walk on Sundays. Our biggest number on a Sunday I think was about 16 people we had that came out. So we've divided the neighborhood into quadrants, and we have teams. We're in the process of trying to establish team leaders, so we can get some consistency with who is going where and we could get to every neighborhood. I mean every house in the neighborhood. And then in the follow up phase, we're only visiting those who have said, "Yes, we would love for you to come back and spend more time with us." We're looking to use that to share the gospel with people who don't know Him in the neighborhood.

George Bullard: Wonderful!

Chris Reinolds: That’s really unique. That's really cool. Really, really cool. Now whenever it comes to life transformation, you're making contact with a whole lot people, a whole lot of families, a whole lot of homes. And you guys have been there for how many years now?

Ant Frederick: We've been a church since 2013, so going on five years this summer.

Chris Reinolds: So you're going on five years, what's a life transformation that you've seen thus far as you all have been ministering to people?

Ant Frederick: Man, how much time you got? How much time we got?

Chris Reinolds: Because really that's what we've been praying for, what you're hoping for when you see church planting take place. You want to see life transformation going on.

Ant Frederick: Right, exactly. So our most fruitful ministry is actually in an area that I haven't mentioned yet, and that's Benedict College. So when we're doing those demographic studies, we found out that Business Insider in 2012 released a study stating that Benedict College was the most dangerous college campus in the country, based on property crimes and violent crimes reported per student living on campus that year. Also without getting into all the studies that we went into, a high percentage of the students that went to Benedict College also come from places of poverty. So I was like, we said initially we're going to target places of poverty and high instances of crime. Benedict College looks like a prime place to get that started.

 In end of the summer of 2012, there's a guy I knew, who was leading a ministry at Benedict, James Ricardo. Yeah, I know you know him. I know you know him. He was leading a ministry at Benedict College, was about to move to Greenville because of his job. He called me, and he knew I wanted to plant a church in the area. He was like, "Ant, I know you’re trying to do ministry here. My job is moving me to Greenville. Do you want to take over the ministry that I'm leading? I'll connect you with everybody you'll need to be connected to, and you can just take over." And this was 2012. We're already putting the team together to get started and officially becoming a church the next year. And so I was like, "Yes." First of all, yes.

JayWill Wilson: I just want to say how missional that brother was. That was a white brother on an all black college, doing mission right there and preaching the gospel every week. He basically dropped the keys.

Ant Frederick: And to just talk about how faithful, how God has obviously gone before me. He was able to build connections that I don't that I would have been able to do, just because I believe he is more gifted in that way than I am. And especially he just knew more about it than I did at that point. So he just connected me with all the people that he spent time building trust with for probably a couple years at that point.

 For example, the dean of the chapel there basically holds the keys. You can do anything almost, you can get any room, you can stay as late as you want, if you're in good with the dean of the chapel. I'd tell people I'm with Reverend Davis, and literally ... One of the police officers was about to kick us out of the room, and I was like, "We're here with Reverend Davis doing some of the stuff with his ministry." And the police officer was like, "Okay, you're good." I mean it was after 10:30 at night, you got grown people there, we got loud music, we got pizza there, so this was after the Bible study was over with. And he was like, "Alright, you're good. Continue on." So he basically passed all that off to us. Tell you about a guy named Jay. So Jay was coming to that initial Bible study we did at Benedict College. At that time, Benedict's cafeteria was closing at about, I want to say, either 7 or 7:30. And many of the students at Benedict College come from impoverished homes. And so many of them were only eating through their meal plan. So after 7:30, your meal plan ... You can't buy any food, the cafeteria's closed. So we showed up with Domino's pizza, potato chips, soda and free T-shirts.

Chris Reinolds: You're winning right there.

Ant Frederick: We're the only place on campus to get food and it’s free. So Jay walks in. This is not exaggeration. I think Jay might have been the most anti-social person I had met at that time. Came to a Bible study. Bible study was I would teach for 20-25 minutes, and then we'd have a discussion for 20-25 minutes. Then we would hang out as long as the students would hang out with us. And so he would come to that with his earbuds in, loud enough for you to hear the music around him and never take them out the whole time, never take- to a Bible study.

