

\$10 Club | NEW ROOM SOCIETY



New Faith Communities

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

700 Waterfield Ridge Place
Garner, NC 27529
800.849.4433 | nccumc.org



Newsletter / March 2021

BUT NOT EVERYTHING that needs to die IS A SEED

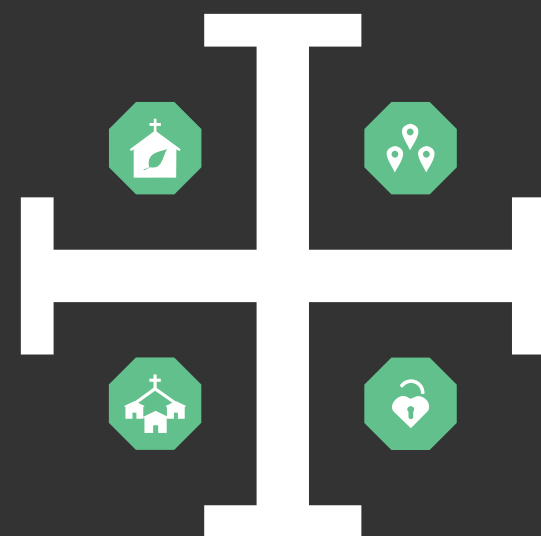
by Rev. Tim Catlett



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR PLANTERS

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

Jeremy Benton	Brent Levy
Dorrell Briscoe	Rafael Martinez
Jason Butler	Cleve May
Daniel Childs	Wes Neal
Randy Evans	Amanda Rigby
Jason Gaskin	Meg McBride Stuart
Joshua Hamra	Donna Thompson
Daniel Jackson	Jamie Thompson
Sherei Jackson	Edgar Vergara-Millan
Justin Jamis	Laura Wittman
Francis Kinyua	



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

GIVE OR JOIN TODAY!
VISIT WWW.NEWROOMSOCIETY.COM



BUT NOT EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS TO DIE IS A SEED

During the fifth Sunday of Lent, in John's gospel, we listen to Jesus teaching his disciples about death. Jesus tells them, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24, NRSV). Then Jesus continues, reminding them that not everything that needs to die is a seed. If we are to gain eternal life, we must first lose our lives, dying to ourselves in this world.

The ultimate story of the Christian tradition is a story of death and resurrection. Lent reminds us that before we get to Easter, we must first embrace death. Ash Wednesday liturgies are filled with reminders of our mortality. Baptismal liturgies, tracing their history to the early church, invite the newly baptized to first be buried with Christ, as they are immersed in the water, before they are raised to new life.

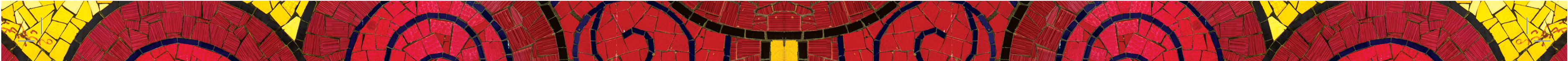
M. Craig Barnes, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, suggests, "The rationale for this burial form of baptism

was to make the members of the church go through 'dying' and get it over with. Once they were no longer anxious about Caesar's persecutions of the church, they were free to boldly proclaim the gospel. You can't scare dead people."¹

I love that reminder. You can't scare dead people. When we freely offer our lives to follow Jesus, there is nothing for us to fear.

On Ash Wednesday, this year, we invited our active new faith community pastors and several other members of our NFC community, to consider our tradition of death and resurrection. We invited them to ask themselves, what needs to die in me and in my church for new life to spring forth this year? This newsletter shares the stories of two churches in our annual conference and how their personal journey of letting things die in themselves and in their churches is leading to new life in their congregations and communities. +

¹ christiancentury.org/article/2016-01/post-anxiety-church



WHAT HAS HAD TO DIE IN YOU AND/OR YOUR CHURCH
IN THIS PAST YEAR WHICH IS MAKING WAY FOR

NEW LIFE?

