

**Preparing a Church for the Unknown**

**Robert Grant, Speaker**

**The Columbia Metro Connection Podcast 029**

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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 executive director of the Columbia Metro Baptist Association and I'm Chris Reinolds, certified church consultant and lead pastor at Killian Baptist Church.

 Joining us this week is Robert Grant, one of the new ministry mobilizers with the CMBA. With more than 40 years of ministry experience, Robert is uniquely equipped to help local churches in a variety of administrative needs. From bylaws to staff compensation to church dissolution assistance, Robert loves helping churches through the details of what can sometimes be a confusing process. Let's listen in as we talk to Robert.

George Bullard: Robert, we really are glad to have you with us today. In fact, I'm more than glad to have you as one of our empowering congregations ministry mobilizers because you're already being of great service to me, great service to our churches and it's allowing us to increase what we're able to do. Many people around the state know you from your 40 years of ministry here in our state, but some don't. Tell us who Robert Grant is.

Robert Grant: Well, I grew up in Greenville, South Carolina. So I've been a South Carolinian all my life. Grew up at San Souci Baptist Church, Parker High School, in that area of Greenville County. Felt called to ministry at age nine. From that point, my whole focus was on ministry and the church. Later went on to Gardner-Webb University and was in religious education, which was at that time a major that you could have at Gardner-Webb. Later went on after that graduation, went to Southwestern Seminary and continued in religious education and basically was able to focus on two areas in seminary. This was a little bit unusual, but because of my undergraduate work in church life as well as in religious education, I was able to skip a few things and go on into two majors really at Southwestern. One was gerontology and the other one was church business administration.

 That's really how I got into that. Charles Tedwell and James Williams were very catalytic in my training at that particular time. That's really how I got into it. Then your spiritual gifts kick in here a lot along the way as well. Sometimes we forget about that, but they really do. I felt like that through a spiritual gifts inventory, I would discover administration was my top one and teaching was my next. So I just have...just kind of centralized on all of that through the years and made that a focus.

Chris Reinolds: Now, there are a lot of people out there that they may be confused because you think administration and you don't exactly think of the pastorate whenever you hear administration, even though you know you could get a degree in church administration. They usually think of a pulpit whenever they're talking about the pastorate. Why do you think that the administrative role of the pastorate or even in churches in general is something that has a tendency of being minimized and what are some of the effects of that minimization?

Robert Grant: Well, a lot of it comes from how a lot of fellows that are pastors today, of any age really, it doesn't really... I have seen the gamut from the new pastor right out of seminary to the older mature pastors that we have around the state. But it's been interesting to me that it basically goes back to how they're wired or their spiritual gifts as well. I have taken an approach of 1 Timothy 3:1 where, "To him who is aspired to be an overseer, it is a noble work." When you use that word “overseer,” you see that word used repetitively into first and second Timothy and Titus and some other places throughout the New Testament, you realize that it has several different meanings. There are three that seem to rise to the top all the time in that word “overseer” or the connotation of that word “overseer.”

 “Pastor” seems to be the top one. He's the shepherd. That's the one that they gravitate to. “Elder,” which is a mature person in Christ, that's another one they seem to gravitate to. But the last one is the word “bishop” or as is in the Greek, “episkopos.” Therefore, some of those guys find that out and some do not. So some will run away from it because they feel like two thirds of it is done and the other third of it maybe somebody else will help them with. So some of them are very good at it and there are some that just would rather stay away from it. I don't know that the overseer role always comes into play, but it does have, I think, a biblical and spiritual impact to it.

Chris Reinolds: What do you think some of the implications are for the churches and maybe even the pastors that have minimized that administrative overseer type of role?

Robert Grant: Well, they've had to trust that there are other persons in their congregations that have the gift of administration, spiritual gift of administrator. I think a lot of them have either yielded to them or leaned upon them heavily in order to help get that accomplished. Or they've been in a very heavy committee-led type of church that the committees have taken over some of these roles. In the past, where the rub has come for many is that there has been a conflict of power within the church. It has almost always centralized on administrative issues, whether it’s how they dealt with bylaws or how deacons are really functioning and what they should be doing, what the pastor's role really is, whether or not you have centralized committees like finance and personnel and property management and those other areas or not.

