

## \$10 Club | NEW ROOM SOCIETY



### New Faith Communities

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Garner, NC 27529

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Newsletter / October 2022

# RELATIONAL Discipleship

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



### 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  
Kindred Church, Durham

Randy Evans  
The Feast Gathering, Wilmington

Kelly Finch  
Wilmington NFC, Wilmington

Jason Gaskin  
Storied Church, Mebane

Elaine Heath  
The Church at Spring Forest, Hillsborough

Cleve May  
Durham Home Church Network, Durham

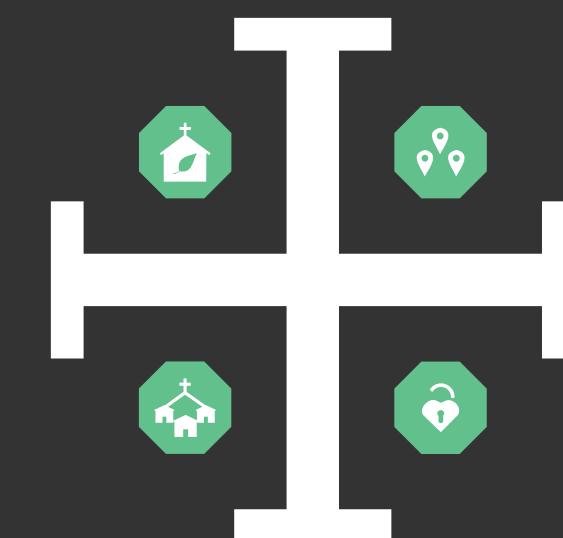
Meg McBride  
Hope Recovery Church, Wilmington

Gayle Tabor  
St Paul UMC, Carolina Beach

Jamie Thompson  
The Anchor, Wilmington

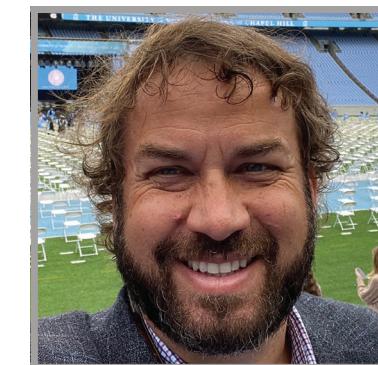
Edgar Vergara Millan  
La Semilla, Durham

Laura Wittman  
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.

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Throughout the gospel of Luke, including our lectionary texts for this summer, Jesus challenges individuals and communities to reconsider how they engage in relationships with each other and with God. The story of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8) explores themes of fear of the other, and how one community fears authentic transformation in a person who is "not like them." In another story (Luke 18), Jesus challenges preconceived notions of holiness and reminds his listeners that someone's status, a Pharisee or a tax collector, does not automatically determine the authenticity of one's relationship with God.

One of the central stories of Luke's gospel is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). A lawyer stood up to test Jesus, asking him what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks him what the law says, and the lawyer replies, "Love the Lord your God ... and love your neighbor as yourself." When Jesus said the man had answered correctly, the man asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replies by sharing the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story which challenges social, religious, and political stereotypes and invites those who are paying attention to live out their religious commitments by showing mercy to all of God's children.

One of the primary emphases of our new faith communities is co-creating new places for new people to engage in relational discipleship. Discipleship is inherently a relational practice. It

is in our relationship with God and our relationships with others inside and outside our communities of faith where we are challenged to grow as followers of Jesus.

For the Church at Spring Forest (featured in this newsletter), relational discipleship occurs in-person and virtually as the community pays attention to rhythms of prayer, work, table, and neighbor. For Hope Recovery Church, relationships happen when people are invited to consider that we all are recovering from something, and people from all walks of life gather to experience God's promises of liberation together. For Six:Eight Church, relationships happen in barber shops, on college campuses, and by paying attention to the social dynamics which shape the community. For Storied Church, relationships happen when people share their lives in "tov communities" and focus on inviting all people into authentic friendships. Mosaic Church is exploring ways to create new places online as emerging technologies are helping people connect in more authentic ways in local communities and around the world.

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support of our new faith communities. By helping to co-create new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ, you are participating in personal and community transformation. May God's kingdom come (Luke 11). +



# Disciple-Making AT SPRING FOREST

By Rev. Dr. Elaine Heath, Abbess of Spring Forest



*The Church at Spring Forest is a new monastic, missional community in the United Methodist tradition that is dedicated to loving and caring for the earth, animals, and neighbors.*

Spring Forest is located in Hillsborough, NC and is comprised of two pieces of property totalling 23 acres, including a farm and forest. I live with my spouse, Randall Bell, in the Forest House at Spring Forest, where along with friends who live in the Farm House, and staff and volunteers we tend a forest and small, regenerative farm. Through the use of Zoom for some of our spiritual formation ministries, our community extends beyond the geographic boundaries of forest and farm, reaching as far away as the UK and Houston, Texas! Spring Forest supports refugee resettlement through sponsorships and our Global Friends ESL program. We also donate fresh produce to area food banks, host a range of spiritual formation ministries, children's programs, and much more.

In Matthew 28 Jesus says to go into all the world and make disciples. That is what we do through the ministries of Spring Forest. We are a "practice-based" community that is centered around forming loving community through

a shared set of spiritual practices. This set of spiritual practices, traditionally known as a "rule of life," guides our vision and day-to-day life together. The community rule of life is: prayer, work, table, and neighbor.

Everyone who is a part of Spring Forest is encouraged to follow that set of practices, not only when they are on the property but especially wherever they live, work, go to school, and have fun. Using this set of practices allows people from a broad array of theological backgrounds to be a community together. Our practice-based approach is inherently a peacemaking endeavor, which is a part of discipleship. It enables us to welcome people from no religion, other religions, and who have been harmed by religion, to join us in our daily rhythms of life. Our four practices are oriented around loving well—loving God, neighbors, ourselves, and our enemies. Through these practices we experience life, joy, the healing of depression, the healing of trauma, new beginnings, new friends, new

possibilities, and all of that means people are experiencing God and God's love. Discipleship is, first and foremost, about experiencing God's love revealed in Jesus, and becoming a conduit of that love to our neighbors.

We do read and discuss the Bible, discuss and reflect rigorously on theology, and other traditional intellectual approaches to discipleship, and we worship together. However, the practice of genuine community is what grounds us and holds us accountable for our interpretations of the Bible, theology, and worship. We believe that love should guide our interpretation of scripture and theology, because this is what Jesus teaches us in the Gospels.

I have found that as we carry out our daily rhythms of work and prayer with generous inclusivity, all sorts of people feel safe and free and join in. This is how we approach disciple formation through Spring Forest. It's a journey—unhurried, open, hospitable, and healing.

As we think about the United Methodist Church in the world and people experiencing God, where I really see it happening is in the expressions of Methodism that are inclusive, hospitable, grace filled, and grounded in neighborhood practices. I see it where everybody gets to show up at the table as themselves and experience the

love of God together. And I am proud of the streams of Methodism where we live that way. My prayer is that we all will continue to learn experientially to love God, our neighbors, ourselves, and yes, our enemies, in the way that Jesus loves us. May we become the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21:

*"I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word,<sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,[a] so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

Find out more at [springforest.org](http://springforest.org). +

