My predecessor, Rev. Greg Moore, and our former bishop, Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, were fond of saying, in a pandemic-shaped world, “Every Church is a New Church Start.” Some of the same values and methodologies common to the co-creation of new faith communities are evident in local churches across our connection. New innovations are emerging in the ways we engage in liturgical worship, relational discipleship, holistic mission, and how we serve and lead our local congregations. As we reclaim historical practices and try new ways to connect people to God and one another, my hope is we will continue to learn with one another and strive together to pay attention to where the Holy Spirit is moving.

And may we remember, that when we experiment and innovate, we will often fail. However, the good news of the gospel is we serve a God who redeems failure. We serve a God who brings life out of death. We serve a God who is always with us! Thanks be to God for the privilege to serve God’s people in such a time as this.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 is one of my favorite passages in Scripture. In Greek, it takes on an even more powerful meaning. We often see the words “Go and make disciples of all nations” as a command from Jesus but the word “go” in Greek isn’t an imperative. Another translation could be “as you are going.” That simple shift reminds me that I’m not called to go to a specific place at a specific time to make disciples, I’m supposed to be making disciples throughout the rhythm of my day.

When I go to the grocery store, the gym, or the book club at the library, I am being given opportunities to form relationships with others in my community. Those relationships can open doors to share God’s love and grace with those who have never felt seen by God.

This “as you are going” discipleship is part of our history as Methodists and is being incorporated in creative new ways. Some of the first converts to Methodism in the US were led to faith by Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge, a lay couple in Maryland who were passionate about sharing their love for Jesus wherever they went. Last month, I talked to a teenager in Virginia who wants to start a podcast on faith to reach other girls at her school. Nathan Webb, a pastor in Western North Carolina, is using “Twitch” to curate faith for hundreds of online gamers.

“As you are going” throughout your community this week, who might God be placing in your midst as we seek to make disciples for the transformation of the world? +

---

New Faith Communities
North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
700 Waterfield Ridge Place
Garnersville, NC 27529
800.849.4433 | nccumc.org

$10 Club | NEW ROOM SOCIETY

NEW ROOM SOCIETY

EVERY CHURCH
Is A New Church Start
by Rev. Dr. Tim Catlett, Executive Director, Office of New Faith Communities

MAKING DISCIPLES
THROUGHOUT THE RHYTHM OF MY DAY

by Rev. Rachel Gilmore
Church Planter and Author
Phoenix, Arizona

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

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

Dorrell Briscoe
Six Eight Church, Durham

Daniel Childs
Kirkland Church, Durham

Randy Evans
The Feast Gathering, Wilmington

Kelly Finch
Wilmington NFC, Wilmington

Jason Gaskin
Stained Church, Melrose

Francis Kinyua
The Church at Spring Forest, Hillsborough

Sheri Jackson
Pioneers Church, Durham

Brent Levy
The Local Church, Pittsboro

Sarah Majors
Open Table, Raleigh

Clerie May
Durham River Church Network, Durham

Wes Neal
Ashley Durham

Gayle Talbot
St Paul UMC, Carolina Beach

Jamie Thompson
Pink Hill UMC, Pink Hill

Edgar Vergara Millan
La Semilla, Durham

Laura Wittman
The Mills Church, Rocky Mount

GIVE OR JOIN TODAY!
VISIT WWW.NEWROOMSOCIETY.COM
Online Worship and in Person Gatherings ARE NOT THE SAME THING

By Rev. Justin Morgan, Church on Morgan, Raleigh

Online worship and in-person gatherings are not the same thing. Can I get an Amen? I know that doesn’t sound like a giant epiphany but it took us awhile to figure that out at Church on Morgan and the truth is we still are. In March of 2020, when we, like many of you, made our first attempt at offering online worship services our general concept was that we would simply keep doing what we had been doing every Sunday but now we would film it in an empty room and folks would watch it in their living rooms.

It turns out that not everything we were doing in-person translated on-screen; passing the peace, extended worship sets, and at home communion were some of the first cuts we needed to make if we were going to honestly engage our audience on the couch. But it wasn’t all subtraction. With time we came to see that there were also some acts of worship that would work at home that often didn’t go well in-person; such as extended times of silence, meditation, or readings.

Once we began to see online and in-person gatherings as distinct offerings with unique opportunities and challenges, it was only natural to revisit some of our previously held convictions about our in-person services. As my friend Jacob Breeze often says at the beginning of worship, “This liturgy is built on one big idea and that is, that in Jesus Christ, God has given us God’s whole self, which means that we are free to bring our whole selves to God in this liturgy.” As such, one of the newly discovered gifts of in-person worship for us is that we get to include all of our senses—cues worship in the round for our ears, new art and chalices for our eyes, incense for our noses, a welcoming font for our fingers, and delicious bread for our mouths.

We are all learning a lot about worship these days, both digital and analog. Perhaps most important is the unique gifts that each brings.

NEXT YEAR at UNC Wesley

OUR RESPONSE TO AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

By Rev. Ryan Spurrier, Campus Minister, UNC Wesley

Although the future of the United Methodist Church is a large, abstract question that evades easy answers, our students at UNC Wesley Campus Ministry have a simple vision of what is most important: offering each other community.

For years, we have struggled to get enough students invested in the week-in, week-out work of welcoming new students well. On a campus that values innovation, the simple (some would even say mundane) yet most important things are often overlooked. But after two years of COVID curtailing the community students often find in college, we have a team of six students excited to do the work of hospitality together.

They are committed to being present at worship every week, ensuring every new student is invited to a table at our pre-worship dinner and invited to sit with them during worship. They are committed to exchanging phone numbers so they can follow-up with a mid-week invite to a social event they are planning and a second invite to next week’s worship—where they will again be present, ready to welcome them again.

This hospitality plan is the physical and structural manifestation of our students’ overwhelming belief that church should be “inclusive” and “accept everyone exactly as they are.” Even questions of worship style pale in comparison to a desire to know and be known by each other.

The overwhelming majority of our students are quick to name that LGBTQ+ inclusion is not a question but that welcoming persons of all sexualities into church and church leadership is central to the Gospel. And yet—at the same time—many of our white students struggle to speak to students of another race, despite their “belief” in inclusion.

And so, we still have work to do in order to celebrate and learn from the rich diversity of students and gifts that God is bringing us. But, we are very excited to take the first steps, one “Hello,” one “Tell me about yourself,” one text of “So great to meet you, hope to see you next week,” at a time.