

President's Report
SBCAL 2020 Virtual Conference
April 30, 2020

Hey guys! Please give me your attention. I only have a few minutes to update you and to share my heart with you. If you are an associational leader, paid or unpaid, full-time, bivocational or volunteer, SBCAL exists for you and for your association. We are your advocate for associationalism in the SBC.

The Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL) is the oldest and largest network of associational leaders in the SBC. We are not a part of the SBC, however. We are a separate 501c3 organization funded by our members, associations that include us in their budget (I hope you will consider doing so!), and by sponsors of our Annual Conference. As you know, we had to cancel our Annual Conference in Orlando in June. I am so thankful to report that all of the major sponsors of our June Annual Conference have agreed to let us keep their funds and apply them to the Annual Conference June 13-14, 2021 in Nashville. Thank you, as well, to the vast majority of you who had registered for Orlando, who are allowing your 2020 Conference registration to be applied to next year's Conference. That helps our organization maintain financial stability.

Thank you to so many of you who have prayed for – and continue to pray for – my daughter, April Gentry Witkowski, who has Stage 4 breast cancer that has spread to tumors in her bones. We are so thankful that the hormone therapy continues to keep the tumors from growing. She is doing remarkably well, all things considered.

I am also appreciative of Steele Billings and the Team at Gloo for producing today's Virtual Conference, enabling us to serve even more of you than we would have been able to do in Orlando.

If you are not already a subscriber to our **free** monthly enewsletter, I hope you will go to our website, www.sbc.org, and sign up today. In next month's issue we should be able to share when the book is coming out, as well as update you on where we are financially, the status of election of officers, next year's budget, and more. It is **always** your best source for finding out about retirements, new AMSs, and other news affecting associations across the SBC.

I want to close by giving you **four words** that, to me, are **indicative of a fruitful associational leader**.

Servant Leader – One of my favorite leadership writers, Dan Reiland, says, "Except for the grace of God, everything rises and falls on leadership." Lead yourself, your family, and your association humbly, faithfully, wisely. "For even the Son of Man did **not** come **to be served, but to serve**, and **to** give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk. 10:45,

CSB). So should we. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God (Mt. 5:9). Be a peacemaker in your association, state, and the SBC.

Steward – “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2, ESV). Are you faithfully executing the role and responsibilities God has given you? Don’t coast! “Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good **stewards** of the varied grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). Operate out of your spiritual gifts and steward the opportunities God gives you well. Work with the willing. Love everyone. Remember: Anything can be improved except the Bible.

Strategist – Learn your communities and counties and their needs. The Great Commission starts in our Jerusalem. Keep calling your pastors and churches to meet needs and share Christ in your local mission field as well as elsewhere. Encourage churches to adopt schools and neighborhoods.

Surrender - Worship and live in dependence upon the Lord Jesus daily. Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine; **you** are the branches. The one who remains in **me** and I in him produces much fruit, because **you can do nothing without me.**” Make everything a matter of prayer as you “pray without ceasing” (1 Cor. 5:17, ESV).

Let us know how we may serve you. We have Regional Directors and State Ministry Coordinators listed in the Leadership section of our website. My email is rgentry@sbc.org.

May the Lord bless you and your ministry,

Ray Gentry
SBCAL President & CEO
McDonough, GA