 Sometimes, the conflicts start because of the power struggles that are within. So I found administration is the missing piece sometimes and the puzzle piece that connects a line of difficulties in the local church. When that puzzle piece can be placed in there and it's called what it's called in the administration then it really seems to be a help.

George Bullard: Robert, I have two questions for you. It's kind of a follow up to that because you've really hit on something that I think is very important. When I work with congregations, I try to help them to understand the difference between controlling management and empowering management. How would you distinguish between those two?

Robert Grant: Well, the controlling management in a lot of the cases has been an assumption. There have been groups or individuals, unfortunately sometimes just individuals, that think that they have that controlling power or they've been there the longest or they have the right of passage, whatever it might've been. What we were trying to help them see is that there is a place in our organizational governance that really brings out that particular point. That is something that over the last several years of working with the South Carolina Baptist Convention I tried to put into bylaws training to help Baptist churches understand. Even because they're are autonomous, there are ways in which they need to function with their bylaws. When I was able to really get down into the weeds of most of the bylaws of Baptist churches, I found a distinctive omission. The omission was no administrative pathway.

 There were assumptions that the deacons would do it or there were assumptions that a committee would do it or there were some assumptions that the church didn't have to do it at all. They were just out of the loop so to speak. They didn't have to do it because they were a church. There's a lot in our society that the expectation is that we are to be a support to the citizenship and to the work of state and local governments, even within the church. We need to have pathways in our documentation, especially our bylaws, that relate to that. Much of this came about in about 1993 with the Nonprofit Corporation Act. It became a real visible part of South Carolina government as well as nonprofit corporations. Many of our churches did not adhere to that. Some were not even incorporated at that time, believe it or not, and so they didn't have to adhere to it.

 But once they became incorporated, their bylaws then needed to come in parallel with Nonprofit Corporation Act, which has to do with the state government and the work of how we as an organization organized in South Carolina, equipped as a nonprofit organization, but one also that is destined to be a business of sorts in a religious context and that we need to value those directives through our bylaws and into state government work. It's a big tie that has to come about.

George Bullard: Well, and I guess really, also when I'm thinking about the dichotomy almost of empowering management and conrolling management, ultimately, what we want to do even if we get all the management, administration, constitution, bylaws straight, it doesn't mean the church has a clear vision for the future.

 So how do we help administration management not get in the way of the future direction of the church?

Robert Grant: Well, what I have strived to do over the last several years is to help churches really put down what their mission, purpose and priorities are and that they make sure that everything that is done in the church, whether it's their bylaws or their budgets or the way they are structuring their staff and the makeup of their staff and then the programs and the activities and the missions, all of that is in conjunction with the mission, purpose and priority of the church. If a church does not have mission, purpose or priority, we have ourselves a difficult situation to know exactly which direction they're going. If we can direct them and put them into the pathway and make these other things happen towards that mission, purpose and priority, there are no problems with things getting out of control. Everything is in sync with, where's the church going? What's the long term example of this? Where are we going? If you can't answer the question, where are we going? Then we need to come back possibly and look at some of those.

George Bullard: Therefore, if a church is not captured by God's empowering vision, sometimes management can become controlling rather than empowering because it's a vacuum that it rushes into.

Robert Grant: It could be that it's controlling against the way the Lord's leading a particular church. Every church has to see itself being placed there for God's glory and being placed there to work the Kingdom work. Everyone has a little bit different mission field. Every church has one. So it needs to be in sync with that.

George Bullard: Good.

Chris Reinolds: So what you're saying is that even though the Bible says that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, we should probably still re-examine our bylaws on occasion.

Robert Grant: Oh, by all means. That is a little bit of humor there, but at the same time, we need to realize that the bylaws really tell the whole story. They are your rule books, so to speak. But at the same time, they need to be understood and not be so overbearing that they cannot be used properly. When I first become involved with a church that is looking at amending bylaws, I'm more concerned about what is left out of a bylaws than what is in bylaws for most Baptist churches. Now, I will say the administrative part is a very vital part. It's always on article three or article four of every bylaws you would ever read is an administrative section. Many of our churches did not have that and that was a blatant discovery back when I was getting heavily into this in the training and made them look and recognize, yes, that's exactly right. Once that component was put in place, then things would work a lot better and it does move them down the road a lot better knowing who is really administratively in charge and it makes that corection.

