



January 2018

Dear North East District Family,

Happy New Year! 2018 is only a couple of days old, but I sincerely hope it has started out well for you. I'm excited about all the ways God will be able to use our faith communities in this new year.

Some of you may be familiar with a Canadian pastor named Carey Nieuwhof. He has an excellent blog on church leadership, growth, discipleship, and many other topics. He just recently released an article entitled *7 Disruptive Trends That Will Rule 2018*. You can find the entire post here: <https://careynieuwhof.com/7-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2018/>. I encourage you to read it together with your leadership teams and discuss it.

I won't go into all the details of the article, but there are three things that especially stood out to me:

First, Church needs to increasingly be "both/and." That's good news for us because Wesleyans are both/and people! Carey points out (wisely, I think) that churches need BOTH a building to which people can come AND strategies for reaching people outside the four corners of our church campuses. He wrote, "Bottom line? Churches who only think Sunday and who only think building will continue to shrink. In 2018, if coming to Christ means coming to your church in a set location and a set hour, you need a new strategy."

I know I probably sound like a broken record, but the day of the attractional church is over. Yes, we need to have a building, but it is imperative that we have an intentional, proactive strategy for leaving our campuses, meeting people where they are, and offering them Jesus. Refusing to engage in this kind of both/and strategy will likely mean eventual decline and closure. I firmly believe that we're not called to do that. We're called by Jesus to be His "Plan A" at work in the world, and there isn't a "Plan B."

Second, we have to come to grips with digital technology. Carey goes so far as to point out that we need BOTH digital AND analog, but most of our churches are only analog. It doesn't take a lot of money to begin a digital strategy for your church. Having a Facebook page for your church is free. Use a smart phone or tablet to Facebook Live your service at no cost. A digital strategy involves more than just that, but my point is that we can all do this, and we should.

Third, teams are vitally important. The days of the heroic, solo leader are over. In fact, they've been over. I'm a firm believer that every aspect of our churches should be led by and through teams. Jesus demonstrated this for us by creating an outstanding operational team we know as the disciples. I think we should follow His lead. Our district is led by an operations team of exceptional laity and clergy. I rely on these wise souls and together we set the mission, vision, values, and strategy for our district. When one person is leading ministry, the ministry is limited to the bandwidth of that single individual. The bandwidth increases so much more when a team is involved.

Check out Carey's article and talk about it with your leaders. I encourage you to put together a team to digest what your proactive strategy will be this year. To help with that, our district training event, also known as Equip 2018, is focusing on helping you engage people in your communities. It truly has an outstanding lineup of breakout sessions and teachers. You don't want to miss it. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

God bless you in the coming year! As John Wesley said with his dying words, "Best of all, God is with us!"

All God's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Therrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jay Therrell
Superintendent