

## Reflecting on 2021 in Our Association

By

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When we entered the year 2021 great hope existed for mass vaccination that would halt the spread of the pandemic and open the world back up to missional engagement that happens – as the Acts of the Apostles says – with “openness” and “unhindered.” Here we are at the end of 2021, and it has and has not fully happened in the way we all would have hoped.

We still have churches who have not returned to onsite worship. We have others who have been onsite and online for much of the year. While some ministries are closed and others hindered, the Good News of Jesus has continued to go forward.

At the same time, we have wonderful things happening among our member congregations who have found a renewed focus during the pandemic. Also, some congregations are taking this season of ministry to address challenges they face and to discern their long-term future under God’s leadership.

Here are noteworthy things that have happened during 2021:

- Congregations became Church Network Connections or Members of CMBA: Beth Shiloh Messianic Congregation, Discovery Church, Iglesia Bautista de Lykesland, Lykesland First Baptist Church, Riverbend Community Church. (Several others are expected to connect early in 2022.)
- Progress is being made on a dozen new congregations that should launch during 2022 and 2023.
- A Church Planters Network launched with more than a dozen participants.
- Congregational revitalization efforts conducted with seven congregations.
- A peer learning community activated among executive pastors/second chair staff of our largest congregations.
- The Block Party Trailer renovations, re-equipping and resupplying were completed, and it was once again used by many congregations.
- The partial historic restoration of the church building of Good Hope Baptist Church was completed, the building transferred to Preservation South Carolina, and the parsonage land was sold. The association recouped all costs of this effort.
- As of July 1, CMBA became a virtual association in that it no longer has a physical office. During the pandemic it was discovered that an office was not essential to the operation of the association.
- The CMBA Team Huddle of One Priority Mobilizers worked throughout the year to serve the CMBA congregations. Their work was divided into four squads for focus on specific strategies and tactics. The team members are Andre Rogers, Chris Reynolds, David Waganer, Julia Bell, Kyndra Bremer, Robbie McAlister, Robert Grant, Ryan Dupree, and George Bullard.
- Cathy Locklear retired at the end of August after more than 20 years of service to CMBA. She had also been a member of the CMBA Team Huddle. Chris Reynolds is serving in an interim role to sustain our ministry efforts in this area of Impacting Communities.
- George Bullard announced his retirement for June 30, 2022.
- An Executive Director Search Team was appointed with Ryan Dupree (Columbia First) as chairperson, and it included Brenda Sheets, Buck Williams, Jacob Helsley, and Ralphetta Davis. Two alternates are Dan Griffin and Cookie Adams.
- A formal partnership with Columbia International University was launched.

- The Denominee Journey process was begun in the fall with Future Church Co which will develop a deep focus for CMBA as we transition to a new executive director.
- A Bylaws Revision Team process was approved to bring our legal documents up-to-date, and our moderator is working on appointing this team.

We are thankful for the opportunities God gives CMBA to minister from the base of the Midlands of South Carolina as a Family of Congregations. We continue to seek fulfillment of Our One Priority which is *to start and strengthen congregations to serve as vital and vibrant missional communities.*