

**Your Church and the Baptist Collegiate Ministry**

**Jamie Rogers, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 022**

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Chris Reinolds: Welcome to the Columbia Metro Connection, the podcast where you can go and 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 family churches that support the Ministry of the CMBA. Hosts for this week's episode are George Bullard, the director of missions, strategic leadership coach and lead missiologist at Columbia Metro Baptist Association. And I'm Chris Reinolds certified church consultant and lead pastor at Killian Baptist Church.

 Joining us this week is Jamie Rogers, new Baptist Collegiate Ministry director in Columbia, South Carolina. His work spans four colleges in and around the Columbia Metro area where he seeks to build relationships in order to disciple and share the hope of the Gospel with the students he meets.

George Bullard: Jamie, we're really glad to have you here for the podcast. We're glad to have you back in South Carolina. But we know your experience in New York state has been wonderful and it has helped prepare you for what you're doing here. You know, with over 50,000 students and various kinds of higher education in the Midlands area, we have a tremendous responsibility to impact students and for students to impact the world.

Jamie Rogers: Yeah, we do. Yeah, we do, man. They're there from all over the world, and 2000 international students at just USC alone. This past February at our state convention gathering for college students called Converge, we actually took several students from Benedict College with us, some of them from different countries, foreign countries, Muslim background peoples, and still not even followers of Jesus. And so, it was an awesome opportunity to go and share the gospel. So just really neat man, to be able to stand out and to be able to just see who God's bringing into our path, into our corner and just saying, man, we're going to faithful to share the gospel with them.

Chris Reinolds: You're serving, how many different colleges, is it four different colleges?

Jamie Rogers: Yeah, they're five actually.

Chris Reinolds: Five colleges.

Jamie Rogers: Five actually. We always tell people that we're there to reach students who are at Benedict College, Allen University, Columbia College, Midlands Technical College, and then of course, the University of South Carolina. So 35,000 students just in that one campus alone. So, huge missions field.

Chris Reinolds: Now I've worked in associations and in large cities and sometimes whenever it comes to the BCM, the Baptist Collegiate Ministries, churches and pastors can look at these as sort of a para-church organization that really just comes to churches and say, hey, we want funding from the people at the church. But y'all really operate independently. However, you're hoping to sort of redefine that sort of relationship to where it doesn't, it doesn't look like that model.

Jamie Rogers: I mean, we are para-church ministry, no doubt about it. There's no getting around that, which means, we are to come alongside of the church.

Chris Reinolds: And I like that idea, the alongside of.

Jamie Rogers: Yeah. We very much see, that's our goal, that's our mission. Para-church ministries by definition are ministries that say, hey, we're targeting one particular people group or age group. For us, it's the campus environment, primarily students. We adopted a new mission statement this past year when I came on and said our goal, our mission, is to share the gospel with every person on every campus in Columbia. So, we've tried to organize what we're doing around that one mission statement.

George Bullard: Jamie, what are some other ways that you're hoping to integrate churches into the fabric of the BCM?

Jamie Rogers: We're thankful to be an arm of not only the Columbia Metro Association but also the South Carolina Baptist Convention because they have a hand in this as well. But our goal is to have churches in our building, on our campus, prayer walking, providing meals for us, for us on our Tuesday night, large group gathering, which right now is what we're calling Community Night. So our numbers are even up a little bit there compared to last semester, and I think it just helps to have somebody there who's there all the time. The students are comfortable with me or they're getting still to know me, but it's the same person, there's some consistency there. But we're wanting to involve the churches.

 So for instance, right now, we have small groups that we call family groups. I know we're going to talk about that here in just a little bit as well. But one of the things we're trying to do is, there are some churches where our students are collecting together. So some of those churches, there are multiple students that go to that church. So one of the things we're wanting to do is we're wanting to make some of our family groups church groups. So turning, you know, what those students are going to be talking about and discussing in their family groups, letting the pastors, you know, letting them speak in to saying, hey, I want this group to be studying this or discussing sermons.

