



New Faith Communities

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

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NEW ROOM SOCIETY

Newsletter

October 2018

Holistic Mission

By Rev. Greg Moore



“When man (sic) came first out of the hands of the great Creator, clothed inbody as well as in soul, with immortality and incorruption, there was no place for physic, or the art of healing.” John Wesley, Primitive Physick, or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases

Mr. Wesley’s best selling work wasn’t a compilation of his sermons. Arguably, the Wesleyan message that had the most impact in his day wasn’t one that he gave from a pulpit or even one that would have been found in the Religion section of Barnes and Noble.

His little book, *Primitive Physic*, which he originally authored anonymously, Wesley attempted to make medical care (a luxury of the rich) accessible to the masses. It went viral and sold more copies than anything else he ever wrote. It is a little ironic that one of our best preachers’ best sellers isn’t explicitly about God, at all.

That’s not to say that it isn’t deeply theological. Every word of the book drips with the baptismal belief that the God we meet in Jesus is in the work of incorporating (embodying) mighty acts of salvation (healing). Every sentence is a crumb collected from the table which proclaims that any news isn’t good until it proclaims that God heals the sick, feeds the hungry and eats with sinners.

Wesley’s theology always had the whole person, the whole community, the wholecreation in mind because it’s all God’s.

That’s what we mean when we say, “holistic mission.” Holistic mission is about continuing that inheritance that is ours as the children of the Wesleyan movement. Our care for people, place, and things is never easily divided into, “spiritual” or “physical”. Our mission work is never just to care for souls or bodies. Once God sent Jesus in the flesh, God’s mission became an eternally embodied spirituality.

What does that look like in action? Read on! This edition of our newsletter is filled with stories and examples of God’s holistic mission taking flesh among us. This is our humble offering to the God who, for our sake, was humbled into a body and healed us from the inside out.

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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Featured Members



My name is: Annette Ethridge
Church: Open Table, Raleigh, NC
How do you engage in Holistic Mission?

Holistic Mission is engaging in the mission of God through love and compassion. During these days of cultural struggle, Jesus’ compassion stands out to me more and more, for example, Jesus feeding the five thousand. Jesus was going to a place of solitude after the death of a friend. The crowds followed. He abandoned His need for the need of the crowd. He had compassion on them and healed them. Not only that, he fed them instead of sending them away. Serving 5,000 people would be draining mentally, emotionally and physically. What is impossible for us alone is possible through the redemptive power of our God.



Holistic Mission is the active representation of the redemptive power of God. We see through the eyes of God’s love and compassion, and we engage in what is set before us with the purpose of restoration. As a group of people, we unify, and we act.

Open Table UMC’s story is a story of Holistic Mission. It began in 1942 when Trinity UMC was birthed in the Oakwood neighborhood near downtown Raleigh. After many years of thriving ministry, the church began to feel it was becoming disconnected from the community. So in 2016 it made the bold decision to re-launch as a completely new church dedicated to embracing the redemptive power of God for the whole community. Open Table was born – a new church building upon this foundation. Today, Open Table is a place where we love our neighbors, no exception. We love by our actions, by our actions, we serve.



My name is: Arthur Manigault
Church: Spirit and Truth Windfall, NC
How do you define Holistic Mission?

Holistic Mission is not a choice; it is a responsibility to all who lift up the name of Jesus Christ. Holistic Mission is defined as engaging in the mission of God to care for all of creation, humanity, and society in ways that heal, restore and celebrate communion. For me this

definition is the epitome of what the Apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans Chapter 12:1 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.



While many of us limit our worship to songs and gatherings for worship in the sanctuary, one of the highest forms of worship can be found in the heart of Holistic Mission. This can be summed up in a statement made in Matthew Chapter 25. When speaking of visiting the sick, visiting those who are imprisoned, feeding the hungry, and clothing those who are less fortunate, Jesus simply states “when you have done it for the least of them you have done it unto me”

At Spirit and Truth UMC, we consider it a privilege to sacrifice all that we are for the glory of God. We pray for the opportunity to be the hands and feet of God not only for our community, but wherever and whenever God can use us. Our true desire is to work alongside all who are willing, and through the grace of Holistic Mission day by day, change the world!



Name: Christopher Jenkins
NonProfit: Hope Restorations
Holistic Mission in Kinston, NC

Holistic Mission isn’t about building a bigger worshipping congregation so much as it’s about becoming a healthy community (communion). Holistic Mission isn’t about helping others follow the rules I’m good at following or avoiding the sins I’m good at avoiding so much as it’s

about helping others know the truth of how God loves and values them regardless of how the rest of the world grades them. Holistic Mission isn’t about helping others adopt and pursue my ideals of prosperity and happiness so much as it’s about helping them discover and become who and how God created them to be, helping them learn to be present in the fullness of God.



