

**Giving Strength to Churches Through Relationships**

**Cathy Locklear, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 023**

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Chris Reinolds: Welcome to the Columbia Metro Connection 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 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.

Chris Reinolds: Joining us this week is Cathy Locklear, Community Impact Ministry Mobilizer with the Columbia Metro Baptist Association. Cathy has assisted churches in the association that are seeking ways to impact their local communities through missions. This week, we look forward to discussing how her investment into the local church over the past 20 years has given her a unique insight on how to partner mission-minded churches with ministry opportunities in their local context.

George Bullard: Welcome Cathy, we're so glad to have you as a part of this podcast today. I really appreciate who you are and what all you do as our Community Impact Ministry Mobilizer. You are passionate about people's needs, you are passionate about churches’ involvement and so it's just great to have you.

Cathy Locklear: Thank you George. It's wonderful being here.

George Bullard: I've only had the chance to know for little less than two years but you've been in this role as we have indicated, for 20 years. But initially your role looked very different than it does today. How has your role changed over these 20 years?

Cathy Locklear: My role has really changed because when I first came to the Association, it was as a very part time person running food pantries. That was my initial job and that was to just manage existing ministry. The food pantry itself. There was a lot of participation from the churches but it was very limited as to my contact with them.

Chris Reinolds: Now what was the reasoning for making a shift or sort of how did that gradual shift take place from the working just the food pantry to more of a obviously a more involved aspect and role within the context of the Association?

Cathy Locklear: Some of it was structure in the Association change. Some of it was a matter of replacing jobs and the roles at the Association in general changing. But I did have an interest in other ministries. I wanted to learn about what other people at the Association were doing. Bill Wright for instance, I worked under him and learned a lot about different opportunities at the Association.

George Bullard: Okay. How long for instance, have you been involved in work with the prisons and the women's prison picnic and things like that?

Cathy Locklear: I started working with those probably about 15 years ago. I had been there about 5 years, just maintaining the food pantry and various things like that but then I started helping out with the other ministries. That was more volunteer basis, wasn't part of the job, but I just found that real interesting in watching the churches come together and do that kind of thing.

George Bullard: Then also for years, did you not work with the annual state fair? And what did you do there?

Cathy Locklear: Yes. The state fair has always been a good ministry. I love that. The state fair, we are able, and it ties into the food pantries and hunger ministry because there's a need there for that ministry. All of our ministries out, most of the ministries at the Association overlap. I don't think there's a way to distinguish the different ministries. And the state fair had a need for food. The prison picnic has a need for food. They all kind of tie together or a lot of them tie together.

Chris Reinolds: Now it seems like you had a lot of ownership of those ministries. You owned it, you even to the point of it wasn't part of the job and yet still frequently, you were volunteering and serving and more than likely, leading out in a lot of those various capacities. But there's been sort of shift in that associational model over the past couple of years and so what was the reasoning behind that necessary shift from maybe you owning it to it transitioning to what it is now and what it's going to?

Cathy Locklear: The ultimate goal of missions ministries is for the church to take ownership in these ministries, not the Association have the ministry and ask the church to join. Some of the larger ministries, state fair, prison picnic, it takes cooperation of multiple churches. I feel like my role is organization, getting people together or getting churches together but it does take more than one church to do those ministries. That part of it has, to turn those ministries back over to the church and to go back to the church and join them where they are, not just provide opportunities. To see what they're doing and how we can help them.

George Bullard: You're talking about joining them where they are. Go a little bit more into that. How is that different than asking the church to join the Association in a project?

Cathy Locklear: It's a big difference. If I go to community agencies, secular, I can always find something for our churches to do. But joining the church where they are individually, every church has its own heart, every church has its own vision, its own mission, its own direction that it's going in. For us to come alongside the church in the way it's going, supporting what they're doing, maybe helping them join with other churches, whatever it takes to back what the church is doing versus having the church come and help us do what we do because we are the churches. We need to go with the churches.

Chris Reinolds: That makes sense. And there's a greater opportunity for a larger impact in the community itself if the church themselves are organizing the ministry opportunities and they're taking ownership of it versus if you're having to lead out and having them join in. I think especially with the fact that we've got almost a 100 member churches and that's a lot of people that could be doing ministry in their capacities. But what are some of the specific ways in which you're now able to partner with the churches, versus you leading the ministry for churches to participate in? What are some of the transitions that you've seen as far as those specific ministries the churches are engaging in ever since this transition has started taking place?

