

**Our Wednesday Word from George Bullard**

**April 15, 2020**

Good afternoon. This is George Bullard on Wednesday, April 15th. Normally this would be our day to be sure our taxes are submitted, but we all have a new lease on life if you have not yet submitted your taxes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. That may be one of the very few things that is good about the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Welcome today pastors, church leaders, lay leaders. I want you to know that we all need to be in prayer for one another during this particular season of time, as we are going through this time of being a different kind of church as there many people who are sick around us, and some who are dying. There are also many families and households in need economically, emotionally, and spiritually during this time.

I earnestly pray for you on a daily basis as a group and want you to understand that the Columbia Metro Baptist Association (CMBA) family of congregations is a place where we care for one another as a family of congregations in the Midlands of South Carolina. You should feel free to contact me if you have needs, or want to have dialogue about any issues that are going on at this time, or any ministry needs that might exist.

You can call my cell phone at 803.622.0923 or you can send me an email at GeorgeBullard@ColumbiaMetro.org. I will be glad to respond to you as I have opportunity. I want to let you to know that the Visionary Leadership Community, which is the way we call our administrative team for the association at this time, had a virtual meeting yesterday and made several decisions that we would like to share with you.

**Hunger Ministry Grants:** The first decision I would like to share with you is that we do have a *Hunger Ministry Fund*. We have grants available for our member congregations who are contributing congregations to the association. If you are engaged at this particular time in some regular or special hunger ministry efforts, and you need some additional financial assistance to help you with direct or indirect costs of that ministry, you can apply for up to $500 from CMBA, and we'll be glad to give that grant to you. Some of our churches are involved in a Backpack ministry either with Richland School District One, or Two, or it could be same thing in Kershaw County and Fairfield County.

You should feel free to say if you need extra economic help in order to participate in hunger ministry from the funds that have been provided to us by the member congregations over the years. Cathy Locklear, on our staff, is the one that manages this. You should feel free to call Cathy Locklear at 803.622.0303. Or you can also email her at CathyLocklear@ColumbiaMetro.org. There is an application form that is online that she will direct you towards, and she can also send it to you or talk to you about some of the guidelines that exist.

We are glad to make this available, and our Visionary Leadership Community has said that we can make these grants for the period of now through June 30th without having to go back to them and asking for their permission first. We will simply report them to them that these have taken place.

**Technology Grants:** A second thing that we determined yesterday is, that we know that some of our smaller membership churches, those churches that have under 100 in attendance, which is basically a majority of our churches. Some of those churches had to jump into the use of technology to have online worship in small groups in the life and ministry of their congregation, and they may or may not have been economically ready for that.

We have also set up a grant fund for these churches for anything that they have to purchase between March 15th and up through April 30th in order to increase the technology capacity of their congregation. If you will write me, George Bullard, directly at GeorgeBullard@ColumbiaMetro.org, and let me know what you spent, and what you spend on it, and if you have less than 100 in attendance, and you are a financially contributing member to the association, then we would be glad to give you up to a $500 grant. This is also for the period only through June 30th. We would need to hear from you by June 30th in order to make this grant. I have the permission to make this grant, and then to inform our Visionary Leadership Community that we have done so.

It is important for you to remember the purchases have to be made between March 15th and April 30th. It could be that you borrowed some technology from a person within your congregation, and now you know this is going to be an ongoing part of your ministry at least for a while. Even if you are going to be using it for supplemental technology even after we are back in your church worshiping face-to-face, and so you want to purchase this material now, so both of these would fit for you.

**Riverside Community Church:** There were several other decisions made yesterday. There are two that I want to highlight to share with you. One of them is that you may be aware that we have two dimensions of membership in the Columbia Metro Baptist Association. One of them is a full-fledged member of the CMBA. The second is what is called a Church Network Connection, which is a church with doctrinal and missional practices consistent with our Baptist understandings and our Baptist actions, and they want to affiliate with us, and be connected with us. We call it, again, Church Network Connections.

Yesterday we approved the application of Riverside Community Church here in Columbia. That is a church that many of you know about, and is a church that sponsors some training things followed by Carolina Greenhouse, a downtown pastor's forum, and other different things like that, that many of our Columbia Metro Baptist Association pastors and staff people participate in. They want to connect with us in this way, and so we have granted them that permission, and we welcome them. Their pastor is James Walden.

Finally, we are wanting to beef up our communication, our storytelling, our online presence, in a little bit different way. Reshuffling some money around in our budget, and we have asked Julia Bell, who has been doing some storytelling for us, to take on a role of Our One Priority Storyteller. She will help with a communication strategy, with writing at least three family stories a month, and various other things.

**Cathy Locklear is a Grandmother:** I would be remiss without telling you that we have a personal event that is happened in the life and ministry of our association. That is, that our Cathy Locklear, who is Our One Priority Mobilizer for Impacting Communities, is now a grandmother. She has a granddaughter by the name of Samantha, and pretty soon Kathy is going to be what we call an SOG with POP. Now, I want you to think about what that might mean. What it means is, Silly Old Grandmother with Pictures On Phone. She will be glad to share with you about her beautiful new granddaughter.

Blessings to you as you continue your ministry under the leadership of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.