

**Salvations, Discipleship at Midlands BCMs this Fall**

Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) have been busy this fall engaging students through outreach events, worship nights, and building relationships. There are now two BCM ministries active within the CMBA footprint working to reach the estimated 50,000 students here in the Midlands. The University of South Carolina BCM is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and Benedict College’s BCM is in its very first year.

“God is bringing the nations and the world to our college campuses, which makes BCM ministry so important,” says Jamie Rogers, CMBA Associational Missions Strategist and former Carolina BCM Ministry Director. “The amount of lostness that exists on college campuses is heartbreaking. Most 18 to 22-year-olds are in good health, think they have life under control, and yet are looking for life in so many of the wrong places. Those who are lost probably won’t just walk into our churches but might be more willing to check out what’s going on in a campus ministry. BCM is a great place on campus for students to potentially take their first step toward Jesus.”

**Benedict BCM**

“God is always going to accomplish what He has set out to do at Benedict’s campus. He is going to be the reason it becomes whatever it becomes,” says part-time Director Lesley Joseph who, with his wife Jonita (“JJ”), officially launched the campus ministry at Benedict College in August 2022.

Lesley is a full-time engineer and adjunct engineering professor at the University of South Carolina, and JJ is pursuing a master’s degree in Counseling from Columbia International University. The couple has four children – three daughters and one son – so time is a precious commodity for them. But the Josephs also love college students and want them to know Jesus.

The couple worked with Benedict administration for about six months before receiving approval to hold the ministry on campus shortly before school started. In the few months since, they are already seeing God working through relationships, life change, and growth in what has been an answer to prayer.

“We didn’t know what we were getting into or what the response would be like when we started showing up. What’s clear to us now, looking back over the last few months, is that God was already present on this campus and working in the lives of students,” Lesley says. “This tells us we don’t have to be timid or reserved in our mission because God is already here tilling the ground, molding the hearts, and shaping the people. We’re here to just shine the Light and pull them in.”

Benedict BCM is held on Mondays at 7 p.m. Until there is a permanent place for the group to meet on campus, students check Instagram and watch for the BCM table set up to know where to go that week. This year’s theme is “Created for Greatness,” and Lesley’s messages consistently remind students that “there are amazing, great things they have been created to do.” About 30-40 students regularly attend the meetings, and three individuals have already prayed to receive Christ.

In addition to the BCM meeting, the Josephs engage students as often as possible and JJ disciples three female students one morning each week. To further develop relationships and reach new students, the Josephs have offered creative activities like game nights and playing tennis at the campus courts. They’ve also realized food is the real game changer in reaching students and are looking for CMBA churches to provide meals for BCM meetings.

“We need churches to provide meals. We’ve seen how galvanizing a meal is in this ministry, it really does create a different environment when food is there,” Lesley says.

Another meaningful way to support Benedict BCM is for individuals who love college students to join the Josephs at the meetings on Mondays and at other times during the week. Lesley invites CMBA churches and members in much the same way he and JJ accepted the call to love and serve Benedict students.

“I wish people would actually get to know these students, connect with them in meaningful ways by having lunch with them, and go to their school and sports events. Unbelievers stand around the door to our meeting, and I wish there was someone who could just sit outside and talk with them,” he explains. “Benedict BCM needs churches to care about these students to the point where they would be ok if the students never attended their services.”

For more information on how to provide meals, financial support, or become involved at Benedict, contact Lesley at LesleySJoseph@gmail.com and follow on Instagram at @Benedict\_BCM to learn about upcoming meetings.

“Come see what God is doing, meet students, and come again the next week. If you’re retired, if you have children or a family, if you’re a high schooler – just come! Hopefully you’ll meet a student or two, and if you make a connection with someone you can start the relationship that will really change things,” Lesley says.

**Carolina BCM**

Adam Venters began his work as the new full-time director at Carolina’s BCM on August 16. A native of Tennessee, Venters has served as a youth pastor, church pastor, and comes to South Carolina from Little Rock, Arkansas, where he served as a BCM director. He and his wife Lindsay have two young boys.

Adam acknowledges stepping into his new role was made easier because most of the planning was complete and existing ministries were ready to launch when students returned to campus. This has allowed him time to focus on relationships, both with students and area churches.

“Good falls are created by spring and summer planning, and I am certainly seeing that here,” he says. “God is stirring on our campus right now. I am seeing as many students coming to faith and recommitment as I ever have. There are a lot of things happening in the world at large that are causing a lot of questions about what’s real, true, and what students should spend their lives doing.”

Carolina BCM meets Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at their building on Main Street. Adam says they are averaging 70 students in worship each week and estimate about 400 total students have participated so far since August. They are celebrating that already five students have prayed to receive Christ, 11 have recommitted their lives, and 17 have said they are “taking their next step in faith,” which has included one pledging to attend church for the first time in four years and others exploring calls to missions and full-time ministry.

“College is a great time in life for people to find Jesus. We are seeing students be confident in being more outward about their decisions about faith and discovering what Jesus is about,” he says.

Carolina BCM also has a vital ministry to students from many countries around the world. It hosts a lunch every Thursday at noon and regularly coordinates rides with volunteers who drive international students to local grocery stores. Adam says CMBA churches provide meals for the Tuesday night worship service and the international lunches, and CMBA members serve as drivers for international students.

“I am thankful for church support. It is a blessing, and it makes a difference in the amount and type of ministry that we can do. We are a missional arm to our churches, so the more they can support us, the more it allows us to do greater outreach to students…it’s all connected,” Adam explains.

Individuals and churches interested in supporting Carolina BCM, including by joining a prayer team or serving alongside students on upcoming volunteer missions opportunities, may contact Adam at Adam\_V@scbaptist.org or 423.202.6512.