 And then what happens is, is these students are looking to bring freshmen in. We're excited about seeing who God's going to be bringing into our campus this next year. But then seeing those family groups that are directly tied to those local church bodies, immediately those freshmen who are plugged into those family groups are going to be, you know, hopefully going to be going to those churches. We can't exist, we don't want to exist without the local church. We do need their financial support. And I mean, that's just part of it. But we want to be a ministry that's actually giving back to them.

 And so, every week, I'm a former pastor, I've been pastoring now for 18 years, whether it's local church, you know, traditional ministry or church planting ministry, I've been a pastor for 18 years. I love the local church. If I'm not preaching somewhere every week in one of our local churches, I am going to a local church and my family's heavily involved. We know that in four or five years, students are not going to be on our campus anymore. And so, BCM, apart from them supporting us as an alumni, BCM is not going to exist for them anymore. But the local church is going to exist. And wherever they go, we want them to know that it's important for you to be plugged into a local body of believers.

 So just to give you another for instance on how we see this role, we have a number of our students who go to Midtown Fellowship, one of our local churches here in Columbia. And so, we kind of had to put our money where our mouth is in this language. It's our goal, our desire to see our students more committed to their local church than they are Baptist Collegiate Ministry. I want them to see the campus as a missions field, which is where BCM comes in. We are a collection of local churches because all of our students hopefully are going to a local church. But this past year, eight of our students went on a, instead of going on our spring break trip, they went on the spring break trip with Midtown. And so, rather than sulk about that, like we celebrated that because that's who we are. That's what we say we believe. And if that's what we say we believe, we have to do that.

 We had a chance to celebrate some of the victories that they were able to, those students were able to see while they were there. And so, we've been trying to even partner with some ministry on other campuses like Benedict. Midtown has been a partner with us in that, and seeing a ministry that we started, now, we've actually kind of handed that over to them and said, man, we praise the Lord that these students are now connected to you guys. We celebrate everything that God's doing around us. So that's just some of the ways that we see this partnership hopefully doing well together.

George Bullard: Well, you know, Jamie, you mentioned that there 2000 international students at USC alone. But of course we know in the Midlands area there are all kinds of internationals. We're recording this right after the weekend of the International Festival where 99 countries were represented in the international festival out at the state fairgrounds. But tell us about the work of internationals with BCM and how important that is and where you see that going?

Jamie Rogers: I'm so glad you bring this up because this is one of the things that really convinced us, man, this is where God wants us. We have a heart for the nations, like God has given us that. I always tell people, I'm the guy that grew up, I grew up on a dead end dirt road that was two and a half miles long. My closest neighbor was a mile and a half away from us. I'm the guy that had a confederate flag on my wall, and not because I was all about southern heritage if you guys know what I mean. And so, over the years, just through applying the gospel to my own life, Jesus has changed me and has shaped me and has given me a heart to not only see other people who are outside of our own nation come to faith but actually love them. And not only just love them but like them.

 So for instance, at our house on Easter, we're going to have about 25 international students at our house from about seven different countries. Brazil, Spain, India, Pakistan, you know, from all these different places. We love that. God has actually made us better because of that. And so, one of the things we're trying to do even in our association is we're trying to educate our churches, number one, on the fact that every Thursday we open up the doors of our building and we partner with another ministry that's on our campus or other ministries that are on our campus. And we're bringing in over 100 international students every Thursday into our building.

 And most of those students, apart from about two or three of them, and in some weeks, every one of them are from this very strategic, important missiological area called the 10/40 window that we all talk about in terms when we're talking about missiology and reaching the nations, 99% of those students are from the 10/40 window. Places where it's illegal or it's very difficult for missionaries to go as missionaries and take the gospel to these countries. Well, God has brought those countries to US.

