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.

Not Just For Information

Christian education and formation at Glen Mar UMC in Ellicott City, MD is the hinge between growing and serving, knowledge and service, Bible information and living a faith that's fit for life, and discovering spiritual gifts and using them for God's purposes. The spiritual discipline of Bible study is the cohesive center. All the means of grace, in the words of one of the pastors, are not just for information but for living out faith and for growth. Glen Mar's mission statement is "Praise God, grow disciples, serve the world."

To that end, all members are expected to attend worship every week, participate in Bible study, belong to a small group for support and accountability, tithe or grow toward tithing, employ their spiritual gifts in at least one area of ministry, and to share their faith. The staff models the small group expectations by being in groups as participant/learners rather than leaders. In a church that is in the midst of building a new home campus on which they plan to develop Glen Mar U. with core classes over a three year span, those expectations are bearing fruit. The lead pastor at Glen Mar notes that there is nothing that only the senior pastor can do; church participants are empowered to take initiative; groups and classes are highly participatory with facilitators who are teacher/learners.

Evidence of that fruit is seen as people make connections with the biblical story and its claim on their lives and then step up their commitments, their giving, and their sense of connectedness. The congregation, while in the throes of major transition, sees an upward change in enthusiasm and enhanced sense of worth. Youth are bringing their friends and they want to be there. Members see themselves as called to ministry in daily life, not just to the church, so there is more engagement in ministry and mission.

Some Questions for Discussion

- Glen Mar has specific and well-stated expectations for spiritual growth among the staff and the congregation. What are your congregation's core values and specific expectations for how to live out those values?
- The staff models the spiritual disciplines of support and accountability by being in groups as learner/participants. How well do your leaders express and model those disciplines?
- What personal spiritual growth goals do you have for yourself?

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In 2007 church leaders throughout The United Methodist Church in the U.S. were invited to identify churches that demonstrated the vision of discipleship described in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Over 200 churches were surveyed or visited. Issue #16. © 2009 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.