# Romans 12

## We who are many are one body in Christ.

Produced by the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church to communicate effective principles and practices demonstrated by congregations that are actively making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

These congregations are marked by:

- Clarity around the mission and vision of the congregation.
- Practice of spiritual disciplines, both corporately and individually.
- Nurture of growth in discipleship through mutual support and accountability.
- Cultivation of intentional and mutual relationships with the most vulnerable—the poor, children, the imprisoned, the powerless.
- Consistent concern for inviting people into relationship with Jesus Christ, combined with wise practices for initiating them into the Body of Christ.
- Connectional relationships that facilitate participation in God's mission of global transformation.
- Shared clergy and lay leadership.

## Food for Thought

An interesting observation from the Romans 12 surveys is how often food is mentioned. When asked to indicate how important the ministries listed in Matthew 25 (feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting prisoners) were to the congregation, the response that was ranked as very important by the most people was "feeding the hungry."

When asked in an open-ended question to reflect upon the outreach ministries of the congregation, over one-third of the respondents mentioned ministries related to food. These included a wide variety of ministries such as a mobile barbeque to feed the homeless, sponsoring CROP walks, meals-on-wheels, feeding programs operated out of the church kitchen, Thanksgiving dinners for the lonely, sponsoring group food buying programs, a Christmas cookie giveaway, and breakfast ministries. Many churches either operate their own food pantry or support a community food bank. Several churches mentioned that they house and are the primary coordinators of the community food bank.

Numerous people mentioned special food related activities sponsored by the congregation that were important community events. More than one person said their church was known for "good food."

With the emphasis on food it is perhaps not surprising that fasting is not a frequently practiced spiritual discipline. While over 60% of the respondents believe that most people in their congregation pray every day, more than 80% said that they rarely or never fast as a spiritual discipline.

## Some Questions for Discussion

- In what ways is food used to express your congregational identity? What role does food play in your congregation's plan for forming disciples?
- What are the opportunities for members of the congregation to be introduced to the spiritual discipline of fasting? How might this enhance your congregation's ministries related to food?
- Using "good food" as a metaphor, what is the "good food" your congregation provides to its members and to the community? How could you make it more "nutritious"?

**For more information about the Romans 12 Project contact Deb Smith at dsmith@gbod.org.**

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