Since beginning Hope Restorations, I’m learning more and more about the deeply rooted goodness in every human being. I’m learning to believe in those who years ago I may have judged severely and those whose bad, personal choices have caused their current circumstances. I’m learning that the more I hear their stories, their dreams, their painful places, the more I see my story in theirs’, I see God’s fingerprint on their life. With all that seems wrong in the world today, you’d think that the more we looked and listened, the worse it would seem. Instead, I’m learning that the more I look and listen, the more wonderous and beautiful the world becomes. That’s what Holistic Mission is about, recognizing the holiness of God that has already been accomplished, and naming/proclaiming that good news in whatever ways and means for which the grace of God has uniquely inspired, called, and equipped us. I think that’s why I feel so alive serving with Hope Restorations. We’re restoring hope; one life, one home, one neighborhood at a time. Each is so unique. Each has a story to tell, and each has intrinsic good and value to share with the community.

Missional Disconnection

By Rev. Dr. Marty Cauley



Sitting at annual conference I wasn’t expecting to be caught off guard by the speaker. I have heard Lovett Weems more than a dozen times lament about the coming “death tsunami” and the quickening pace of decline of United Methodist and other mainline and even sideline denominations. In true Weems’ fashion he was rattling off research and expressing concern and then he said, “The longer your local church has been in existence the less likely it is to represent your community.”

Wow! The truth of that statement was stunning. Essentially he was postulating that at one time the church you serve looked just like the people outside of its doors, in the surrounding neighborhood, community, or rural area but the outside changed and the inside stayed the same. I have dealt with dozens of churches and seen this time and time again. It is not uncommon for us to see a cultural, racial, or economic shift around the church while at the same time the population inside the church has become more and more homogeneous. They look more and more alike, and less and less like their neighbors.

What should we do? How do we reconnect with the community? There are two reasonable and one radical idea we need to consider. I believe that if we are serious about having churches represent the community that surrounds it, we must love the community, listen to our neighbors (the reasonable ideas), and we must live in the community (the radical idea).

Love the Community

Many churches I have visited are suspicious of the community that surrounds their stained glass sanctuaries. The buildings have become museums instead of mission stations. No longer is there an openness to serve, but there is a fear that something will get stolen, damaged, or broken. We cannot love somebody we distrust. We cannot accept somebody we have suspicion toward. When we are guarded, suspicious, and wary of somebody, they know it. We may think we are faking it, but we aren’t that good of an actor. The first step toward our church reaching our community is that we have to love our community. Get out of the building and prayer walk the neighborhood. Look for places where we can make a difference. Is there a senior adult who needs some assistance with their yard? Is there a single mom who needs her oil changed? The key, however, is not the service we provide but the stories we hear and the people we get to know. Everybody has a story. When we learn people’s stories it is so much easier to love them. This is not a one-time stroll; this is a regular interaction with our neighbors. Who is our neighbor? We’ll never know if we don’t get out of the museum and meet them.



Listen to your Neighbors

I have already hinted at the next step, listen to your neighbors. Listen with one ear toward our neighbor and the other toward God listening for what God is saying to us and to where God is leading us to go. God is always speaking, but so often we fail to listen. God is pushing us, cajoling us, and begging us to join Christ in the community, and yet we plug our ears fearing that it will be uncomfortable and inconvenient. I am certain the cross was uncomfortable and inconvenient, if Jesus can die for us, we can listen to our neighbor. We will hear stories of struggle and stories of hope. As I have listened to stories from people in struggling neighborhoods I have been humbled by the power of their faith and how it molds and shapes every part of their lives. I am convicted that I have become so self-reliant that I really cannot hold a candle to the faith of a grandmother who is trusting God for enough food to feed the two or three grandchildren who are living with her. Listen to your neighbors.

Live in the Community

Now I’m moving from reasonable to radical. If we really want our church to look like our neighborhood, then we must live in the neighborhood. My bet is there is a house for sale (or rent) right around the corner from the church. Oh it might not meet our standards, the yard may be too small (or way too large in a rural community!), the school district might not be the best one for our kids, and we may have concerns about safety...that sounds an awful lot like a mission field. If we are serious, I mean Jesus level, die to self, get over our personal preferences and do anything for the Kingdom serious, about celebrating and repairing communion in the community that surrounds our church, we have to be an integral part of that community. Oh, and they won’t trust us right away. It may take months, even years, before we are considered part of the community. We have to show up for every neighborhood meeting, we have to open the doors of our church for kids to play, for meetings of local clubs, for block parties and holiday festivals. We have to be willing to give ourselves and the church to the community and then the church will start to be part of the community and not set apart from the community.

Last Words

Gone are the days of commuter Christianity, where we can fly in, preach a little, sing a little, and pray a little and expect God to do big things. We have to be willing to make significant investments in our communities. We have to be willing to make inconvenient and costly sacrifices to live out the calling God has placed upon our lives. Then, we have to invite others to come along and love the community, listen to the neighbors, and live wherever God sends us.

Gracious God help me to be fearlessly faithful to do whatever you call me to do. Amen