



A Sprint to the Finish Line – Serving Until the Last Day

Watching the Olympics recently, I saw a qualifying race for the final medal race for the men's 880-yard dash. The first four finishers would be in the final race. The runner who finished first in this qualifying race knew he had made the final race by several steps, so in the last ten yards he slowed down to almost a complete stop. I do not question his motive but confess it affected me.

As you certainly know by now, I have announced my retirement for June 30, 2022. That will be my fifth anniversary of service. When asked to accept this position, I said I would serve five to seven years. Five seems right for multiple reasons. But unlike the runner in the Olympics the other day, I choose to sprint to the finish line. There is a lot to do during the next 11 months. Several actions are underway currently.

I chose to announce my retirement a year ahead for several reasons. First, so that a search committee can take plenty of time to prayerfully consider the person God is calling to CMBA for the next season for this family of congregations. The process when I became director took nine months.

Second, to engage in The Denominee Journey led by the Future Church organization founded by Will Mancini. That process starts today – August 2nd – with a five-hour livestreaming session with Will's team. I see this 18-month futuring process as a form of succession planning. I will be around for the first year, and the new director will be present for the last six months to flavor the outcome according to his spiritual call and leadership style.

Third, with the retirement of Cathy Locklear as our Impacting Communities Mobilizer after 22 years of service to CMBA congregations, we need to take some time to reassess this ministry and project next steps. We will replace Cathy with an interim to allow the next director to make a longer-term decision.

Fourth, with the help of Robbie McAlister and Ryan Dupree we are just now getting a congregational multiplication movement started. Since January, we are working with 13 new congregational expressions and new congregational affiliations with CMBA. When we started talking about this a year ago, we imagined that we could possibly have 30 more congregations over the next ten years. Already that goal seems low. We want to solidify the movement over the next year.

Fifth, during the first Spring of the pandemic we launched the Thriving Congregations Team. It was slow starting due to the pandemic, but now it is working with almost ten congregations on various approaches to again thrive as congregations. This is slow,

hard work as many congregations have no spiritual vision for what God is calling them to do next. They resist change and want to hold on to ways of doing church that continue to diminish their effectiveness. Please pray for a breakthrough with these congregations.

Sixth, an important part of this next year is solidifying the work and ministry of what we call the CMBA Team Huddle. This is ten people – including me – who meet monthly, work in four squads to focus on various congregations, leaders, and processes, and are developing capacities the next director should be able to take to an even greater dimension of service for our family of congregations.

Seventh, CMBA just became a totally virtual organization a month ago. We need the next 11 months to clarify how this better serves our congregations than having a physical location. Pray with us as we look to set a pattern the next director can continue or change as he and the associational leadership feel led.

Blessings to you and your congregation as you serve God's Kingdom from the base of your congregation.

Sprint with me to the finish line!