

## Ten Dollar Club



**New Faith Communities**

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

700 Waterfield Ridge Place

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# The Power of a Church's Origin Story



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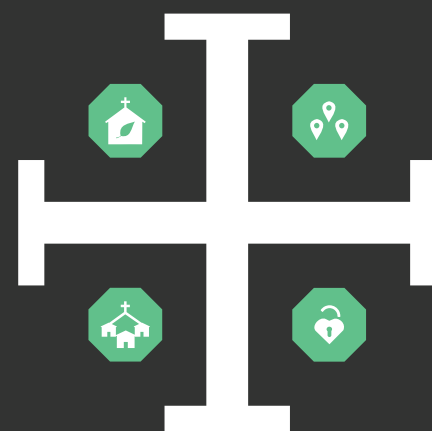
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**Rev. Hope Ledbetter-Bock**  
Associate Director of New Faith Communities & Clergy Life

If someone asked you about your church's origin story, what would you say? How did your church come into being? Was it an answer to prayer, an educated guess, the result of a dynamic visionary, or the faithful work of a passionate few?

Our origin stories matter. From the very first pages of Genesis, scripture is filled with origin stories that have been passed down from generation to generation, reminding us who we are and whose we are. Especially in disorienting seasons, these stories call us back to our roots. They remind us who we were created to be.

In this newsletter, you'll hear Rev. Brent Levy share the origin story of The Local Church, a newly chartered congregation in Pittsboro, NC, and you'll hear from retired pastor Rev. Jerry Smith, who reflects on why he continues to give in support of churches like The Local Church.

Brent and I first worked together about a decade ago at Christ UMC, before The Local Church's official origin story. Even

then, I could see seeds of The Local Church being planted. I remember Brent telling me that I'd probably get tired of him asking "why?" It struck me that not only did Brent care about the "why?" but he also cared about "the why behind the why?" or the deeper purpose for why and how we did things as a church. It has been a gift to see this holy curiosity take root in The Local Church's DNA as they are a church that knows their "why" deeply. They are a church that loves where they are—on purpose.

Rev. Jerry Smith and his wife Carolyn have been faithful members of the \$10 club for decades. They may not know it, but through their giving, they have been a part of the why behind the why that made the origin of The Local Church possible.

Friends, whether you know it or not, you, too, are a part of the why behind the why for countless churches across our conference. We hope you will dream with us about the churches that will write their origin stories in the decades to come because of your faithful stewardship. +

Give to the \$10 Club with this QR code!





## An Educated Guess

Rev. Brent Levy | Pastor, The Local Church

Eight years ago this August, a handful of faithful dreamers gathered for the very first time to pray about what would become The Local Church.

We met at Krista and John's house. Peggy and Paul brought casseroles. I brought a loaf of Hawaiian bread, some grape juice, and a bottle of wine called Educated Guess—because in truth, everything we were doing felt like one big educated guess (held up by a lot of prayer). It seemed fitting.

Local Tables (our version of small groups) wouldn't launch until the following spring. Weekly worship wouldn't begin for another two years.

But that night, before we shared Holy Communion together for the first time as a launch team, I asked what hopes they carried for this new faith community—and gave them space to respond.

Later that night, in my journal on August 6, 2017, I wrote:

*Everyone brought with them a different hope, yet there were still themes that emerged. Themes of impactful mission that's focused locally. The importance of children being*

*incorporated into the life of the community. A place of vibrancy and life and excitement where everyone belongs. So how might these all come together? I guess that's the work we'll begin to do together soon.*

Eight years later, that educated guess has become a chartered United Methodist congregation. And as I look back—something admittedly rare for me, since I'm usually so eager to dream about what's next—I'm overwhelmed with gratitude for how the hopes our team prayed into in 2017 have come to abundant life.

Because here's just a glimpse of what has happened: By God's grace, The Local Church has donated tens of thousands of diapers to families in need across Chatham County. Together with other area United Methodist congregations, we've worked to support students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. The Local Church has cleared teacher wish lists so educators wouldn't have to pay out of pocket for basic classroom supplies. We've written to lawmakers, hosted community feasts that raised thousands of dollars for local nonprofits, and helped bring Pittsboro's first-ever Pride Festival to life—welcoming more than 1,000 people.



And it's not just our outward witness. Inside our walls, our kids and youth ministry has grown from one classroom to four in just the past year. More than that, The Local Church has become a place where people who never thought they'd find themselves in a church have found belonging—a place to call home.

All of this is a testament to the Spirit's work through the North Carolina Conference and the Office of New Faith Communities, which not only gave us a foundation to build on but has equipped and empowered us every step of the way. And none of it would have been possible without the support of Christ United Methodist Church in Chapel Hill and the visionary

leadership of its lead pastors, who helped nurture this dream into reality.

From the beginning, we've carried Jeremiah's words as our North Star: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7).

At The Local Church, we put it like this: **Love where you are.**

Leaning into this mission, again and again, we've discovered—and bear witness to—the One who takes even our educated guesses and makes of them far more than we could ever ask or imagine. Thanks be to God. +



## A Rewarding Journey



When Jesus said, "the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few," he might have been talking about Leland, North Carolina. Leland is a rapidly growing community in Brunswick County. Since 2000, the United States population has increased by 18.7%, while Leland has grown by 1,576%. Despite this incredible growth, there is not a United Methodist Church within the city limits. People are hungry for what the United Methodist Church has to offer. We believe in personal transformation through relationship with Jesus and transforming the world to look more like the Kingdom of Heaven. We take scripture seriously and believe God wants us to engage it using reason, tradition, and our experience. We are rooted in tradition and the wisdom of the past, and constantly innovate to meet the present moment. At our best, the United Methodist Church is the sort of church that people are hungry for, but that few believe could exist.

I believe that the 30,542 people living within the Leland city limits deserve to have a church like that in their backyard. In partnership with Wrightsville UMC and the Office of New Faith Communities, I am thrilled to be a laborer sent out into the harvest!

— Rev. Jerry Smith | Retired UMC Pastor

Do you have a story like Rev. Jerry Smith to share with our team? Scan the QR code to share!



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