

**COVID-19 Financial Assistance Spotlight**

CMBA churches have access to several avenues for financial ministry assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant money for hunger relief ministry efforts and some technology support is available through the association, and the South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) has set aside COVID-19 Serve Community Aid money designed to support the local church in its efforts to effectively reach its community with the hope of the Gospel. The funds are not just for existing ministries, churches are encouraged to engage in creative new ways to reach the lost during this time.

“Our One Priority as an association involves helping congregations to be more vital and vibrant. Enhancing your ministry and connecting with new people groups - even during a time of ‘stay home and stay safe’ – can strengthen the ministry of your congregation. We want to support these efforts by our churches,” says CMBA Executive Director George Bullard.

At the associational level, approval has been given to make expedited Hunger Ministry Fund Grants available to qualifying CMBA churches between April 15 and June 30, 2020. The grants are for churches that have contributed at least $300 to CMBA during the last 12 months and will be awarded $500 at a time, up to $1,000 during a calendar year. Bullard and CMBA Ministry Mobilizer Cathy Locklear will be approving the grants and churches may [apply](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScsoeP0rhStIOZFULbADKn9R3IWKExbNhJwwsP3OAIq9eE0SQ/viewform) and obtain all [information](https://www.columbiametro.org/cmba-hunger-ministry-grants/) through the association’s website.

“These grants are based on Our One Priority to start and strengthen congregational expressions and, in this case, reinforce what churches are doing in the area of existing or new hunger relief ministries. Meaningfully engaging with the community is a fundamental part of this as well,” Cathy says.

A church must detail its ministry plan and the matching investments it is contributing in the grant application process. Locklear says previous approved requests include: support for an existing ministry that interviews and prays with clients; a nonperishable monthly feeding ministry to senior adults looking to add fresh food items; a food box distribution in an apartment complex used to establish relationships with residents in need; and, a church engaging through nutrition education at a community event.

“There are so many ways that hunger can provide a bridge to the community, beyond a food pantry or handing out a box of food. It could be something creative like using extra space on a property to plant a community garden or another way to establish an ongoing resource to the community that brings about unity and participation. We are encouraging churches to engage people by meeting a physical need on a ‘grass roots level,’” Cathy explains.

The association has another grant opportunity to assist CMBA churches with urgent technology needs related to becoming virtual as of March 14, 2020. Specifically, this grant provides up to $500 to CMBA member churches that had not budgeted for the money required to develop an immediate online presence. The one-time grant is based on a written “good faith certification” and intended for churches who have less than 100 in average weekly worship attendance, who have contributed at least $300 to CMBA during the past 12 months and is intended to cover specific technology purchases made between March 15, 2020, and April 30, 2020. The technology grant process will end June 30, 2020.

The state convention has announced it is making $250,000 available to South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) churches through COVID-19 Serve Community Aid, established to “aid our churches in meeting the specific needs of their communities in meaningful ways.” SCBC churches may apply for up to $1,000 through an online [application](https://www.scbaptist.org/serve-community-aid).

“Our purpose statement is clear, ‘We exist to help churches fulfill the Great Commission.’ The current COVID-19 Pandemic is opening doors to share the gospel in historic proportions. Setting aside funds from the Cooperative Program and the Janie Chapman State Missions Offering to help churches better serve needs in their community is a perfect example of the importance of our cooperative way of doing ministry as South Carolina Baptists. Our prayer is these funds will help churches find new and creative ways to connect with hurting people in their communities, which in turn will provide opportunities to share the love of Jesus in tangible ways,” says SCBC Executive Director-Treasurer Gary Hollingsworth.

“Along with the SC Baptist Convention we encourage our congregations to expand and extend their ministry even during a time of crisis. If funds we can make available empowers new ministry and changed lives, then we are pleased to be a part of what our churches are doing,” adds George Bullard.

To apply for the Hunger Ministry Grant or obtain additional information about hunger ministry outreach, contact Cathy by phone at 803.622.0303 or by email at cathylocklear@columbiametro.org. Hunger Ministry Grant information may be found online at [www.columbiametro.org/cmba-hunger-ministry-grants](http://www.columbiametro.org/cmba-hunger-ministry-grants).

To apply for or obtain additional information about the technology grant, contact George Bullard at georgebullard@columbiametro.org or by phone at 803.622.0923.

To apply for SCBC’s COVID-19 Serve Community Aid visit [www.scbaptist.org/serve-community-aid](http://www.scbaptist.org/serve-community-aid).