George Bullard: Robert, there's one other issue I want to ask you about during this podcast and that is... I guess I would enter it this way…the first time that I personally felt like that I needed a last will and testament was when my first child was born, when I was 28 years old, because I had a responsibility that went beyond my life and beyond how God's kingdom would work in and through my family and that kind of thing. But for some reason, churches never get that idea about themselves as a church. In other words, they don't have a legacy plan. They don't know what's going to happen if one day they are unable to be church again or for whatever reason. But that's also one of the areas that you've worked with churches in developing legacy plans. I would love to hear you talk about that a minute or two.

Robert Grant: A lot of that came through in my work with the Baptist Foundation for the last four years. That particular viewpoint is one that if it's not seen in the church, it may not be seen by the members of that church to leave a legacy as well. There's a tie to this. It's almost like the tie that we have with giving our tithes and offerings every week. What are we doing with that? Where's that going? How's that work? We see the results of that. But long-term legacy giving, whether it's a church or an individual, is like planting an acorn for a tree that we will never sit under a shade. But we have to start it somewhere. That seed has to begin, that acorn and has to become the oak tree that a generation or generations later will be sitting under.

 Churches need to see that same pattern in their own work and function so that they leave a legacy. The legacy is a mission, purpose and priority, back to that again, but it's also where they had been placed in God's kingdom and what they have been inspired to do over the years and make that a visual point for them to look towards. Churches do change. That's sometimes a dirty word in church life, but churches do change. So what is in the change agent work of that particular church? Where could it go next? How eclectic are we going to let the church become in order for it to realize its place again if the community has changed, if the city has changed, if the dynamics around them and demographics around them have drastically changed? What does that make for them?

 They are left with a legacy to either be the legacy of the place where they were and continue that or be, as I said, eclectic enough to where they can move into new venues, new areas of kingdom work and use their location for the best and for the glory of God as they possibly can. I hope that was getting close to what you were trying to say.

Chris Reinolds: Just a point of clarification for those that are listening in and even for me, when we talk about legacy planning as individuals, we're talking about the end of our life. But when we talk about legacy planning for churches, it's a consideration of this church at the end of it's possible lifespan, the lifespan of a church to where maybe a congregation gets older, or as you said, the community changes. Is that what you're saying, that there's the suggestion of a church to even consider the process by which they would transition should that time ever come in that churches life?

Robert Grant: That's correct. The reason we put the dissolution clause into a lot of our bylaws is because that already anticipates what the church would do. That basically though is dealing though with their assets as a 501(c)(3). But at the same time, I think there's some spiritual assets of this too, that a church be willing to know what it's next step possibly could be. It's almost like a family who determines that during their last will and testament that they're going to create a trust and that trust is going to go on to another more profound part of their own personal lives and continuing on way past the time that they're with Jesus. So it's a matter of prescribing a long-term process but one that has value and benefit, but yet it'll be a point where the church will never see all of that grow.

 Even in death, we don't see what happens with the trust, but it's the same kind of process. But I think it's good for Christian folks to have a last will and testament, to have a legacy plan, to have a planned giving even after their death. I really think that's important. I think it's important that they give to their church and their church is seeing that and allowing more in the congregation to do the same thing. That perpetual process carries over into the life of the church itself, that it's not just the members, but the church in its membership at the time of those changes goes on to be something that is very vital to them long-term.

Chris Reinolds: I think it's good.

George Bullard: Well, Robert, we really appreciate you being with us today and talking to us about this. I'm very grateful for your work. I just want to tell folks that if they want to reach out to the association to use your services that they should feel free to call our number 803-619-7110 and punch in extension 1 and they'll get me, or by voicemail, and I'll connect them with Robert or they can send us an email to CMBA@columbiametro.org. We're glad to connect with them on any of the kinds of issues and services that you've heard Robert talk about today.

Chris Reinolds: Thanks so much for being with us, Robert. We really do appreciate it.

Robert Grant: Thank you. It's an honor.

Chris Reinolds: 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 in 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.