

**A New Chapter for the Columbia Metro Baptist Association**

***Building Sale Funds Future Ministries***

Big changes and exciting opportunities are ahead for CMBA in 2020. The Gadsden Street building was sold in December, associational resources are now housed in rented space at North Trenholm Baptist Church, and the staff works onsite there or remotely as they assist churches in ministry. According to Executive Director George Bullard the move is a part of God’s timing for the association.

“Members of the administrative team that we now call the Visionary Leadership Community were able to see that the sale of the building would free the staff and consultants to focus more deeply on serving congregations, and fulfilling *Our One Priority* of *Starting and Strengthening Congregations to Serve as Vital and Vibrant Missional Communities*,” Bullard says.

During the 15-month process to lease or sell the former property, multiple organizations inquired and toured the facility. Bullard says the lengthy time frame also provided confirmation to the association that selling the property was the right decision, instead of leasing it. In the end, the sale allows CMBA to save almost $20,000 per year in overhead costs while making available another $30,000 per year to be invested toward increased ministry to churches. This shift of $50,000 per year allows the association to increase its real time benefits to member churches.

Bullard has invited associational pastors and church staff members to advise CMBA as to how the new resources should be invested each year in keeping with *Our One Priority*. The Visionary Leadership Community is expected to make a final decision during its meeting this month as to the allocation of the funds from the sale of the building.

“The key concept that has been discussed is to invest the proceeds in ways that increase benefits to our congregations. The opportunity is to fund additional services over the next decade or so, and not spend large amounts of money on short-term projects,” Bullard says, adding that a modified budget for the association is being presented for their consideration.

One key idea is to secure additional part-time people to serve as *Our One Priority Mobilizers* targeting special CMBA opportunities and congregational needs.

“We are currently well-served by four part-time mobilizers – Cathy Locklear, Andre Rogers, David Waganer and Robert Grant. We would like to add two or three more as the many open doors God is providing for our ministry within the association is approaching the time limitations of our current mobilizers, and me as our executive director. This is a good thing and we need to expand *high touch* services to our family of congregations,” Bullard explains.

In her mobilizer role as CMBA community impact ministry leader, Cathy Locklear supports and shares a variety of resources with churches as they work to reach their neighbors with the love of Jesus. She sees her job as ever evolving in support of the work of churches. Locklear says this recent move may provide more opportunities to be out and among the churches as she serves.

One new focus for Locklear for 2020 is helping women’s groups in congregations to engage in missions support and missions actions strategies. Whether it is called *Sisters Who Care*, women’s ministry, or even WMU, Cathy is available to act as a catalyst for women in CMBA congregations.

“With any move there is change, but I see a lot of positive changes with this particular move. I enjoy talking to people, meeting with them and visiting their churches. We are now more centrally located to CMBA churches, and the new office space provides a place to work and do planning. This change in location also serves to remind to me that the association is not a place, it is a ministry of service to the churches,” she says.

Bullard agrees and urges folks to not think of the CMBA new office location as a destination for meetings or training. Rather, the work of the association should be interacting with churches in the missional context of the Midlands.

He added, “I have a deep belief that churches are the association. In our case we are a family of Baptist congregations in the Midlands of South Carolina. The Columbia Metro Baptist Association is not an office building to which people go. It is not a meeting they attend. The churches themselves are the association.”

“One way of looking at it is that *association* is the family relationship that emerges in the midst of the Kingdom focus of our 95 congregations. Therefore, the association is virtual and not physical. As long as there was a building it was physical. Now we can express more deeply the relationship among and between the congregations that produces a synergy of Kingdom efforts,” he says.

Casey Williams, pastor at North Trenholm Baptist Church, says his church feels led to serve as the host site for the CMBA recognizing its alignment with the church’s vision to “see our city know Jesus.”

“Partnering with CMBA is a tangible way North Trenholm can support the Kingdom’s advancement in and throughout our city by providing a hub for the CMBA strategies that empower, multiply, transform and lead churches toward greater gospel impact and missional influence. Our prayer is that we can serve as an example for others to see how sharing resources and even facilities for the purposes of gospel advancement serves the body of Christ and mobilizes ministries for a greater influence than one ministry or one church could ever attempt to cultivate alone,” Williams adds.

As the CMBA looks toward the immediate future, Bullard says prayer is the foundational driver for the variety of ministries, church plants, leadership development and mobilizing efforts that are in play.

“We are suggesting that one of the core and foundational expressions of our association is prayer. Therefore, we have launched the CMBA Prayer Network where we are inviting people to share the hopes and dreams – and the challenges – our congregations are facing and calling on our congregations to prayer for their sister and brother congregations,” adds Bullard.

For more online information about the work of the CMBA visit [www.columbiametro.org](http://www.columbiametro.org). To connect with the prayer network go to [www.columbiametro.org/prayernetwork](http://www.columbiametro.org/prayernetwork).