

# 2011 Annual Report to the CMBA Churches

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In 2011 we, as an association of churches, began the journey together toward our theme of **Our City God's Delight**. From Isaiah Ch 62 we had a yearning to see our city's reputation change from a city of desolation & desertion to become a city where God delights. This time last year we talked about the Actions required of us to see that vision realized & they included becoming a more **Missional People**, growing **Committed Leaders** & engaging in **Ceaseless Prayer**. At each of our meetings I have challenged us to address 1 of these 3 actions.

In the Spring meeting, we addressed **Ceaseless Prayer** by conducting a **Chicagoland Prayer Summit** & took a virtual prayer walk of our cities & their neighborhoods, praying for our churches, looking at the communities where we need to expand our work, seeing the schools nearby us that need our prayers & supporting the missionaries serving among us, all with the intent to see God's kingdom grow mightily in Chicagoland. We received pledges from many of you who committed to pray for God's kingdom to come in ALL areas of our city.

We also created a **7 Days to Pray for CMBA Prayer Guide**. Churches inside & outside of Chicagoland are still being given brochures for their members to read a daily devotion, view videos of our churches online at [www.chicagobaptist.com](http://www.chicagobaptist.com) & pray. This piece is to be used by churches to bring about prayer 24/7 around the city.

We hope to continue this emphasis of Prayer in 2012 by your continued prayers & by creating an ongoing bi-annually elected role of **Prayer Coordinator** to keep prayer central to what we do. You will decide this leader today in our meeting.

In our Summer meeting, we addressed **Committed Leaders** by conducting a coaching event on **Building Leadership Farm Systems**. We interviewed several leaders, live & virtually, to talk about how it happened for them & what their churches are currently doing to raise-up leaders.

This is 1 of 9 Chicagoland On Demand offerings we make to churches to have fellow churches help you in your setting when you need it.

As we raise-up leaders, I want to challenge us to work toward our **Chicagoland 2020 goals** of raising-up **10 new leaders in each church** over the next decade to multiply our presence 10-fold in Chicagoland, to the place that we have over **2000 churches, missions & ministry sites**. This will provide a tithe toward the 20,000 churches needed for us to reach our whole area w/ the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We plan to continue this leadership emphasis in 2012 by coordinating ongoing **Chicagoland On Demand Peer Coaching** & encouraging churches & their pastors to cluster into **fellowship groups** across this city to work together for kingdom causes in your area.

We also plan to expand local leadership, in light of the de-funding of paid missionaries, by creating **Coordinator roles** beginning in the areas of Prayer, Volunteers, Church Planting & Women's Ministry, w/ others to follow as needed.

And now at our Annual Meeting we are addressing the action of becoming a more **Missional People** thru a day of **prayer & fasting** leading us into this day of **focus on our mission**, taking a look at our roots, measuring our progress & re-visioning our future w/ the changing landscape of our denomination.

To sharpen CMBA's missional focus in 2012, I will be stepping into a new role of **Church Planting Catalyst**, alongside my Executive Director role, to help us do more in expanding God's kingdom thru the local church. As you have heard the Administrative Council will be assuming much more of the day-to-day administrative work of CMBA much to the delight of my wife.

We are also looking at the feasibility of **merging associations** in Northern Illinois to strengthen our work & expand our witness to a broader territory. And as you just heard, IBSA & NAMB will be engaging us more in 2012 thru **re-positioning staff** up here part-time & providing **additional funds** to expand our influence for Christ in the region.

To realize our dreams for this city, I recognize we have **1 great barrier** that prevents us from doing the work necessary to accomplish more together. I would like to say it this way, we have **1 Great King**, & that is the Lord Jesus Christ, & He has **1 Mighty Kingdom** that needs to be expanded greatly to see all of Chicagoland reached for Him.

**But We are, Each One of us, doing what is right in our Own eyes, thereby diminishing our influence.**

Remember Paul's words to the church at Ephesus, which was a collection of churches in that city, when he said *we don't battle against flesh & blood, but against rulers, authorities, the powers of darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

To combat such spiritual forces, I love the solution Dr. Luke gives us. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts, he says that God's people *had everything in common & there was no lack among them w/ the result that the Lord added to their numbers daily those that were being saved.* Please hear me, the spiritual battles we face can be defeated as we come together, not as we remain apart. Christ has one body & we are each a part of it. We are not the whole...we should not say to any part of the body, we have no need of you.

B/c of our fragmentation, I have been drawn to the book of Judges where God's people were described in a similar way - each doing what was right in their own eyes. The message the Lord spoke loud & clear to me from Judges is what I want to share w/ you today.

