

CMBA Goes Virtual to Serve Churches-in-Association

By

George Bullard

Executive Director

Columbia Metro Baptist Association

GeorgeBullard@ColumbiaMetro.org

This week CMBA's Visionary Leadership Community voted to close its offices at North Trenholm Baptist Church and go totally virtual in its operations to deepen its connection with and service to congregations. This is another step to fulfill **Our One Priority** which is to *Start and Strengthen Congregations to Serve as Vital and Vibrant Missional Communities*.

During my almost four years as your Executive Director, I have sought to advocate that the churches are the association. The association is not a place to which you go. It is not a meeting you attend. It is not an organization that churches support among the many ministries that ask for your support. It is your primary, organic denominational relationship.

In our Baptist structural and governance model, the local association is the only entity that churches belong to as members. Churches affiliate with the state and national denominational dimensions, but they join and are members of their local association. It is, therefore, a primary relationship. It is the oldest relationship among Baptists in the southern part of the United States having started 70 years before the first state denominational organization.

Churches are the association. CMBA is churches-in-association with one another for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment. Therefore, we have continually moved physically and strategically to be closer to the churches.

Your association is the only denominational entity that sees churches as a whole, organic, spiritual body with many members and many spiritual gifts. We want to help the whole church be vital and vibrant, and for you to be on mission and looking to fulfill God's empowering vision for you. State and national denominational dimensions see you in your parts. That is why they approach you with specific programs or emphases that help you make progress in a part of your church. We care about all of who you are.

What Does the Move to Virtual Mean for My Church?

Two things. One is relational and the other is strategic. Relationally we want to do more to identify with our diversity of congregations. A symbolic – yet real – aspect of this is that every possible meeting and gathering of our association will be in a variety of churches.

For example, the Visionary Leadership Community meets ten times per year at North Trenholm. Now we will meet in a different church every time, have fellowship and a

meal with the pastor and others, hear their story, and pray with them. Our leadership must know our churches more deeply to serve them more meaningfully.

Additionally, churches-in-association must know more about how that primary relationship can serve them and help them reach their full Kingdom potential. Newsletters, social media, digital and written communication can never replace the need to have personal and spiritual interaction with church leaders in their setting.

Strategically churches-in-association must know more about the benefits and resources available to them. We have invested in a group of part-time mobilizers who are people with abilities in various areas of need. This means we have a lot of people available to help your church without the high cost of a group of full-time staff. I am the only full-time staff person in CMBA's structure. Including myself, these ten people form what we call the CMBA Team Huddle. In the [Our Strategies section of this newsletter](#), we describe who these people are and how to connect with them.

Invite Us to Your Church

We would love to hold a gathering at your church, spend time allowing more of our leaders to get to know you, your church, and your ministry. And, for you to get to know our leaders more. Simply invite us. To do so, send an email to CMBA@ColumbiaMetro.org or call me at 803.622.0923.