 And so, we even have partnered now with Domino's that's right beside us to allow our visiting guests who are coming in to serve with us to park in the back of their parking lot because we'd run out of parking spots in our parking lot. Because one of the things we want to do is we want churches, we want church members, we want pastors to come in and sit down, have lunch with these students, get to know these students. It's part of our ongoing larger strategy to help share the gospel and to reach out to these international students. One of the things, George, you and I've talked about is trying to compile a database, a list of church members names that are willing to say, man, I'm willing to host these international students at my house once a month just to share a meal with them.

 We've had another partner in ministry with us say, Jamie, if you get me 1000 church members, I'll get you 1000 students, all international students. Because my fear was I actually went to him and I said, Raj, you know, my concern is if I get a list of people who are willing to host international students, what if we don't have enough students? And that's when he said, I'll get you a thousand if you get me a thousand. And so, immediately, like my heart just broke because I'm facing this daunting task now of not, I'm not quite sure we can get a thousand. I wish we could get 2000. I don't want any international student who's here at USC or Benedict or wherever they are, if they want to be in an American home, I want them to be able to be in an American home and I want that family to be able to share the gospel with them.

 So the question now for the CMBA is we want to talk about missions and we're willing to send people all the way around the world to go on missions trips, but are we going to step up to the plate and are we really going to do missions right here at home with these internationals that God has brought us? Are we going to do it?

George Bullard: It's a big challenge. It is. It's unknown to us right now but known to God whether or not we'll be able to do that.

Jamie Rogers: I'm believing in the churches of the Columbia Metro Association and a few other churches outside of our association, Lexington Association. I'm counting on the fact that God has a missions field. The thing about it is, and this is what I want everybody to hear and know, is that anybody can do this. If you cook a meal at your house once a month, you can do this. Or if you don't even cook at your house, let's just say you go out to eat every meal, you can do this kind of ministry. Everybody can do this.

 So if you're a widow or a widower or if you've got a family like me with four children or more than that, or you're a retired couple, everybody can do this. We're going to provide trainings this summer, we're going to provide multiple trainings. It's just going to be a one night training event. But we're going to provide multiple opportunities for people to be able to come because we know everybody can't make each night, but we're going to provide trainings and it's just going to be able to teach people that anybody can do this if you're willing to open up your home, open up your life.

 There are some things culturally that every person, everybody needs to learn. Things like, if you're paired with a Muslim student, they're probably not going to eat pork in your house. Or maybe you got a Hindu student who they're not going to eat any meat. So you just need to know that might be the case. But I promise you, I know what Satan's going to do. He's going to try to throw a roadblock up and say, man, this is going to be too much of a requirement for you.

 I'll just go ahead and make a promise to you, that anybody who's willing to open up their home, I promise you, you'll receive more of a blessing than you will be a blessing. We have seen that to be the truth in our lives over and over and over again. We've always been blessed by hanging around people who are not from here. It opens up our minds, it opens up our hearts even to being able to share and being willing to share the gospel with even more people, even more American people who are around us. But the gauntlet has been laid. So now, what are we going to do with it?

Chris Reinolds: It sounds like you're not settling with the old adage or the old statement that, you know, we ain't never done it that way before. You've kind of thrown that out the window and you're hanging a new banner as far as BCM, as far as your approach even to the ministry at the colleges and what you are serving. What are some other ways in which you guys are approaching that sort of, let's take a new look and a new perspective on things?

Jamie Rogers: Well, ministry's changing, especially with this generation. They are not quite as personal. They live their whole life on phones and they live their whole life in technology, you know, being immersed in technology. I mean, some of the ways we do things has to change. So we're trying to, even a new mission statement is new to our students. BCM right now can be very inward focused. So, one of the things we had to change when we first came in was, man, we've got to reach other people. This is not just about us, this is not just a club for Christian students. This is a ministry to reach every student. And just even that mindset is something that is completely different and that we're trying to institute and to initiate with our leadership team, with the students whom God is bringing to us. So even those kind of things.