Cathy Locklear: There's always the Association's place would look different with different churches. For instance, if a church has a ministry that they want to begin and they need a jumpstart on it, it may be something as simple as we need to use a block party trailer to get attention. Or it may be something more complex. Maybe we're a smaller church and we need the assistance of a larger church that's already involved in a ministry. There's different aspects of for instance, prison ministry, and we have a couple of churches that are already established in that. Maybe a church has a heart for prison ministry and we need to join those two together. It could be a number of ways.

 One thing, this job is never boring. It's always something different. Every case is different. And that can be seen in our churches because every one of our churches is different. It's never the same. It will always look different.

Chris Reinolds: That's good.

George Bullard: Cathy, anyone that knows you, knows that you have a heart for all kinds of compassion ministries, not just food and clothing and food pantry kind of things. How are you exercising this passion through this new model of partnership in the CMBA?

Cathy Locklear: Oh okay. My original employment was with the food pantries and I've learned a lot through that. I've learned a lot on how to minister through compassion ministry, hunger ministry, that kind of thing. And so it's a unique knowledge that is not trained and it doesn't come from everywhere. I'm able to take that knowledge and for instance, if a church wanted to start a new ministry in there, I have the organization, the knowledge, the paperwork to get them started. We also offer a grant. We're able to help churches financially. If they would like to start a new hunger ministry or if they have an existing ministry that needs a little bit of funds, we're able to help by offering grants to our member churches and contributing churches to help them with what they're already doing.

 Another thing that I love to do is see people out on mission. I like to see the groups. State fair, prison ministry, I love to see that. We have offered, or last year, we held a Compassion Day. Operation Inasmuch Day, where churches all got out on the same day and ministered to their communities.

Chris Reinolds: Did you all specifically organize? You told them, "This is what you're going to be doing in your community. This is what you're going to be doing in your community." Or, did you leave that up to them?

Cathy Locklear: No, that was the beauty of it is each church was able to go in and look at what they wanted to do or what the need was in their area. I was privileged enough to get to go out and ride around and watch them and look at them. There are things that need to be done that adds to that from an organizational standpoint. That is where I step in and I'm able to help. For instance, I had when I was doing the training on those, I have a list and it's 54 things you can do in your community. A lot of people just can't think of things. I can't think of it, I can think of it for you.

Chris Reinolds: Give them a list. That's good.

Cathy Locklear: Give you a list.

George Bullard: Well you know Cathy, among the other things that have sort of shifted, let's go back to the state fair. It used to be that a big part of the state fair was an exhibit booth that the Columbia Metro Baptist Association and the Lexington Baptist Association had together. But you've refocused that ministry in the past year. How are you delivering what you see as essential and very helpful services now?

Cathy Locklear: We took a good look at the state fair ministry and the state fair ministry, the booth did not serve the people well. It did not serve our churches well. It did not allow for them to have a hands on ministry and make a difference. The difference we have made over the years at the state fair, has been to the workers. Now, we are able to concentrate on those first several days when the workers first get here, we're able to feed them, we're able to provide them health kits, we're able to have conversations with them without people walking around the fair and trying to maintain a booth. When people come to the fair, they come to the fair for a different reason. Our workers, we are the only church they'll have. They travel 365 days a year so we are their church. The chaplains that serve out there are their pastors. It just was a change that needed to be made and it was time to make.

George Bullard: I'm sure the carnies really appreciate that.

Cathy Locklear: Oh they do.

George Bullard: Because you have a very high-touch relationship with them and to the volunteers that participate in that with you, I think they probably see a different understanding of people and what they're going through at being in that kind of transient relationship.

Cathy Locklear: Yes, they do. They're from, the carnies are from all over, internationally all over. Our people of course, we're all local and yet we're able to talk to those people and have time to talk to them. We have had over the past few years, we have taken part in a wedding. We've taken part in a funeral. The management of the fair, when they've needed people to go to the hospital, they call one of our chaplains. We have nurses that go out there and help these people actually take blood pressures. They don't take care of themselves, they don't have time. They have seen instances where they have had to send them to the hospital.

Cathy Locklear: And then the general, just being able to feed them and have them come back to us and say, "No other fair appreciates it." The fair management told us that when they travel to the different fair organization management level meetings, that they say, "What do you do in South Carolina because when the workers get here, they want to know why we're not feeding them?" It does make a difference and they do know why they're being fed. They know that it's just not food, they know our chaplains take the time to talk to them. Every day they go by, visit them, take them scripture cards. It's a ministry.

George Bullard: Cathy, tell us, what are some of the things that you're most excited about that's happening in the Columbia Metro Association these days?

Cathy Locklear: I'm most excited about the change. It is nice after doing the same thing for years to be able to look at things through fresh eyes. To be able to go in and make well-needed changes and just having the time to go out and talk to churches. There are things, I spoke to a children's group last week. It was nice to be able to go out there and have time to speak to churches. Next week, or week after, I'm going to talk to another church's missions committee and I'll be able to give them encouragement. Maybe give them my list of 54 things. Just something to help jumpstart and what I'm really excited about too is seeing the churches work together. That's really nice to see our churches working with each other.

