

**BCM: Church Partners Needed to Reach Students with the Gospel**

CMBA churches looking to engage in local missions and ministry should consider The University of South Carolina Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM), which is actively sharing the love of Christ to students living and studying in the Midlands. According to BCM Director Jamie Rogers, there are plenty of ways to support the ministry that is working to build relationships and share the gospel with local and international students. One current need is for meals to be provided for BCM’s Tuesday night worship time, called Community Nights, and for some International Luncheons.

“This is a way to support BMC ministries with a kingdom-focused mindset,” explains Rogers. “We are an extension of churches to this campus. As churches provide these meals, it attracts students that we can then connect with and minister to.”

Many students regularly participate in Community Night because of the free meal. Rogers says most churches provide a homemade meal while others cater through a restaurant or even provide pizzas. BCM serves about 70 students each week and invites churches delivering the meals to stay to engage with the students and invite them to worship at their church.

“We welcome churches to stay and serve the meals,” Rogers says, adding it’s “encouraging to see Christian students serving and worshipping together. There is great hope for the next generation and future of the Church.”

This year’s BCM president is Charity Walters, a junior majoring in hospitality management who is actively involved at Riverbend Community Church. She looks forward to stepping out of her busy schedule to enjoy a meal provided by churches. “It means I can just come to BCM and spend time with other students,” she says, adding she’s met several nonreligious students who were willing to come to BCM just because of the free meal.

According to CMBA Executive Director George Bullard, ministry to Columbia’s student population is a great option for churches emerging from a missions hiatus during the pandemic looking for a way to engage in the local community.

“CMBA churches are definitely reengaging in missional efforts now that we are more than two years into the pandemic. It is my hope that we haven’t forgotten about existing ministries. BCM is primarily sponsored by the South Carolina Baptist Convention, but our association proactively and positively chooses to collaborate with BCM so that we might have an in-depth ministry to the students, faculty and staff of our universities.” Bullard further notes budget restraints forced CMBA to decrease its giving to BCM this fiscal year, so the time is right for local churches to further support this ministry.

“Part of our mission is to plug these students into local churches,” says Rogers, so meals are “a good way for students to see local churches that desire for them to be in their congregations. We point students to all churches in our area, not just ones that provide meals, and some students are looking for a church to worship in that next Sunday.”

BCM is also passionate about reaching the international student community. In cooperation with other international student outreach campus organizations, free International Luncheons are hosted at the BCM building each Thursday at noon. Rogers says CMBA churches can also participate in this opportunity to “love the neighbors that God is bringing to us from around the world. Most of these students are from what we consider ‘closed countries,’ where missionaries cannot access. But we can build relationships and share the gospel with them.”

According to BCM Student President Walters, God is at work through BCM, which she says has been growing in the last few semesters. “God has brought many wonderful students and has been building up new leaders. Over the last semester, I have seen prayer become much more important to students within BCM. Students are being challenged and starting to feel a calling toward missions or ministry because of BCM. Through BCM, I have also seen God work in many of the students' lives which has caused them to become more spiritually rooted in their faith.”

As of this publishing, BCM has several open dates for Community Night meals in the Spring semester including March 22 and 29, and April 5, 12 and 19. Email carolinabcm@gmail.com or call 803.799.3854 for more information or to sponsor a meal for Community Night (Tuesdays) International Luncheons (Thursdays).