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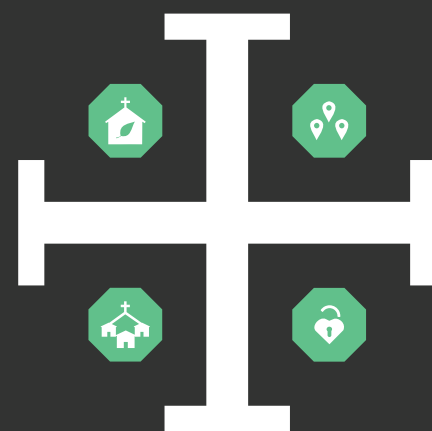
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 **NEW FAITH** COMMUNITIES

Summer 2026



Butterfly MOMENTS

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

For our May Common Learning Day, we partnered with the Center for Leadership Excellence who hosted a visioning workshop led by Dr. Margaret Brunson. During this workshop, she used the journey of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly as an analogy for the process of moving from dreaming and visioning to implementation.

Dr. Brunson explained that the caterpillar's first task is to diligently nourish itself with all the sustenance it will need for the journey ahead. As they head into the chrysalis stage, their bodies undergo a complete transformation. What is no longer needed dissolves away, and hormones spur the growth of their wings and other vital organs. From the outside, the chrysalis can look still or even lifeless, but inside, important work is taking place. When the transformation is complete, the butterfly struggles to slowly find its way out of the chrysalis, taking time to strengthen and dry its wings before finally taking flight into its new life as a butterfly.

As I have served with our Annual Conference the last two years, I have come to believe that we are living in a kind of chrysalis season ourselves. What we were is no longer, and God is inviting us into a new season that we cannot fully see yet. Right now, we're in the midst of doing the good and beautiful work of dreaming, being formed and reformed, and listening to where the Holy Spirit is leading us. It has been a privilege to get to witness and be a part of this work.

Though we don't know exactly what is ahead, it is clear that we have to center co-creating new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ. Our New Faith Communities Lead team has been looking across the conference at places where there are United Methodist deserts or demographic deserts, and we are working with the Bishop and cabinet to place and equip leaders with the resources they need to co-create new places for new people.

I am so grateful for the ways our New Faith Communities pastors are leading in this season. In many of these communities, we are already beginning to see glimpses of "butterfly moments" where the original vision for welcoming new people is beginning to take flight. In this newsletter, you will hear stories from each of our NFC pastors that reflect these moments of transformation and hope.

As I prepare to head back to the local church to serve as the new Lead Pastor of Duke Memorial UMC in Durham, I do so with deep hope for what is ahead for our Annual Conference. I look forward to the day, years from now, when we can look back and recognize how God was at work among us during these chrysalis years, forming and reforming us for what is next. I look forward to all of the butterfly moments still to come, including the ones we cannot yet even imagine. +

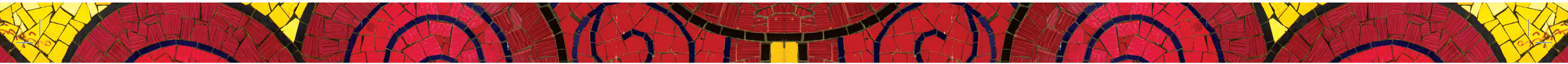


Giving Thanks for New Beginnings and Faithful Partners

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

Psalm 105 reminds us to give thanks to God and share stories of the work of the Holy Spirit! I want to start by giving thanks for Hope Ledbetter-Bock!! These past two years, she has offered her gifts and passion to support our new faith communities. We will miss her, but we trust that everything about her that made our team stronger will also be a gift to Duke Memorial UMC!

I also want to give thanks for our NFC pastors and partners! In this newsletter, you will find small glimpses of the many ways the Holy Spirit is moving as they each work alongside teams to co-create new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ! Thank you for your prayers and support!! +



For our church right now, co-creating new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ looks like ...