George Bullard: What are some of the churches that you see working together in doing community ministry?

Cathy Locklear: About a month ago, St. Mark called. One of their deacons called and wanted to know if we had mission trips planned and it was refreshing to be able to say that Temple Baptist Church is going on a mission trip this summer and so now St. Mark and Temple are working together on that mission trip.

Chris Reinolds: The deacon was actually contacting the Association to find out if the Association had any mission stuff planned and you were able to redirect him to a member church in the area and say, "Hey, this is who you need to partner up with," versus the responsibility lying on the Association to do it. It’s like here's a fellow brother or sister in Christ, fellow body of believers that are serving in this way, why don't you go and join them on the work that they're doing?

Cathy Locklear: Yes, and that's good to see. It's because obviously in numbers, it works better.

Chris Reinolds: Right, that makes sense. Whenever these individual churches are reaching out to you, you're bringing them a list of 54, 54 right?

Cathy Locklear: It's 54.

Chris Reinolds: Long, I feel a little overwhelmed, just the idea of 54 things on a list. But, how many of them are taking that list and are then turning around and maybe implementing maybe just a small portion of it? Have you seen that since you've been giving that information out to them?

Cathy Locklear: Yeah, that was mainly used with our Operation Inasmuch project and that was a hesitation of churches to become involved because they didn't know what to do. They didn't know, what do you do? Well sure we want to reach our community but what are some tangible things that we can do? Being able to hand them a list and talk to them and talk to them about what their community looks like. One of the things I did for that project was I went out, I had two different churches call me and I went out in their neighborhood and just rode around. And I took pictures of different things in their neighborhood. Things that have, they ride by on their way to church they may not see. A fresh set of eyes needs to come in sometimes and just look and just hand you a list. They were using them. That was a good thing. North Columbia used a couple of them. There was a mobile home park near. It was just nice to be able to feel like I'd done something to help them come out of those four walls and get out in the community.

Chris Reinolds: And so oftentimes, churches even within the context of their own four walls, they miss the crumples in the carpet or they miss the marks on the wall because that's their home. They live in it and they don't notice those things like a guest would. Even in the context of our own communities, having that fresh set of eyes come in there and look and say, "Hey, there are needs in your communities," and begin to point those things out. It opens them up to see those as possibilities of ministry points in that community and that's a big deal.

Cathy Locklear: I think so.

George Bullard: Cathy, you personally are a great resource to our churches but we also have some other tangible, nonhuman resources, shall we say, like the block party trailer. Would you explain to the people what the block party trailer is and how they might use it and how they might connect to you to utilize it?

Cathy Locklear: The block party trailer is an excellent tool in itself. If nothing else, when you park it at your event, for instance, a vacation bible school kickoff, a community picnic, a public park, when you park the block party trailer, it has Bible verses on it. It's this big white 18 foot trailer but inside it, there's two bounce houses, there's a snow cone machine, a popcorn machine, a sound system, a cotton candy machine, corn hole, tables, chairs. You don't even have to bring your own tables and chairs. All that can be used to attract attention and start conversations.

 When we send out the information on the block party trailer, we even send them out a sheet, it's called, Tips and Usage. Some of it's even how to start that conversation. It's an excellent tool.

Chris Reinolds: I think what the transition that you've made has been a healthy one and I think that what you are doing in the Association is absolutely essential as sort of taking a little bit of a twist. The church and the leadership in a church is called to equip the saints to do the work at the ministry and so often churches can become so involved in equipping saints to do the work of the ministry that they even need that additional assistance as far as how can we continue doing this? How do we do this effectively? You're giving that out, those outside eyes and opportunity to look through a different set of lenses. I think that's key.

 Say a pastor or a church leader or a lay member is interested in getting involved in some way or would like to touch base with you, what's the best way for them to be able to reach out to you?

Cathy Locklear: I can be reached by email, cathylocklear@columbiametro.org. We have a new telephone number, I want to share that, 803 of course, 619-7110. Our new phone system will get that call to me 24 hours a day. If a church really wants missions opportunities, I don't sleep well. But, I am available at any time. I am very flexible. I go out on weekends, evenings, I'll be glad to speak. I love talking to children. I love talking to ladies' groups. I will be glad to meet with missions groups or whatever and talk to them and drive around their neighborhoods.

Chris Reinolds: That's great. That's great. Thank you so much Cathy for being with us today.

Cathy Locklear: Thank you for having me.

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.