 One of the things we're doing now as well that's different than in the past, BCM would bring in different pastors and teachers from around the association, which in a good way, that's a good thing, you know, that's a good thing. However, there just wasn't consistency that we needed. And so, like I mentioned earlier, just even the fact that I'm teaching and preaching every week is a consistency thing that the students know, they know they're coming in, they know what to expect, they know what the style is going to be. We're even trying to change some of our, some of our approach to our worship night where we're bringing in some more fun elements because right now it just resembles a church service. We're encouraging students to go to church. And so, just trying to do some different things to appeal to this generation.

Chris Reinolds: Now you're also starting Bible studies as well. Is that the case?

Jamie Rogers: Yeah, Bible studies. And one of the things we're actually finding out is that students are looking for truth. Like they're looking for, you know, they live in a world that's morally relativistic. That's the mantra today, there is no truth. But you know, people know, we're born with that innate sense of knowledge and truth in our own hearts, that there really is something out there that's greater than us, that God exists and truth exists. And so, one of the things that we're just trying to show them, one of the things we're seeing is that as we share the gospel, that's something that students don't have. They don't have any hope. We live in a world that's hopeless and there is no hope apart from Jesus Christ in our world. So the answers to life and the answers that all of us are looking for, even these students are not going to be found in Washington DC. They're not going to be found even in their classrooms for the most part. It can only be found in Jesus and in the Bible that he has given to us, that he has spoken into existence.

 And so, what we have found is that even as we start these Bible studies, students are able to see, man, there's something different. There's something different here that I don't read, that I don't hear my biology class room. There's something different here that I don't see, wherever it is that they're on campus. So we're just providing hope, the hope of the Gospel.

Chris Reinolds: That's good

Jamie Rogers: To these students,

Chris Reinolds: I know that George has a question he's been itching to ask you and a lot of books haven't been written on the subject as of yet as far as this next generation goes. But I'm going to let him ask you this question to see maybe if you can go ahead and start writing your book for this.

George Bullard: Well, you know, a lot of churches are wondering how they reach students once they graduate from high school. And you know, we have these kind of a big wave kind of things we think about these birth cohorts. For years, people have been talking about the millennials. But basically the next generation known by various titles, one of them is the iGeneration because they've been on the Internet since they could read and look at videos and stuff like that. But my basic question is, are you noticing a learning trend or change or the dialogue thing, like for instance, I've often said that one of our issues in the church has been in the last couple of birth cohorts that we would sing the song, tell me the stories of Jesus, but the way the song really needed to be sung was show me your story of Jesus. And so, what are some of the trend changes that you see happening in how we present the Gospel to collegiates at this time?

Jamie Rogers: Well, it really is, it's about relationship, which is something they really don't have. This is the most, you know, we were talking about, there's a difference even in our seniors and in the freshman who are on campus right now and the ones who are going to come in. They're the most connected generation that we probably have ever seen. They have imminent, is that the word? They have knowledge. They can find the answers to any question they're looking for by not just turning their phone on. They can just speak to their phone and I can't even say it because my phone's in my pocket and she's going to come on, this Google browser or whatever it is. But yet, they are the most lonely generation. I think it's because we are created to be relational creatures by God.

 Adam wasn't alone. He had Eve in the garden, and then they still weren't alone because they had a relationship with God. We are relational beings. So one of the things we're finding out is that students really are just crying out and longing for real relationship. So when I came on, I turn 42 next Tuesday, so one of our fears was, are we too old for this? You know, can students connect with, can we connect with students? And one of the things we found is, that we are even finding and that we're counting on even, is that students are looking for somebody who is older than them, who's been there, who's been where they're wanting to go. And so they're able to see us, they're able to see my wife and I connect and talk to each other.

 Tonight, we're hosting students at our house for the national championship game just to view our life, that's something that can't see on their phones. They're not going to find that on their phones. And then, one of the other things too is, we wonder, how can we reach them? They don't want to be reached. Just this past Saturday, I was representing BCM with other campus Christian or Christian organizations on our campus and representing them at an info booth. It was funny to see the people who would come up and talk to me because these are prospective students coming in to check out the University of South Carolina. And the students would just pass by my table, and if anybody did come, it was their parents because their parents are going, hey, I want my student involved, I want them in the religious organization. The student's thinking, I don't really care.