George Bullard: And it wasn't Bible music.

Ant Frederick: It wasn't Bible music, I can guarantee that. Dude came in late, had the earbuds in, so I'm already teaching, walks in, grabs pizza, chips, soda, finishes that, walks out. Did that for probably a month or two. Then after a while, he started hanging out the whole time. Never took the earbuds out, but he's hanging out. So it's a win, he's staying. And then after a little while, you would notice him take his earbuds out for a little bit. He kinda nod his head, like, "Hm," put the earbuds back in. Same thing. Long story short, he got involved, we transitioned that Bible study into a life group more focused on building community and relationships and fellowship amongst believers. Jay comes in, not a believer, actually starts opening up, actually started sharing who he is with people. Few months later, we had an old-school testimony time type of service in our church. This was probably- we had just been having Sunday services for maybe three months. Jay comes up, gets on the microphone, and he says, "When I first came around, I thought y'all were the weirdest people I'd ever met in my life." He was like, "Y'all was always hugging each other. I don't hug people. I thought you all was weird." He said, "Eventually I realized Jesus is giving me and you all the family I always wanted but never had."

George Bullard: Oh, wow.

Ant Frederick: Jay grew up in a foster system, bounced from home to home. Without going to all the details, ended up spending time in juvy and federal prison. He never really had a home—people he felt like he could trust that would be there for him long term. He got his GED in prison, came out, and went to Benedict College. That was his first semester on campus when he was attending that Bible study, when he was super anti-social. He had just learned to just be a loner and just do life by himself, just couldn't trust anybody.

George Bullard: He was surviving.

Ant Frederick: And probably about two years after that, other guys who became believers in that Benedict Bible study, who befriended him ended up baptizing him when he became a believer in that same Bible study. So you got two Benedict College brothers baptizing him, who became a believer also, and the Lord has just changed his life. He's a different person. Anyway that's the story. I share that because that's what we want to be about as a church. We feel like there's a lot of…there are many Jay's out there, is what I tell people, that we want to get to that we can be family to who have some of the same struggles as Jay had. That's my favorite story so far.

JayWill Wilson: Now you guys are in a very interesting area, because most people don't realize that you all are in actually what they consider a food desert. And y'all have actually started doing something to combat the food desert that the community's dealing with. Can you tell us about some things that you're doing to combat this issue in the area?

Ant Frederick: Yeah, so it started with one of the events we did in the neighborhood last year. The best event we've done as far as retention, as far as people getting involved with the life of our church, was the health fair. We realized that a lot of people in the neighborhood have various health problems, just as we’ve been meeting people. So we got Palmetto Health to come out. Actually we have another one, the 23rd of next month, another health fair. And Palmetto Health came out and did free health screenings. They did 35 free health screenings in the neighborhood. We also brought a local farmer to come out because as you said it's a food desert. Basically what that means is that many of the residents don't have consistent access to healthy foods, especially fresh produce. The nearest grocery store is over a mile away. Grocery stores around neighborhoods like that would oftentimes close down after a while. So many people don't have reliable transportation, so they take the bus to get where they need to be. And the nearest grocery store is over a mile way, and you don't have a car. You're probably not going to the grocery store very often to get fresh produce for your family. But what's close is your McDonald's, is your convenient stores, is your Church's Chicken, all of that, which leads to a lot of health problems in those types of neighborhood.

 So what we said was, we found a farmer, and we asked him, "How much would you need to make for you to come out here consistently to the neighborhood, just set up some tables, and just sell your goods." And he said, "$400. $400 I could do it repetitively." So he came out there. We were going to be grilling food anyway, so we bought corn and squash from him, and we grilled it for the vegetables for the food that we were going to have there anyways. So that was $150, $200. Our members paid, people from the neighborhood came and paid. He accepts government assistance, so the SNAP program. People with SNAP benefits, he accepts that. He accepts cash, credit card, debit card and SNAP. And so it makes it accessible to people in our neighborhood who receive SNAP benefits to be able to purchase food for their homes, for their families.

