

\$10 Club | NEW ROOM SOCIETY



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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Garner, NC 27529
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April 2024

New Places FOR NEW PEOPLE



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

Meg McBride
Hope Recovery Church, Wilmington

Gayle Tabor
St Paul UMC, Carolina Beach

Jamie Thompson
The Anchor, Wilmington

Edgar Vergara Millan
La Semilla, Durham

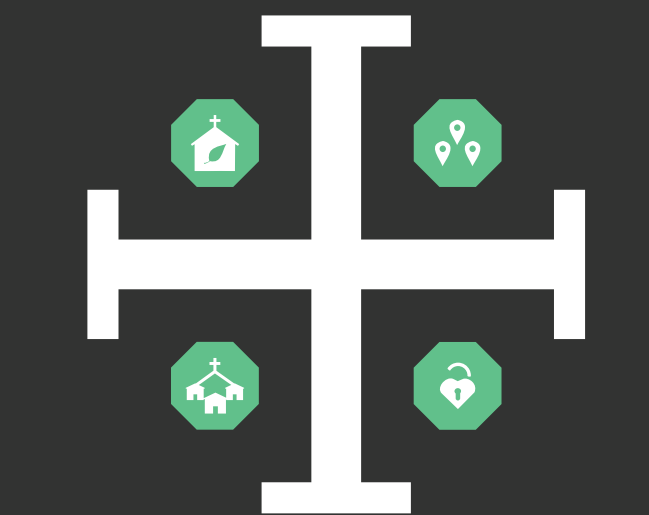
**Laura Wittman and
Renee Edwards**
The Mills Church, Rocky Mount

Seyun Hwang
Genesis, Cary

Saul Gastelum
Jonesboro, Sanford and
Fiesta Cristiana, Apex

Amanda Rigby
Edenton St UMC, Raleigh

Schylar Ferguson
Asbury UMC, Durham



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



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

Earlier this year, 450 pastors and leaders from across the United States experienced the first United Methodist Fresh Expressions National Gathering in Charlotte, NC. The purpose of this gathering was to help “cultivate communities of love and grace for people neglected by the church [and] to be the church with new people, in new places, and in new ways.”

The Fresh Expressions movement originated in the Anglican Church in England and has its roots in early Methodism. The contemporary Methodist Church in Great Britain has also embraced and expanded on the practices of the Fresh Expression movement to enhance their vision for co-creating new places for new people to be disciples of Jesus Christ. The Methodist Church in Great Britain “sees starting New Places for New People in every circuit as a vital part of responding to the gospel of God’s love, revealed to us in Christ. [The] aim is to see new people becoming disciples of Jesus and forming new Christian communities in rural, estate, urban, suburban, and village contexts.” New Places for New People projects “are focused on forming new Christian communities for those not yet part of an existing church.” For the British Methodist Church, this includes

the Fresh Expression movement, as well as focuses on new towns and housing developments, students and young adults, families with children, replanting in existing places, and developing Church at the Margins of communities.

One of the shared core values of both the British Methodist Church and the Fresh Expressions movement is to develop a “mixed ecology” of church which includes caring for people in our inherited churches, while also leveraging resources to develop and strengthen new faith communities.

In this newsletter, Rev. Edgar de Jesus will share some of his experience in the local church related to experimenting with Fresh Expressions of Church. Edgar will also share his hopes for how the Fresh Expression movement will help strengthen the witness of the United Methodist Church in the United States and here in North Carolina. Rev. Julia Hayes will share how Wrightsville United Methodist Church is experimenting with a “mixed ecology” of church, and particularly how the merger between Wrightsville UMC and Oleander UMC is co-creating new places for new people in the greater Wrightsville Beach community. +

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Fresh Expressions Movement

By Rev. Edgar DeJesus



I'm excited to share with you about a new Spirit-led, organic and renewal movement that is being birthed in the North Carolina Conference and the connectional United Methodist Church-- the "Fresh Expressions". The Discipleship Ministries defines "Fresh Expressions" as "a distinctly Wesleyan Spirit-lead movement of new Christian communities that serve the present age. We have a singular focus— to cultivate communities of love and grace for people neglected by the church. We are seeking to be the church with new people, in new places, and in new ways." In other words, Fresh Expressions is a new way of being the church. It's missional, contextual, formational and ecclesial. It's a new way of reaching out to new and diverse people for Christ.