 So we only got four names, four names. And that's not just BCM. Like there was one Baptist inquiry and three other inquiries. I think one Catholic, one Lutheran and then the other like one evangelical. So you think man, we've got, I don't know how many students are going to bring in, but I would say the vast majority of them, they could care less about the gospel. They don't even know that they even need Jesus. So you say, man, how are we going to reach them?

 And the only answer, the only answer that I have, but it's the best answer that I think we could come up with is we're going to pray to the Lord, and we're going to ask God to do what he does, the Holy Spirit does. And we're going to ask him to put a burden on the hearts of students, that they would be driven to find answers to their deepest question, which is where am I going to find life? Where am I going to find life? And Jesus said, I've come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

 So we want to be there. So I'll give you a for instance. About a month and a half ago, we had something that was not a part of our ministry but we opened up our building to other groups. And so, there was a group that had brought in some younger students from like a title nine school or title one, whatever the terminology is. They were in our building. And so, they invited athletes to come in and speak to these students, just trying to encourage them to go to college one day. Most of the students are from families that nobody's ever gone to college. They'll probably be the first student to ever go to college.

 So there were four tennis players. And we were talking to them and just getting to know them. And one of the students started asking me questions about faith and she said, I've been at, I've been looking for the answers to these questions. She's been searching. Her family is from upstate New York, which is where we were, and now they live in Tampa, Florida, but no faith background basically whatsoever. And she said, I'm looking for, I'm just looking for some answers. So I was trying to get to the tennis match yesterday so I could go and try to contact the student again just to say, hey, you know, didn't know if you had still been asking these questions and would love to follow up. I was so tired from the weekend, I had a busy weekend and I just said, God, I'm going to have to trust you on this one, which we ought to trust him in everything.

 And so I prayed and I said, God, you know who this student is. You're able to work in her life and to put that burden in her heart to say, I need to get back by the BCM building again. And because this doesn't, like this isn't my ministry. This is God's ministry. He is responsible for bringing every person who's going to come to faith. He's responsible for that. My job was just to be an open door, a good front door and say welcome in and here's where life is found and just share Jesus. Just talk about Jesus. And Jesus said, if I am lifted up, and I know he's talking about the cross, but it still is so relevant to say if I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself. And that includes college students.

 And we're seeing that happen. Since I've been on campus, we've seen four students come to know Christ. We're praying that's going to even multiply, well, at least multiply by two, see eight next semester. We're just still trying to find out these pockets where the gospel is not being shared to love every person on every campus in Columbia and share the gospel with them.

Chris Reinolds: I'll tell you Jamie, I'm excited about what it is that you guys are doing. I appreciate y'all's approach to things and also your desire to work with the local church and partner with them and have them working. I really do pray and hope to see people stepping up to the plate and understanding that this is a mission field that is absolutely, absolutely essential for the gospel to be shared in the hearts and lives of these kids.

 If there's a pastor or a church leader or a member that's listening and they want to get in contact with you, what's the best way for them to be able to reach out to you?

Jamie Rogers: They can contact me on email. My email is Bcmrev@gmail.com they can email me. They can go to our website, my email is there, [carolinabcm.org](https://www.carolinabcm.org/), or they can come by our building, 819 Main Street and just come and visit us and see what we have to offer. I would love to do lunch with them, talk to them about ministry, how they can be involved even more so. Any of those ways would be great.

Chris Reinolds: That's great. Wonderful. Thanks so much.

George Bullard: Thank you Jamie. We appreciate you being with us very much today.

Jamie Rogers: Hey, thank you guys.

Chris Reinolds: And to all of our listeners, thank you for joining with us and please be sure to check out the show notes for more detailed information about today’s show. Also, if you found this podcast helpful for you and your ministry, share it with others so 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.