



Spreading the Gospel Through Hunger Ministries

Cathy Locklear

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Chris Reynolds:

Welcome to the One Priority podcast where our goal is starting and strengthening congregations to serve as vital and vibrant missional communities. The One Priority podcast is sponsored and supported by the Columbia Metro Baptist Association and the almost 100 Family Churches that support the ministry of the CMBA. Our hosts for this week are myself, Chris Reynolds, lead pastor at Killian Baptist Church, and Julia Bell, communications director with the CMBA. This week, we're speaking with CMBA's own ministry mobilizer Cathy Locklear to explore the growth of hunger-related ministry that's continued to flourish amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chris Reynolds:

Cathy, thanks so much for joining with us and thank you for Julia for coming in and co-hosting this conversation with Cathy today.

Julia Bell:

Thanks for having me.

Cathy Locklear:

Oh, thanks for having me.

Chris Reynolds:

To begin with, Cathy, I want us to take a moment for you to be able to speak into the effects of this pandemic on families across the Midlands. Because it's obvious that it has had an effect. So, what are some things that you're seeing from your position as ministry mobilizer at the CMBA?

Cathy Locklear:

We are getting increased requests from churches, some of it's their membership, some of it is people approaching them with needs. This pandemic, it took us all by surprise. No one was prepared. And I think even people who were making it paycheck to paycheck, had not thought ahead to put funds back. You just don't think about things like that. Well, so what happened was of course when people got laid off and businesses shut down, it really... it made people lose that

ability to pay their rent, lose their ability to pay their utilities, and even provide the basic needs for their families, which is so sad.

Cathy Locklear:

The good thing about that is they turned to the church. Oddly enough, I think that's a positive thing. I think that when people turn to the church, they know what the resources should be. People who weren't used to looking for help would now have to call agencies, call churches, and we are there, continuing to help those people.

Chris Reynolds:

Good.

Julia Bell:

So, Cathy, why is it that hunger-related ministries in particular make such a big impact in a church's community?

Cathy Locklear:

Oh, you know, it does make an impact in the community, but it also makes an impact to the church. In the community, I think the reason people... I believe and I've always believed that before we can speak into people's lives, we have to have that touch. We got to have that connection. Whether that be they come to us for help and we're able to help, is simply showing that the church cares. So, if the church reaches out to the neighborhood, if they see a sign out there, saying, "We're giving away food. We know that times are hard," it opens that door for those conversations. I think that is how a church can really impact their community and have those one-on-one conversations with people that normally they wouldn't have had. People wouldn't just come to a church, just to come to a church. It's sad that it had to happen in this way or that it's happening in this way to families, but it does give the church the opportunity.

Cathy Locklear:

And then there's the church itself. Hunger ministry in an odd way is almost fun. People have food drives. They collect food. They have contest among themselves, and there's a sense of unity when they have a direction and a ministry that people can relate to and they know they're doing a good work. So, it does, it brings unity to a church. I feel like it's positive on all aspects.

Chris Reynolds:

It almost sounds as if the church itself and the community understand that this is not something that's extra, this really gets back to a deeper, from a biblical standpoint, it gets to even a deeper-rooted level of we're genuinely helping people. It's not just extra on top of the norm of life. I think that's good. Generally speaking, what are some ways in which churches are meeting hunger needs in our area around the Midlands?

Cathy Locklear:

Well, you know, many of churches, even before anything happened, we have always had churches that had food pantries. They're open on regular basis and community knows they can come to them. Church gathers the food and distributes it. They're able to have, again, those one-on-one conversations with people. I think when a church distributes food versus an organization just handing a bag, that touch to be able to talk to that person and share with that person why you're doing it, I think that makes all the difference in the world. And then some of

our churches, because of windfalls of some sort, are able to hold single distribution events. They're able to put a sign out saying, "This Saturday morning, we'll be giving out food." That's a wonderful thing. People really, they look out for that kind of thing and they appreciate it. I did talk to a pastor earlier this week, and they have gift cards in their church. And when people call, they simply do a gift card for a grocery store.

Chris Reynolds:

Oh, wow.

Cathy Locklear:

Another way that the churches can reach out in their community is helping other churches. We talked a minute ago about food pantries, I mean, I'm sorry, about... We talked a minute ago about food drives, and that is something that a church can have a food drive, even if they don't have the means to give that food out, collect that food, give it to another church, share that resource. It's churches working together which is great.

Chris Reynolds:

That's good.

Cathy Locklear:

Our Association has a central location where the food can be dropped off and picked up by a church that has a hunger ministry. Sometimes you may not know, your church may not know what to do with that food. You know you want to do something, you know you have the resources to do it, and we can connect you directly with the church or we can help you send it out to other churches.

Chris Reynolds:

Good.

Julia Bell:

Okay. Cathy, you sort of just touched on this, but what if a church staff member or a lay leader is listening to this and feels the prompting to start a hunger ministry, what do you recommend? Where do they start?

