



**New Faith Communities**

North Carolina Conference

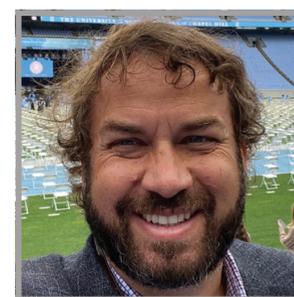
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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# EVERY CHURCH Is A New Church Start

by Rev. Dr. Tim Catlett, Executive Director, Office of New Faith Communities



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

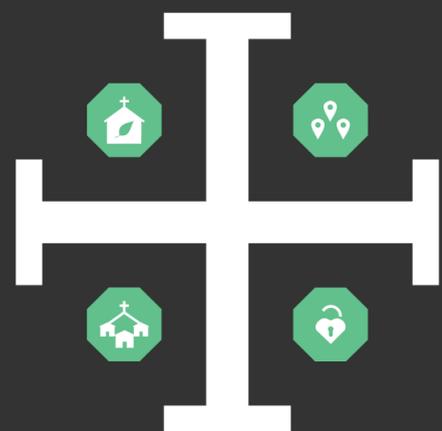
people to God and one another, my hope is we will continue to learn with one another and strive together to pay attention to where the Holy Spirit is moving.

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. +

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



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

# MAKING DISCIPLES THROUGHOUT THE RHYTHM OF MY DAY



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

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.

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.

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.

“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? +

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## Online Worship & in Person Gatherings ARE NOT THE SAME THING

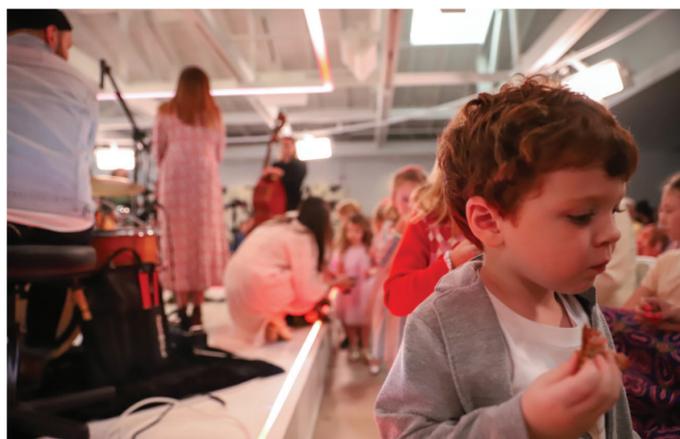
By Rev. Justin Morgan, Church on Morgan, Raleigh

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 - cue 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. +

