



New Faith Communities

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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NEW ROOM SOCIETY

Newsletter

January 2018

Pioneer Planting

By Rev. Greg Moore

Pioneers seem rare these days.

While new information seems abundant and cheap, doing new things with the new information is rare. We humans, being chronic creatures of habit, seem to fall back into old ways of thinking, being, and doing, no matter how much new information comes our way. Information alone does not motivate us to change.

Nowhere is this truer than in the church. While every indicator tells us that the church in the west (of every denomination, every race, and every geographical location) is on the decline, we seem slow to change. When faced with information about decline, most of us in the church instinctually begin to circle the wagons. “It’s time to strengthen the faithful, not try something new,” we think. “Let’s take care of our own, and then, when we are strong enough to care for ourselves, then we can reach out to others,” we say.

Pioneers are rare these days.

The people you’ll meet inside this newsletter are stepping outside of the old and familiar. They are seeking to lead us into communion in new places with new people. Here’s the thing: while they are pioneering our work in new places with new people, the work they are doing is anything but new.

Pioneering new relationships based on love is the ancient work of the God called Trinity, and of the people called Methodist. The God who sends Jesus Christ, who sends the Holy Spirit, who sends the apostles, who sends John Wesley, who sends the pastors who started our churches, this God has always been in the business of sending pioneers out.

This newsletter is an introduction to the newest people who are called to that ancient work.

While their craft of creating new spaces for new people to be gathered in the communion is old, it is a new thing in our day to see people step out into unfamiliar places and meet unfamiliar people in order to embody the deep love which is creating us all.

Maybe you’re called to do that work, too.

Maybe you’re a pioneer.

The New Room Society is seeking to gather together the pioneers within the North Carolina Conference. If you, like the people here in this newsletter, feel called to move into new spaces in order celebrate communion, we want to hear from you. Contact our office, let us discern and celebrate with you the call that God has laid on your life.

Pioneers may seem rare these days, yet by God’s grace, they are leading us into God’s preferred future, where all are at the table sharing in God’s grace together.



Together is Always Better

By Pastor Jason Butler



What do I do as a church planter? Sometimes people think I just sit in a coffee shop all day. Well...kinda true. As a church planter, I spend a lot of time meeting people over coffee, listening to their stories and getting their thoughts about God, life and the church.

In many ways, a church planter is a community organizer – meeting, listening and seeking to draw people into communion with the church to bring good to our community. That’s the key for me. Every person is bringing their experiences and expertise, and together we can learn from one another, partner with each other, and make a significant impact in our communities together. Because together is always better.

By drawing people in to stand with the oppressed, it gives us all a purpose and helps us live into our true selves. My dream is to draw others into a communion of mission – into a community of service where everyone is embraced, and everyone is included; where the excluded are becoming the included; and where we are equipping each other to be leaders in our community. It feels like people resonate with this – with the church being more than just an event on Sunday but being a movement to bring flourishing to our neighborhoods.

As a church planter, I build tables of inclusion where people can come and realize we all need each other to be the people God – where there’s always enough bread and wine to go around. So, I guess at the end of the day all I am is a “communion organizer.”

To connect with Open Table UMC visit their website at <https://opentableumc.org/> or stop by to worship with their community at Open Table United Methodist Church 824 N. Bloodworth St. Raleigh, NC 27604



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New Room Society

An order of laity and clergy dedicated to embodying apostolic hospitality for new people to be gathered into communion with Jesus Christ

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category/newroomsociety](https://nccumc.org/newfaithcommunities/category/newroomsociety)

Filled with Good Things

By Rev. Wesley Neal

Hunger looks different in every place. Hunger sometimes looks like a homeless man's roadside sign, a child who goes without breakfast, or an addict's fidgeting nervousness. Hunger sometimes looks like angry questions or tears of loneliness.

The people of Asbury UMC are learning again about hunger that brings people to the table – especially about how physical, social, and spiritual hunger look across the street from Duke University.

Hunger is an ache for justice that has not been heard, a longing for community among the rush of mobility, or a thirst for a lost intimacy with God.

