“When man (sic) came first out of the hands of the great Creator, clothed in body as well as in soul, with immortality and incorruption, there was no place for physic, or the art of healing.” John Wesley, *Primitive Physick*, or *An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*

Mr. Wesley’s best selling work wasn’t a compilation of his sermons. Arguably, the Wesleyan message that had the most impact in his day wasn’t one that he gave from a pulpit or even one that would have been found in the Religion section of Barnes and Noble. His little book, *Primitive Physick*, which he originally authored anonymously, Wesley attempted to make medical care (a luxury of the rich) accessible to the masses. It went viral and sold more copies than anything else he ever wrote. It is a little ironic that one of our best preachers’ best sellers isn’t explicitly about God, at all.

That’s not to say that it isn’t deeply theological. Every word of the book drips with the baptismal belief that the God we meet in Jesus is in the work of incorporating (embodying) mighty acts of salvation (healing). Every sentence is a crumb collected from the table which proclaims that any news isn’t good until it proclaims that God heals the sick, feeds the hungry and eats with sinners.

Wesley’s theology always had the whole person, the whole community, the whole creation in mind because it’s all God’s.

That’s what we mean when we say, “holistic mission.” Holistic mission is about continuing that inheritance that is ours as the children of the Wesleyan movement. Our care for people, place, and things is never easily divided into, “spiritual” or “physical”. Our mission work is never just to care for souls or bodies. Once God sent Jesus in the flesh, God’s mission became an eternally embodied spirituality.

What does that look like in action? Read on! This edition of our newsletter is filled with stories and examples of God’s holistic mission taking flesh among us. This is our humble offering to the God who, for our sake, was humbled into a body and healed us from the inside out.

Please support our planters with your prayers for communion to be celebrated in new ways in their lives and in their communities.

Charles Albright  Annette Ethridge  Cleve May  Jamie Thompson
Kyle Burrows  Randy Evans  Mary Frances McClure  Edgar Vergara-Millan
Jason Butler  Chris Jenkins  Kiley McGrady  Michael Williams
Hernica Cannon  Brent Levy  Robby Mills  Tyler Williams
Daniel Childs  Arthur Manigault  Wesley Neal
Paul Dunham  Rafael Martinez  Nick Rich

To GIVE or JOIN, please visit our website at: nccums.org/newfaithcommunities/category/newroomsociety
Open Table UMC’s story is a story of Holistic Mission. This began in 1942 when Trinity UMC was birthed in the Oakwood neighborhood near downtown Raleigh. After many years of thriving ministry, the church began to feel it was becoming disconnected from the community. So in 2016 it made the bold decision to re-launch as a completely new church dedicated to embracing the redemptive power of God for the whole community. Open Table was born—a new church building upon this foundation. Today, Open Table is a place where we love our neighbors, no exception. We love by our actions, by our words, and by our presence.

I’ve learned that the more I hear their stories, their dreams, their painful places, the more I see my story in theirs’, I see God’s fingerprint on their life. With all that seems wrong in the world today, you’d think that the more we looked and listened, the worse it would seem. I’m learning that the more I hear their stories, the more I see our story in theirs’. I see God’s fingerprint on their life.

While many of us limit our worship to songs and gatherings for worship in the sanctuary, one of the highest forms of worship can be found in ways that heal, restore and celebrate communion. For me this is a regular interaction with our neighbors. Who is our neighbor? We’ll never know if we don’t get out of the museum and meet them.

Let’s listen to the neighbors, and live wherever God sends us.

Love the Community

Many churches I’ve visited are suspicious of the community that surrounds their stained glass sanctuaries. The buildings have become museums instead of mission stations. No longer is there an openness to serve, but there is a fear that something will get stolen, damaged, or broken. We cannot accept somebody we have suspicion toward. When we are guarded, suspicious, and wary of somebody, they know it. We may think we are faking it, but we aren’t that good of an actor. The first step toward our church reaching our community is that we have to love our community. Get out of the building and prayer walk the neighborhood. Look for places where we can make a difference. Is there a senior adult who needs some assistance with their yard? Is there a single mom who needs her oil changed? The key, however, is not the service we provide but the stories we hear and the people we get to know. Everybody has a story. When we learn people’s stories it is so much easier to love them. This is not a one-time stroll; this is a regular interaction with our neighbors. Who is our neighbor? We’ll never know if we don’t get out of the museum and meet them.

Listen to your Neighbors

I have already hinted at the next step, listen to your neighbors. Listen with one ear toward our neighbor and the other toward God listening for what God is saying to us and to where God is leading us to go. God is always speaking, but so often we fail to listen. God is pushing us, cajoling us, and begging us to join Christ in the community, and yet we plug our ears fearing that it will be uncomfortable and inconvenient. I am certain the cross was uncomfortable and inconvenient, if Jesus could die for us, we can listen to our neighbor. We will hear stories of struggle and stories of hope. As I have listened to stories from people in struggling neighborhoods I have been humbled by the power of their faith and how it molds and shapes every part of their lives. I am convicted that I have become so self-reliant that I really cannot hold a candle to the faith of a grandmother who is trusting God for enough food to feed the two or three grandchildren who are living with her. Listen to your neighbors.

Live in the Community

Now I’m moving from reasonable to radical. If we really want our church to look like our neighborhood, then we must live in the neighborhood. My bet is there is a house for sale (or rent) right around the corner from the church. Oh it might not meet our standards, the yard may be too small (or way too large in a rural community!), the school district might not be the best one for our kids, and we may have concerns about safety…that sounds an awful lot like a mission field. If we are serious, I mean Jesus level, die to self, get over our personal preferences and do anything for the Kingdom serious, about celebrating and repairing communion in the community that surrounds us, then we must live in that community.

Gracious God help me to be fearlessly faithful to do whatever you call me to do. Amen