



CONNECT  
CHURCH

# Connect Church

**Connect Church** helps rural churches strengthen their communities through asset-based community development. Connect Church has now served more than 100 churches across North Carolina since 2018. After completing the one-year coaching program, churches learn how to identify and mobilize local assets to create lasting change. Each year, a new cohort of church teams embarks on this journey, gaining practical tools, personalized coaching, and access to funding opportunities.

**Our vision** is a nationwide network of partners equipped to support rural churches as vital community institutions. Partners will launch localized, thriving versions of Connect Church through dedicated training, financial investment, and ongoing coaching. Participating churches will receive small implementation grants, matched by their own investment, reinforcing sustainability and shared ownership. Real-time evaluations will guide continuous refinement, adapting the program to diverse regional contexts. Churches will be fully engaged in the Connect Church model, strengthening rural ministries across the country.

## What We Offer

- **In-Person National Training & Support:** Hub partners receive support to start Connect Church in their state or region, including ongoing coaching.
- **Asset-Based Church Development:** Churches receive training and coaching in leveraging congregational strengths and community assets to create impactful missional engagement plans.
- **Cohort-Based Learning:** Church teams participate in a structured **eight-session** coaching process, peer engagement, and guided implementation strategies.
- **Extensive Partner Investment:** Hub partners **may** receive funding to provide three Connect Church cohorts, and engage in a national peer network.
- **Scalable Rural Church Engagement:** Denominations, networks, and organizations are equipped to support rural churches with proven methods tailored to their regional needs.

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*“By recognizing and leveraging the unique gifts, talents and resources present in our midst, we not only fulfill the church’s mission but also ignite a ripple effect of transformation that empowers individuals, nurtures relationships, and breathes life into our shared vision of love, service, and purpose.”*

**-Minister**



## Hub Partner Commitment

- Program Oversight & Leadership - Provide strategic leadership to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of Connect Church in the region.
- Provide Monthly Coaching - Recruit and equip coaches to mentor church teams through training, 8 monthly in-person coaching sessions, and strategic guidance.
- Recruit & Support Participating Churches - Identify and onboard churches, ensuring they are prepared to engage in asset-based community development and sustained missional work.
- Manage & Oversee Implementation Grants - Administer and track \$5,000 implementation grants, ensuring effective use in launching or expanding church-led community initiatives.
- Provide Post-Grant Coaching & Sustainability Support - Offer ongoing coaching and resources to help churches sustain their initiatives and navigate challenges beyond the grant period.
- Lead Program Evaluations & Continuous Improvement - Collect and analyze program data, collaborating with the NC Rural Center to refine and strengthen Connect Church's impact.

## The Process

July 1, 2026 - Hub Partner Pre-Application Opens

October 1, 2026 – Hub Partner Applications Sent to Selected Pre-Applicants

December 2026 – Hub Partner Acceptances Issued

January 2027 – Onboarding for New Hub Partners

August 2027 – Hub Partner Launches Connect Church Cohort

## A Story of Success:

**The Carteret Mother's Care Program St. Peter's United Methodist Church**  
– *Morehead City, NC*

St. Peter's United Methodist Church in Morehead City, NC, partnered with the community to address food insecurity among pregnant mothers and newborns. Through the Connect Church Program, they developed the Carteret Mother's Care Program, now serving 32 prenatal mothers with nutritionist-designed food boxes. After discovering Connect Church through the NC Rural Center, Bill Douglass and the church team identified a critical need for maternal nutrition. With support from local healthcare providers, they launched the initiative, overcoming challenges to improve maternal and fetal health. Partnerships with organizations like the North Carolina Medical Society and Carteret OB-GYN Associates have been key to the program's success. St. Peter's hopes to inspire other churches to take similar action in their communities.

**If you have any questions about this program or the application, contact Faith in Rural Communities Senior Program Manager Darren Crofts at [dcrofts@ncruralcenter.org](mailto:dcrofts@ncruralcenter.org).**