Haley Capps, Star UMC and Ellerbe UMC

"For my congregations, co-creating new places for new people looks like building creative ecumenical partnerships to meet urgent community needs and reenvisioning our legacy through dinner-church worship that meets people exactly where they are."

Grayson & Jacob Dye, Co-Pastors of Divine St UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people looks like a joyful blend of old and new. Embracing our identity as a 139-year-old New Faith Community by fostering missional connections through schools, local fellowship, and radical hospitality that welcomes every newcomer like family."



Kelley Finch, Mosaic UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people looks like blooming into a community center and sanctuary, where everything from community gardens and vegan meals to music jam sessions brings together a diverse family of all ages and identities to find deep connection and the empowerment of Jesus."

Saul Gastelum, Angier UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like building a 'bigger front porch', moving beyond traditional services to create welcoming spaces where diverse voices are heard, and strangers become friends through shared meals, fresh worship, and genuine community support."



Mark Gustafson, Grace UMC

"For our church, co-creating new places for new people looks like building a new building for our new worship home while simultaneously reaching beyond that building to serve our community through school partnerships, senior outreach, and consistent ministry to our neighbors in need."

Layne Harpine, Pine Valley UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like generating intentional community outreach and high-energy fellowship like karaoke and live music to missions and family meals in order to build relationships that welcome new military families and neighbors into the heart of our church."



Julia Hayes, The Grove UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like being a 'sycamore tree', building a community that helps our neighbors in Leland see Jesus clearly as we move toward our public launch and summer of small groups."

Marisol Hernandez, Village Church Rolesville UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people looks like an ever-expanding table where culture and faith are inseparable, gathering neighbors and family for monthly dinners where we laugh, pray, and ensure no one eats alone as we live out what it truly means to belong."



Seyun Hwang, Genesis UMC

"For us, Genesis, co-creating new places for new people looks like 'The Word Made Flesh,' our ESL program. Here, love is made tangible, visible and audible. Different languages and cultures serve as a bridge to connection rather than a cause for distance, creating a hospitable space together and sparking a holy curiosity for our neighbors to discover the heart of the Gospel."



Mark Lykins, Trinity Lighthouse UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like a season of 'fresh air' and a multicultural re-starting, breaking through old barriers to empower a diverse new leadership and a spirit of service where every voice and background helps lead our church forward."

Stephan Margeson, Knightdale UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people looks like becoming a 'heartbeat' for our community, deepening our partnership with Beaverdam Elementary and developing intentional, kid-friendly worship practices that ensure every family feels a profound sense of belonging in God's love."



Katelyn MacDonald, Benson Memorial UMC

"For us right now, co-creating new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ looks like exploring what it means to be a more inclusive community for LGBTQ+ people by reading books together, supporting our members and staff in the Triangle Pride Chorus, and hanging a welcome banner for Pride month this June."

Mary Frances McClure, Moyock UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like fostering interactive services where every person helps co-create the worship experience, making faith more accessible while opening our doors for a third summer to support our community through the Summer Literacy Initiative."



Grace McGee, St. Peters UMC and Hargrove Chapel UMC

"For me, co-creating new places for new people looks like honoring the legacy of those who came before us by keeping our community ministry in motion, loving our neighbors and loving God so that through our actions, others may truly know His love."

Kathy Newton-Dunton, John Wesley UMC

"For our team, co-creating new places for new people looks like bringing diverse communities together to be instruments of Jesus, bridging literacy gaps for young readers and strengthening families so that every child is empowered to 'Leap into Learning.'"



Cassidy Salter, Ware's Chapel UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people looks like expanding our physical and spiritual borders, renovating our space for greater accessibility while living out our call to be 'A Place for ALL' through hands-on service that shares God's inclusive love without barriers."

Ramon Wycoff, Elizabeth UMC

"For us, co-creating new places for new people means hosting 'Creekside Readers' in deep partnership with Swift Creek Elementary and with the support of sister United Methodist Churches in Johnston County, to change the trajectory of children's lives through literacy education, all while inviting the families of students and staff into the heart of our church as the body of Christ."



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