Picture a railroad crossing & the warning sign that stands next to it. What does it say? Stop, Look & Listen. Stop before you proceed, Look both ways before crossing & Listen for oncoming trains. The warning sign God gave me for us is very similar, with these 3 key words - **Live, Look & Listen.**

These 3 words, Live, Look & Listen, represent 3 Challenges for us in 2012:

- Live fully obedient to the Lord,
- Look for the partners He has placed around us,
- Listen for the Leadership He has set in place.

I want to 1<sup>st</sup> challenge us to **Live Fully Obedient to the Lord** by drawing our attention to v 19 of Ch 1 of Judges. It is a strange addition to the litany of wins & losses that came about by God's people after the death of Joshua. It says "*God was w/ Judah & gave him possession of the hill country, but they could not drive out the people who were living in the valley b/c those people had iron chariots.*" Is this the secret weapon that can defeat the Lord's army, the kryptonite that weakens God's Supermen?

I don't think so. God promised to give His people the land under the 10-Commandment-Giving-Leadership of Moses & also under the Strong-&-Courageous-Leadership of Joshua, but neither saw it fully realized & now the Elders were committing the same sin that prevented their forefathers from fully entering the land.

What was it? Fear. They feared men & what they possessed more than they feared God. And their disobedience caused the people around them to be a thorn in their side & their idols to be a trap for them. What fears are paralyzing us from Living Fully Obedient to the Lord? Maybe we fear those who are different from us, Or maybe we don't trust those who have failed us in the past, Or just maybe we see ourselves as weak compared to the people around us who have all the power. So what are your giants in the land or iron chariots? I want to challenge us to pull out all the stops to Live Fully Obedient to the Lord & not live by fear amidst all the changes we face.

2<sup>nd</sup> I want to challenge us to **Look for the Partners God has in place right around us.** V 3 says that Judah realized that he couldn't see victory in the land if he went at it alone. So he called on his brother Simeon & his tribe to help. And together they saw the most victories of all the tribes. What's interesting is that Simeon was the weaker of his brothers, but closer to him, so he called on his brother near & dear to him for help.

Brothers & sisters, now more than ever before, we need each other!

And we need to know best those closest to us, to see who God is calling us to work with. God has put you into a family of churches locally, statewide & nationally, so that together we can do much more for the kingdom of God.

He also has provided many others in this city who have not bowed the knee that can be of help to us too. Let us be about multiplication not division.

Why are we so quick to leap to make foreign alliances? B/c we think they can help, yet we fail to see w/ help comes control. Or, to the other extreme, we think we can go at it alone so we don't look for those around us who can help. Either position can be deadly.

3<sup>rd</sup> I want to challenge us to **Listen for the Leadership God has set in place**. Vs 1 & 2 show us when leadership is needed we should call on the Lord to speak to us. God's answer was right in front of them. He pointed them to their brother who had been w/ them all along to continue the battle. And for 1 brother God showed him that he needed to the answer to his own prayers. And as they faced other battles they cried out to the Lord & he raised-up other leaders for the time.

God wants you & I to enter the land. You will surely face your share of battles to see it accomplished. We see, though, from the book of Judges, that victory comes as God provides the leadership. Listen for the leadership He has set in place for the battle & follow their lead, or be willing to be the answer to your own prayers if you need to be the one to lead. Remember leadership comes out of relationship, a relationship w/ each other to see who is truly qualified to serve & a relationship w/ God who speaks to us to show us the way & the one who needs to lead the way.

**CMBA, now is the time to enter the land!** I believe if God is for us who can stand against us. Join me in recommitting to our common work by renewing your covenant w/ each other before God to take this land. The book of Judges shows me **victory comes from obedience, partnership & leadership**.

May God give us all that we need to complete the work in our land for His glory & our joy.

Thank you for the wonderful honor & privilege of serving you these past 24 years. I look forward to serving you as I begin this my 25<sup>th</sup> year.

I have also greatly appreciated serving alongside this CMBA Missions Dream Team of Robert, Eric, Mindy & Jay that the Lord allowed us to assemble at CMBA for a season that must now come to an end.

Though my title will be changing, & fellow missionaries will be de-funded by our denomination, I make this pledge to you:

**To faithfully lead the charge for us to fulfill the GC across Chicagoland, by expanding the K of G thru His local church.**

I love you all dearly & desire the very best for our work together in 2012.

May we all see our dreams realized as we seek to make Our City God's Delight. God bless you all!