 So it was a hit. He made probably $500, $600. And then we said, "Could you come on Sundays after our service is over with. We would challenge our people to purchase their produce from you when you come." He was like, "Yeah, I need to make $500 to be able to come." I was like, "Hold up, you said $400. Like hold up now, you said $400 bro." He says, "I’ve got to make $500. I’ve got to make $500." I was like, "Gah, whatever man." So that's what he does for first and third Sundays from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., he comes out. I'm talking right in front of our front door. He sets up his stand, puts his produce out there, very good prices, very good product. We continue to call our members to purchase their produce there. If you're going to purchase produce anyway, purchase in a way that's going to help give members of our neighborhood access to the same thing that you have access to by purchasing it here in Pinehurst. Use your resources to be able to do it. So we've been able to sustain it so far.

 Sometimes the church has had to kick in a little bit of money to get it to $400, but for the most part we have been able to sustain it. And first and third Sundays, Pinehurst Farmer's Market, come get your groceries in. Pinehurst neighborhood, 2801 School House Road if you're in Columbia.

George Bullard: That's good, but you still can’t get Papa John's to deliver pizza to the neighborhood?

Ant Frederick: Pizza delivery is not coming from Papa John's. They're not coming. They're not coming to the neighborhood.

Chris Reinolds: What is your vision, long-term vision for the future of Midtown Fellowship in Two Notch.

Ant Frederick: You're getting me excited here.

George Bullard: You're not already?

Ant Frederick: Right. I want to see inner-city communities along Two Notch Road be transformed by Christ working through his people to see and promote more and more human flourishing and prospering holistically speaking in that part of our city. That we would begin to see that part of our city—many who see it as a kind of a negative in our city—that it would be seen as a bright spot. That Christ will so transform people and communities that it will be a place that people will desire to be, not because there's a boom in the economy or anything specific like that, but because Christ has transformed people's hearts, because Christ has reconciled people to himself, because people are growing and living out what it means to be made in the image of God and be about the prospering of others.

 So I want to see not just the perception, but even the realities of some of the brokenness changed and transformed. All along inner city Two Notch Road, and I mean from Forest Drive to I20 when I say that. That all those pockets where you see those neighborhoods, that Christ would transform them through His people. We try to do that in a variety of ways. One of the ways we do that is that we try to be a hub for different resources and programs in our city. So we don't try to ... We're not trying to make a whole bunch of programs, but we do want to be an advocate for our community and our neighborhood so that those programs could come.

 Met a guy the other day that works, his office is right off of Gadsden Street, right there near the Statehouse, and he helps people with felonies get jobs. He provides incentives to employers to hire people with felonies to be able to get jobs—financial incentives, all types of incentives to employers to be able to do that. So it's like, how do we connect you with people in our neighborhood, so we see ourselves as a hub for different programs and resources. It's a food desert, okay, well let's get groceries into the neighborhood. How do we do that? We’ve got mentors that we're sending currently to Carver-Lyon Elementary School, which is also very near our neighborhood. So that's a large part of how we're trying to do that is seeing ourselves as a hub. We know people in the neighborhood, we're learning more about resources and programs we're bringing to the neighborhood. Let's bring them together for the flourishing of inner city Two Notch in our city.

George Bullard: Wonderful, great. Good. Well, the key thing would be, Ant, we would like for people to be able to connect with you to find out more about your story and to support what's happening in your church. So how would you connect people with Midtown Two Notch and what you guys are up to?

Ant Frederick: Yeah, probably easiest way is our website. [Midtowntwonotch.com](http://www.midtowntwonotch.com) Right there you can find ways to contact me, so you just go to “Leadership” and you’ll see my name, and you'll be able to email me there. People follow us on our Facebook. You go to Midtown Two Notch on Facebook. We're also on Twitter. You can go to Midtown Two Notch. Just search it on Twitter, you should be able to find us there.

Chris Reinolds: That's good, and we'll put all that information in the show notes. Ant, thank you so much for joining with us today. We really do appreciate it.

Ant Frederick: Yeah, my pleasure. Thank you guys.

Chris Reinolds: And to all of our listeners, thank you for joining with us. Please be sure to check out the show notes for more detailed information about today's show. Also if you found this podcast helpful to you or your ministry, share with others so that we can get the word out about what God is doing. 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.