

**CMBA Church Re-Defines Living Missionally**

Beulah Baptist in Hopkins [celebrated an incredible milestone](https://columbiametro.org/now-debt-free-beulah-looks-to-future-ministry/) several years ago when the church became debt-free. During that time, Pastor Cameron DeBrew says the congregation prayed for ways to reinvest in the Kingdom. God responded with a creative calling for the missions-minded church.

“Once our debt was paid off, we dreamed about the possibilities of how money that we’d once put toward our debt could be used. One idea was to place a person as a missionary in a local apartment complex,” DeBrew recalls.

As the church began information-gathering to learn where to begin the process, they quickly realized it was uncharted territory, at least among churches in the Midlands. As Jon Jamison of the South Carolina Baptist Convention helped identify potential local apartment complexes, DeBrew says his church was identifying a potential couple to fill this unique missional role.

“Daniel and his wife were members of our church several years ago while they were in the Columbia area for school,” DeBrew says. “The family was moving back into the community as this played out and, in my mind, they were the perfect candidates.”

Daniel was six years old when his military family moved from Europe to Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter. During a mission trip to Puerto Rico at the age of 16, Daniel says he felt the call to ministry and “also desired to be in the military, so why not do both?” Those callings led him to North Greenville University, where he met his wife and was commissioned as an officer in the National Guard. He went on to earn a Master of Divinity in Chaplaincy and complete chaplain residency in a Midlands hospital. The couple now has two young children.

“We first attended Beulah at the recommendation of a friend, and fell in love with the church and its people,” Daniel says of his connection to the congregation that ordained him. “When we returned to Columbia for my residency in the summer of 2021, Cameron shared his vision for this missions position with me.”

According to DeBrew, Beulah “whole-heartedly affirmed” the decision to hire Daniel for the new dual church staff and missions role. The church’s missional mindset includes the realization that a family living among their neighbors has a greater opportunity to engage residents with the gospel than a church coming into that same community would, and it has no expectation that any residents attend the church.

“We sent them out knowing we may not see any members or attenders from this, and we’re fine with that.

We treat this as a mission field where Daniel and his family are missionaries,” DeBrew explains. “Our involvement is through prayer support and providing some of the ministry-related items they need.”

It’s been almost two years since Daniel and his family moved into their apartment. They say it’s easy to meet next door neighbors and parents at the playground. But it is taking time to form deeper relationships because many residents are international, so there are cultural differences and many are there as students, which translates to high turnover. Still, the young family has met many neighbors, built several meaningful friendships, and had opportunities to share about their love for Jesus.

“As residents, we have a lot more privileges than someone from the outside coming in. It’s just different when a neighbor has a casual conversation about a hard day you’ve had,” Daniel says of how his family lives out their faith. “We intentionally build friendships and go meet people. Thankfully, our two-year-old is social so when we walk outside, he stops and talks or waves at people. It’s really about just being a good neighbor.”

The family occasionally hands out treats to meet neighbors and invites people they’ve gotten to know over for a meal or a cup of tea. When a neighbor was anxious about an upcoming surgery, Daniel prayed with him before the procedure and helped him with several needs afterward. They take advantage of opportunities to connect residents with each other, too, including recently introducing two Korean neighbors who had never met.

“One of the hopes is that we can show that anyone can do this – it’s building relationships with your neighbors wherever you are. You don’t have to be a ‘super Christian’ or wait for a call to do something specific from God, just love your neighbor and share life with them,” Daniel says.

A friendship with some Hindu neighbors has allowed Daniel and his wife to share elements of their faith through cultural exchanges and a willingness to learn about each other’s traditions. This couple has had negative interactions with other very religious people in the apartment complex, and Daniel says their patient approach has opened the door to share God’s truth with the neighbors.

Shortly after moving into the apartment community, Daniel met a Christian Chinese family who had been building a relationship with their non-Christian Chinese neighbors. The two families met through an international student organization, and the Christian Chinese family had been sharing the gospel with the non-Christian family for some time. When the Christian Chinese family moved away, Daniel and his family stepped in to love the non-Christian family by praying for them, talking with them about God, and eventually becoming good friends.

“A few months after the non-Christian Chinese family also moved away from Columbia, they sent us photos of them getting baptized,” Daniel says of their news about following Christ. “It was a tremendous feeling.”

According to DeBrew, it’s “refreshing that our church embraced a vision that wouldn’t necessarily grow our physical body. The Kingdom was a priority and, however we could accomplish Kingdom growth, they would embrace that. Our hope and dream is that we can learn some things and duplicate this in other communities.”

For his part, Daniel understands he is part of a “long-game ministry.” The relationships he and his family are establishing will be avenues for truly loving their neighbors and not just “mercy ministries.” He’s also grateful for Beulah’s bold investment to live missionally with and through his family and invites other churches and individuals to consider doing something similar.

“You don’t need a lot of tools or resources, just a willingness and disposition to work with other people who are different. Just really live in your community, be a neighbor, and you’ll get fruit,” he says.