Cathy Locklear:

Well, a lot of people think, "Well, the first thing we need to do is make sure if our church has space for the food and that kind of thing." Well, no. First thing you have to do is make sure you have people within your church with a heart for that ministry, a heart for reaching out to the poor that will not only just collect that food, but they will actually take the time to speak with that person that it's going to. And then take a look at your community. See what the needs are out there. See if there's another organization that's already begun a hunger ministry of some sort in your community maybe you can partner with.

Cathy Locklear:

If you want to start from scratch, over the years I have developed all kinds of forms and procedures and good practices, and I have some stories to tell. But we will be glad to sit down with you and tell you how to begin one or help you begin your own. Every church, I think, would

tailor it differently, whether it's a food pantry, single distribution, or helping another church. So, I think that the church first has to think about what fits their church first, and maybe not, like I said, reinvent the wheel. It may be that you partner with a local agency, something like that. We do have some contacts out there that we know of, the people who are already doing the hunger-related things.

Chris Reynolds:

Well, now that you kind of mention that, you're talking about those hunger-related ministry groups that are around the Midlands, what are a couple of those ministry groups that y'all work with or that you know of? That way we can include them in this show, for churches that are maybe looking at getting started, or expanding their hunger-related ministry style.

Cathy Locklear:

Oh, yeah. There's a lot of organizations around the Midlands that their main focus is hunger or they collect food. Harvest Hope is one. Harvest Hope is one of those organizations that our churches can approach about getting food. A few weeks ago, Cooperative Ministry donated an entire pallet of food for our churches with hunger ministries to share. They refer people to our churches for help. They do a lot of clothing and things like that, and household goods, but they told us they're just not well equipped for people approaching them with hunger needs. So some of our churches have stepped up and said, "You can send them to us." It was so good that they felt with this resource, they took some of their funds and purchased that pallet of food. There again, that leads back to, we have that food, or the Association has that food, ready to be distributed through hunger ministries in the churches. If anyone needs that, please give me a call.

Chris Reynolds:

For a quick clarification on that. So the Cooperative Ministries and you're talking about pallets of food, who's that available... Who can pick up on those food? Is that for individuals, is it for churches? How does that work? When does that happen?

Cathy Locklear:

Hillmont Baptist Church out in the north Main Street area allows us to use some space. We have a small warehouse room with food in it. Of course, that's open to any churches of the Association with hunger ministries. Occasionally we'll have a pastor who's maybe dealing one-on-one with a privacy issue or Sistercare who has a privacy issue that needs to just pick up some food for someone, and we do make arrangements for that kind of thing. But this food is set up to be distributed through our churches. We don't have an active food pantry for Columbian Metro Baptist Association. All of this will filter through our churches, so they can make that personal touch with the community.

Cathy Locklear:

If I could tell you about one more, churches working with churches, Red Hill Baptist Church right now is in the middle of a wonderful thing that they're doing. They arrange to get truckloads, large 18-wheel truckloads of government food boxes. It's already set up to be handed to families. They have made that available to the churches of the Association. We have done two weeks out of six weeks. We've got four more weeks to go. If someone's interested, and we will help show you how to get down to Red Hill to pick that food up. But that is a church working with a church who is working with the government to get that food distributes.

Chris Reynolds:

That's really good. Really good.

Julia Bell:

So, Cathy, you've shared so much great information. But if someone has questions about partnering with another church, about starting their own ministry, or maybe even connecting with one of these community partners that you've mentioned, are you available to help them with that?

Cathy Locklear:

Oh, Julia. I would love to help them. When I first began with the Association over 20 years ago, that was my first responsibility, it was the hunger ministry. I must say I have a lot of experience and, again, I have a lot of stories that I could share. But that being said, I would love to share with our churches who are interested and I also, being out in the community a good bit, have come across agencies and organizations that will work with others. I do have a good idea of which churches have food pantries and hunger ministries in their churches. I'd love to hear more stories from y'all also. The Association also has another step that we can help our churches get started in the ministry or strengthen their ministries. We have grants available. Now, the one I focus on and work with a good bit is the Hunger Ministry. We begin those grants at 500 dollars, and they're available for active churches in our Association. But do bear in mind that there are other grants out there, pastoral training, educational scholarships for ministry, replanting and restarting churches, leadership and evangelism ministries and other community impact ministries that the church would be interested in, please give us a call on that and we can help you maybe get some start-up funds or something to strengthen what you're already doing.

Chris Reynolds:

That's good. Now, what's a phone number that they could contact you guys at... they wanted to do something like the grant opportunities through to CMBA.

Cathy Locklear:

Oh, yes. They can call Cathy Locklear at 803-622-0303. My email is simply cathylocklear@columbiametro.org.

Chris Reynolds:

Great. Well, we-

Cathy Locklear:

I'd love to hear from them.

Chris Reynolds:

We really appreciate it, Cathy. Thank you so much for all that you're doing with the Association and our churches across the Midlands in helping to coordinate these efforts to meet the needs of our community when it comes to hunger ministry.

Cathy Locklear:

Great. Thank you for having me.

Julia Bell:

Great to talk to you, Cathy.

Cathy Locklear:

Good to see you, Julia.

Chris Reynolds:

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, 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.