In John 6:35, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never be hungry.”



The journey to inviting new people to the table and into communion with Christ starts with the realization of a common need for the bread of life. We are called to remember that while our tables and lives are full, other's tables and lives may be empty. The call of a new faith community is to be a place that spreads a full table and opens our lives to those who are seeking and hungry.

“The hungry he has filled with good things” (Luke 1:53). Our prayer for the coming year is that this will be so in our neighborhood as well.

To connect with Asbury UMC visit their website at <http://asburyunitedmethodist.com/> or stop by to worship with their community at Asbury United Methodist Church 806 Clarendon St, Durham, NC 27705



Abandoned Churches...Open Hearts

By Rev. Dr. Marty Cauley

Building based Christianity is starting to crumble around the edges. Even as a few churches build multi-million dollar facilities to act as a place of ministry “for the next 100 years,” my travels seem to indicate that more and more church buildings are being left to decay. This is not just happening to small, rural churches, though it is more obvious there, also to once thriving “first churches” in the hearts of our cities and former “mega-churches” who encounter difficult leadership transitions or who just fall out of favor and plummet into decay. Once the building becomes the driving force for all ministries rather than a tool to use to do ministry, the movement nature of the faith community rapidly decelerates, and the monument becomes the object of worship. Even facilities with virtually no debt have the burden of operating costs and maintenance which is ever-growing and never ceasing.



What happened? In a world with bigger and bigger buildings, I believe that Christ followers are beginning to realize how unsatisfying consumer Christianity is. Just because you have a great building, an amazing music program, and a preacher who can make you laugh and bring you to tears, it doesn't mean you are becoming a disciple. The hole in our soul remains despite moving worship experiences and inspiring messages. We crave more. Those seeking to be real, radical disciples crave living examples of discipleship, not perfect ones. We crave relationship, not showmanship. We crave community, not just crowds.

We crave living examples of discipleship, not perfect ones. The humanity of notable Christian leaders and their personal stumbles have caused most of us to realize that there are no perfect disciples. I think we knew that all along, but when their public image of perfection starts to decay, so does our faith in the community of believers. Now we are at a point where we have given up on the myth of the perfect pastor, and simply seek a living example of discipleship, with all of its messiness and struggles. This kind of discipleship only happens when you live in a close community.

Not only do we desire living examples, but we also want real interaction with those who lead us spiritually. We crave relationship, not showmanship. Real disciples want to walk with Jesus in an intentional relationship with others who are seeking to follow Him. Yes, we love a well-delivered message, but more importantly, we love a well-lived life.

We crave community, not just crowds. It seems everywhere I go there is a crowd and it's exhausting. I love big venues filled with cheering fans or engaged in powerful worship, but for me, those experiences are like Christmas and my birthday, great for celebration but hard to handle every day. In a crowd, you are one of the masses, and it can be awesome. In real life with its daily struggles and pain, however, the crowd simply reinforces the isolation of our culture. During those times I like the smaller community. I embrace those twenty to fifty people in my life who hold me up to live at a higher level; hold me accountable to be who God wants me to be, and hold me together when my life falls apart.

Lastly, while some studies show that believers continue to gather in large churches, with great worship experiences, and powerful teaching, they are attending fewer Sundays per year and expect more and more from the place and the preacher than ever before. When they come to consume, they want the best product on the market. What if we realized that with the decline in soul satisfaction of consumer spirituality, we are coming to the end of a building based Christianity? What if we actively begin to move back to gathering house to house, home to home? What if every time the whole community gathered it was around the Eucharist table set up in a public square, a rented building, or a public park? What does buildingless belief look like? What if you are a pioneer planter who is more concerned with open hearts than abandoned buildings?

Please support our planters with your payers for communion to be celebrated in new ways in their lives and in their communities.

Charles Albright	Tim Fitch	Edgar Vergara-Millan
Kyle Burrows	Brent Levy	Michael Williams
Jason Butler	Arthur Manigault	Tyler Williams
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