

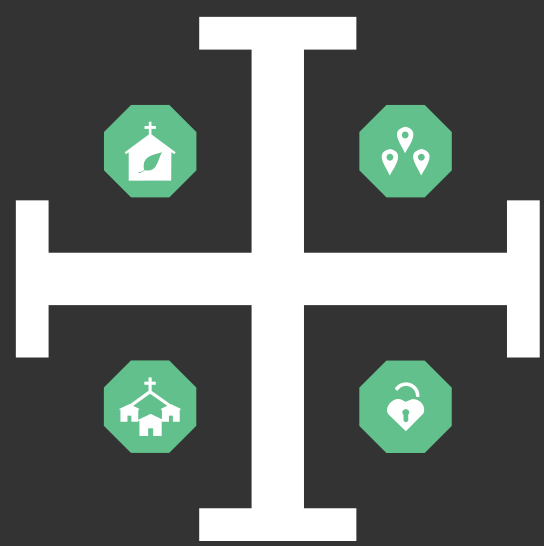
 **New Faith Communities**
North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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TRANSITIONS

by Rev. Greg Moore

When you tell someone that you are a Methodist, usually the first thing they mention (if they claim to know anything about Methodism at all) is that our pastors move around a lot. It's not uncommon for someone, once they find out that I'm a Methodist pastor, to say, "don't you move like every two years?"

Never mind our unique insistence on personal and social holiness. Forget our legacy of mission and higher education and healthcare and preaching and sacramental theology. Sorry, John, but your sermons taking flesh among us are not how the world recognizes us as your spiritual children. And I hate to break it to you, Charles, but us singing your hymns in sanctuaries and streets is not our hallmark in the world.

What's the one thing we are known for? The fact that we move. While we know that itinerancy is primarily a missional practice for us (it helps us align resources and leadership to live fully into our mission) it just might be that it is also our most robust gift of evangelism (proclaiming good news in and among the world).

Our annual ritual of transitioning from one place to the next is our enfleshed sermon, reminding the world of the truth that God is a transitional God. The word "transition" simply means "to cross over." The gospel truth is that God is not just the God of transitions, it is in the very nature of God to transition, to cross over, in order to bless and create. In the beginning, God crosses over the chaos to bring forth life. In the Exodus, God crosses over the Red Sea to lead Israel to freedom from bondage. In the incarnation, God crosses over in Jesus to take our flesh, and during Holy Week, Jesus crosses over death and leads us into resurrection.

This holy movement seems particularly pertinent this year. As the world's normal patterns have slowed down and, in many cases, come to a halt (including our normal practices of itinerancy) many have noted a divine transition happening in their communities and in their homes. Church breaking out around dining room tables, household by household, bearing witness to a God who still crosses over closed doors and says, "Peace be with you." Prayers and hymns and

continued inside . . .

**"THERE'S NOTHING OUT TODAY BUT CROWS
AND METHODIST PREACHERS ."**

— *EARLY AMERICAN PROVERBIAL SAYING*



*Picture of a Methodist Circuit Rider,
Published in Harper's Weekly in 1867.*



VILLAGE CHURCH

By Rev. Tyler Williams

They say when you become a parent that “the days are long, but the years are short.”

As a father to three boys, I have found that statement to be very true. I don’t know what they say when you become a church planter, but for me, that statement seems appropriate too. It’s hard to believe that it’s been five years since my wife, Lauren, and I and our then one-year old, Gabriel, moved to Rolesville to help begin a new faith community with a few families. Now we have two more boys and have been a part of the birth and growth of Village Church Rolesville—a vibrant and loving faith community!

As I reflect on the transitions over these last five years, I find a lot of similarities between parenting and planting. Here are some things I’ve realized:

1 You grow into the role of parent and church planter. You can read books, but nothing prepares you more than actually doing it. Nothing prepares you for the depth of joy you will experience partnering with God to bring something new into being that wasn’t there before.

2 A new church start, like a baby, feels incredibly fragile and yet is surprisingly strong and tough.

3 God loves it more than you do. God loves my boys more than I do and God loves Village Church Rolesville more than I do too.

4 “It’s just a phase, so don’t miss it.” There have been so many phases over the last five years just like with kids. I’ve learned to not miss any of them but to appreciate them in all their joy and anxiety.

5 “It takes a village.” One of the greatest gifts I’ve experienced as father and as planter has been the village of people to come alongside and share the adventure. I couldn’t imagine it any other way.

I give thanks that through every season of Village Church Rolesville’s development, God has proven to be faithful and wonderfully creative bringing about good and helping us to “live like family and love like Jesus.” I can’t wait to see what happens next! +

NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES



LAURA WHITMAN

I began the discernment process with New Faith Communities in May of last year, with the hopes of planting something new and exciting in the Rocky Mount community. Doing this has allowed me to join in on Common Learning Days where we gather with other planters, brainstorm, hear ideas, and grow together. This time has been incredibly transformational for me. After 13 years of pastoral ministry, I have felt a revival in my heart and in the work that I am called to. In this time when it feels like church is in decline, I have found that for the UMC, death does not have the final victory, and it certainly does not have the final sting. Community and new life can be built anywhere, especially when you start over a cup of coffee and the desire to know one another better.

I remember gathering with a group at the conference office one day a few years back when Greg Moore reminded us that we are all called to be planters. That we are all called to be doing something new and creating something new. I felt those words in my soul. I felt like I was being called out into the world to do something new, to build community in new ways. I found myself wanting to ask the question, “how can we stop assuming the needs of our community and instead start living with our community to make it better together?” +

TRANSITIONS continued

sermons shared through social media, seeking to care for neighbors and offer hope and faith and love in the midst of fear and uncertainty proclaim that God is still on the move, even as we slow down.

By grace, we have become a people who are patterned by the life of a transitional God. And in this moment, it shows.

In this edition of the NRS newsletter, you will hear some stories from leaders who are crossing over into a new place with God. One veteran planter is leading his new church from the season of being

birthed into a season of growing into maturity. Another leader is about to be sent to start a church, entering that tender and exciting time of birthing something new.

I trust, given that you are a people who are in communion with Trinity, that you are also being led into a new place in life in order to create and redeem. I trust that you are also in some sort of transition. May these stories encourage you as you follow God into a new place, or relationship, or season and celebrate being in ministry with a God who crosses over every boundary to be with us. +