



CORE VALUES: Common Learning

by Rev. Tim Catlett



Members of our New Room Society covenant to live out our mission to co-create new spaces for new people to be gathered into communion with Jesus Christ by committing to the shared values of common prayer, common learning, and common practices. One way we live out our shared value of common learning is through participation in Common Learning Days three times each year.

In February, we gathered together for our first hybrid Common Learning Days event in almost two years. About 15 active church planters, discerning pastors, and students gathered at St Paul's UMC in Carolina Beach, with another 15 participants joining us online. We are so thankful for the ways technology has allowed us to bridge the gap between in-person and online gathering spaces.

Rev. Danielle DeNise, Director of Evangelical Mission for the NC Synod of the ELCA, joined us and invited us to explore the core values which shape new

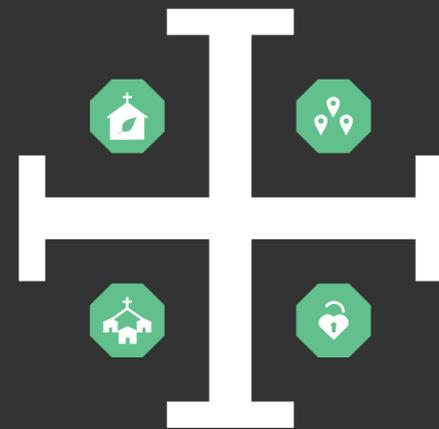
faith communities, and how co-creating those core values with our communities help to shape decision making and give us direction during conflict, stress, and seasons of renewal and rebirth. Also, several of our new church start pastors shared their own stories and experiences and how they are navigating this work in their contexts.

However, while the teaching was rich and timely, it was doing this learning together which made it holy work. Creating something new can be lonely, and coming alongside one another to support and challenge each other is an incredible gift. God promises to always be with us, and most often I discover God's presence is made known to us through each other. I continue to be so thankful for the privilege of journeying alongside this community of pastors and leaders who are dreaming of ways to co-create communities where new people might find meaning, purpose, belonging, and communion with the Triune God. +

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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| Dorrell Briscoe
Six:Eight Church, Durham | Sarah Majors
Open Table, Raleigh |
| Daniel Childs
Kindred Church, Durham | Cleve May
Durham Home Church Network, Durham |
| Randy Evans
The Feast Gathering, Wilmington | Wes Neal
Asbury, Durham |
| Kelly Finch
Wilmington NFC, Wilmington | Meg McBride
Hope Recovery Church, Wilmington |
| Jason Gaskin
Storied Church, Mebane | Gayle Tabor
St Paul UMC, Carolina Beach |
| Francis Kinyua
The Church at Spring Forest, Hillsborough | Jamie Thompson
Pink Hill UMC, Pink Hill |
| Sherei Jackson
Pioneers Church, Durham | Edgar Vergara Millan
La Semilla, Durham |
| Brent Levy
The Local Church, Pittsboro | Laura Wittman
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PASSION, VISION, AND A FEW PENNIES

By Rev. Danielle DeNise

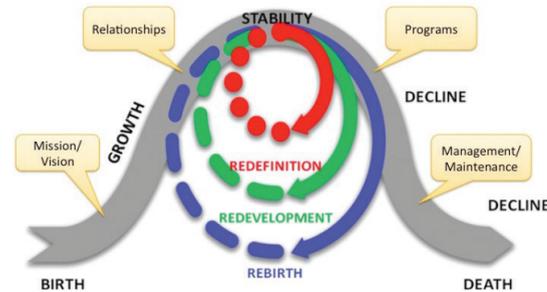
Every New Faith Community development starts with passion, vision, and often only a few pennies. What happens next? Our Common Learning Day for February 2022 focused on how congregations move through a lifecycle and explore the opportunities for redevelopment, renewal, and straight-up rebirth.

Layered over the lifecycle were conversations about when we need to lean into Vision, Relationship, Programs and Management. Knowing where our congregation is on the lifecycle helps us clarify where we need to be spending our energy in this time – and it often helps us put words around why we are exhausted.

We moved through our time together exploring how important it is to name our purpose and values. This isn't simply an exercise in trendy words, but an opportunity to name for the community what will be at the center of our decision making, our witness, and our conversations. Clarity is kindness to our neighbors. And yet, values mean very little if they are not embodied in the life of the congregation. So much church harm is done when values collide or are spoken and not followed.

The church planters were invited to think more deeply about how the values are operationalized through clear guiding principles that help the communities co-create. These values and principles are essential guides in crisis and in growth.

The church planters also engaged with a case study of Prince of Peace Lutheran in Greensboro exploring how the values process has shaped their community, helped them hold the gifts of a multicultural church with an African-descent witness, and make hard decisions regarding community partnerships. +



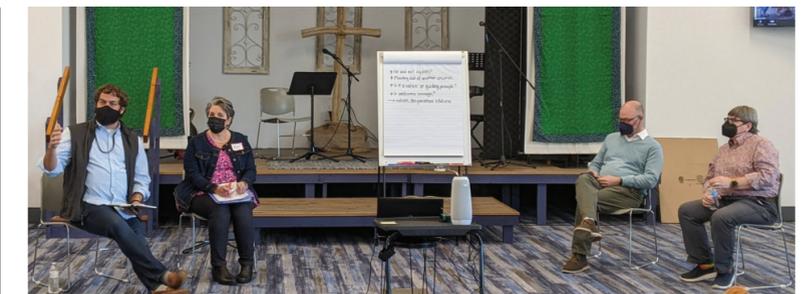
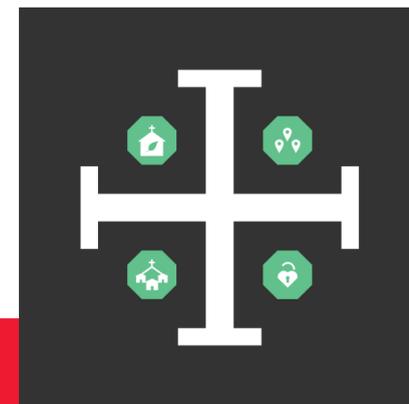
ST. PAUL'S UMC CAROLINA BEACH

By Rev. Shawn Blackwelder and Gayle Tabor

St. Paul's is in the midst of the Mary's Path process, as we are seeking to discern whether God is guiding us to plant a new faith community in the area over the bridge from Carolina Beach. This is an area of booming population growth combined with low percentages of church involvement. In other words, or in Jesus' words, "the fields are ripe for harvesting." It would seem obvious, then, that there is a need for something new. What is less obvious, though, is exactly where it would be, what it would look like, and who it might reach.



What is also very important to discern is whether St. Paul's is ready to take this step. A new campus was in our strategic plan, but a great deal has changed since that was adopted 5 years ago. During Mary's Path, we have been asking hard questions about ourselves and thinking about our missional focus in our current location, as well as over the bridge. The recent Common Learning Day was incredibly helpful in this process, as it helped us to define where we are in the life cycle of our congregation. Even more important, it helped to affirm the importance of naming core values and guiding principles, standards that will help us to more clearly discern where God is calling us now and in the future. +



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