"Fresh Expressions" is something God planted in my heart when I was growing up in the Philippines and long before I knew it, something like God's prevenient grace at work through me! I had this Epiphany moment when I attended the first-ever Fresh Expressions UM National Gathering held on February 7th-9th in Charlotte, NC. What a life-giving and empowering experience to be part of this new movement!

After returning from Charlotte, I prayed and prayed, discerning where God is leading me to the next steps. And then the Spirit now nudged me to invite the NC Conference to lay the groundwork in organizing a network of pastors, laity and practitioners within the NC Conference who are already doing Fresh Expressions or who are curious and willing to bring the Fresh Expressions DNA to their local churches or special appointments.

The prayerful goal is to birth the Fresh Expressions NC Network—a diverse, core group of courageous, boundary-breaking leaders from the NC Conference committed to champion Fresh Expressions; and to organize a network of support to the leaders and churches who are already embodying Fresh Expressions or who are curious and committed to bring Fresh Expressions to their local churches or special appointments.

On March 11th, we had our first successful Fresh Expressions NC Network Virtual Informational Session. We were blessed to have Bishop Connie Shelton, Dr. Elaine Heath, Rev. Motoe Yamada Foor, Rev. Tim Catlett, Rev. Luke Edwards & Rev. Michael Beck providing leadership on the virtual session. And we thank God for those who signed-up to be involved with the Fresh Expressions movement.

Indeed, God is birthing something new in The United Methodist Church! The Pentecost Spirit is moving the people called Methodists in a mighty way—listening and learning to one another in re-imagining, collaborating, and creating a network of Fresh Expressions movement in the North Carolina Conference and beyond. We thank you for your courage, curiosity and commitment to journey with us on this new Spirit-led, organic and renewal movement. Please see the link: <https://fxum.org/>.

If you or anyone you know from the NC Conference may be interested in getting involved with Fresh Expressions movement, please email me at edejesus@nccumc.org. Finally, the next Fresh Expressions UM National Gathering will be on February 27-March 1, 2025 at Peachtree Road UMC in Atlanta. Looking forward to our shared journey and to what God's Spirit will do in the birthing of the Fresh Expressions NC Network! ✚



Breathing New Life

By Rev. Julia Hayes



Sometimes the Holy Spirit is so active in something it feels like God is just showing off. That's how God's work at Oleander UMC, now an extension campus of Wrightsville UMC called Wrightsville on Oleander, has felt. In the fall of 2022, Oleander UMC was having hard conversations about their future. At the same time, Wrightsville was desperate for more space to grow our ministry. God brought us together and used us to answer each other's prayers. Shepherded by our District Superintendent, Rev. Tara Lain, we discerned together that we would merge, and that the buildings on Oleander Drive would be used primarily for youth and outreach.

Wrightsville on Oleander consists of two buildings: the Fellowship Building and the Sanctuary Building. The Sanctuary Building is the original structure of Oleander UMC, and will continue to be a worship space—as it has for nearly 75 years. Our youth group will use this sacred space for their devotional time. We are also experimenting with creative forms of worship in this space, like the

Good Friday Stations of the Cross we hosted a few weeks ago. In addition, the Sanctuary Building will house a resource library, café, hangout space, and offices.

The Fellowship Building includes a full kitchen, a youth lounge, and a large multipurpose room. It will also house a warehouse-style space for use by our Outreach Committee. Specifically, it will become a "free store" where teachers and guidance counselors can "shop" for their classrooms and students.

While Wrightsville knew from the beginning that the space on Oleander Drive would be an incredible gift, we didn't realize how blessed we would be by the people of Oleander UMC. It was no coincidence that Oleander UMC chose to have their last independent worship service on Easter Sunday of 2023. By releasing control of their church and allowing its existing form to die, they embodied faith in the resurrection. Now, the Holy Spirit is breathing new life into the new thing we have become together! ✚



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