BY ARTHUR MANIGAULT

Arthur Manigault is the pastor of Spirit and Truth United Methodist Church in Winfall, NC. Arthur also serves as pastor of First UMC of Williamston. In addition to the challenges of this pandemic, Spirit and Truth's building was damaged by fire intentionally set by arsonists in May 2020. Arthur describes how despite missing their physical spaces of worship, through creative use of technology the church has tripled its reach during the pandemic. To learn more, connect on Facebook with "Spirit & Truth UMC."

I've heard it said that sometimes the true enemy is the "inner me". The part of me that consistently wants to have its own way. The part that struggles with the idea of total surrender. Truthfully speaking, this is what is takes to be true disciples of Christ. Romans 12:1 reads: 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.

In this time of COVID, one of the biggest struggles we have faced is having to stay away from the house of God. We have had to give up worship the way we formally know it. We have missed the fellowship of our Christian brothers and sisters because of a pandemic that has

claimed many lives. In spite of our disappointments, we have noticed a great thing take place. Through the use of modern technology, we now reach an audience triple the size of our normal attendance. We have learned through being forced to surrender that the light of Christ yet shines in the midst of dark days.

I came across a quote by A.W. Tozer that really brought it to light for me: "Worship is no longer worship when it reflects the culture around us more than the Christ within us."

I encourage us all to continue to be a beacon of light to all who are living in darkness. Regardless of our current circumstances, God is able! ✚



HOPE RECOVERY CHURCH

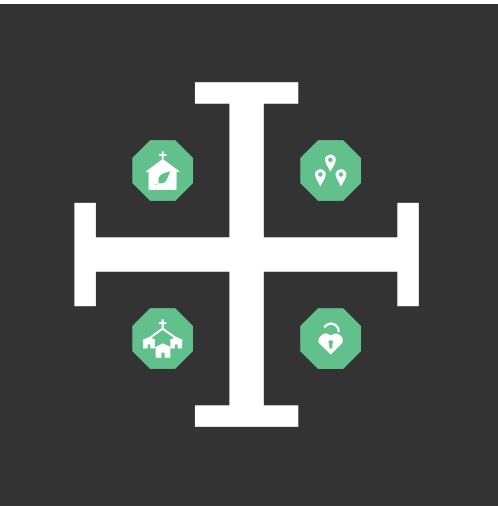
BY MEG MCBRIDE STUART

Meg McBride is the pastor of Hope Recovery Community (HRC), a new faith community in Wilmington, NC for people in need of recovery. HRC was started in July 2020 and currently gathers online at hrconline.org. When gathering in person, HRC is hosted by Trinity UMC. Meg describes her own personal journey during the pandemic and how through attention to the Holy Spirit, Meg connected to a group of women seeking to leave the commercial sex industry. Meg's honesty, vulnerability, commitment to recovery, and passion for deepening spiritual practices is helping new people gather together and discover the liberating love of Christ. Learn more about HRC at hrcwilm.org.

Covid-time invited me into a new season of radical self-inquiry. The quieted rhythms of life, imposed by sheltering at home, offered the space to mine a pit of feared lost dreams for my budding congregation. But I was not alone. "Wise counselors" offered me tools to help me emerge from the depths with dirtied face, callused hands, parched of thirst, and equipped with new revelations about myself -- and a means to navigate a changing landscape.

During this time of reflection, I participated where I could find sustenance, stopped listening to other's critical

commentaries, sought a new experience in the Gospels, and waited on the Spirit to move. By chance, and through attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, I met women trying to leave the commercial sex industry. Here was a waiting "congregation" of desirous hearts, craving to recreate their lives in the light of God's renewing love. Like me, they were seeking deeper levels of recovery in order to know themselves in Christ. Hence, the radical self-inquiry of the pit became the outer work revealed in the world - accomplished with digging, dirt and tears. ✚



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

GIVE OR JOIN TODAY!
VISIT WWW.NEWROOMSOCIETY.COM