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.

Be What You Are Trying to Teach Me

The vision of First United Methodist Church is a Love Takeover that:

- *Celebrates and demonstrates God's gift of diversity,*
- *Transforms and nurtures the children of God through Christian disciplines, and*
- *Builds a multicultural community of healing and hospitality by reaching out to all.*

First UMC in Hyattsville, MD is a little "United Nations" with a membership hailing from the US, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere. With a multicultural community, Hyattsville recognizes the great value of nurturing disciples in small groups. The pastor expands the membership vows to make clear that worship and study are expected. In addition, they focus on the practice of spiritual disciplines—prayer, meditation, fasting, study—in small groups.

The teachers and leaders of groups are expected to model faithful discipleship and Christian spiritual practices—"to be what you're trying to teach me." Teachers and leaders must mirror an understanding and passion for what they are asked to do and to assume their ministry as if it is their primary and only role at the church. In so doing, they are expected to be a spiritual guide, praying daily for their students and group members; to encourage them to be engaged and active; and to nurture themselves through a group experience.

Training for teachers and leaders is more than sharing content. Together they share expectations in a spirit of mutual accountability and covenant in a structure akin to the early Methodist class meeting. They receive coaching and support and have the opportunity to review with the pastor what goes on in their classes and groups. The goal is to help all members to identify their own spiritual gifts and to employ them for the benefit of the community.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What formal, expressed expectations do you have of your teachers and group leaders in terms of their own growth and Christian nurture?
- What infrastructure of support and accountability is in place so that newly recruited teachers and leaders know they are not on their own?
- How are teachers and leaders taught and encouraged to "be what you're trying to teach me"?

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EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES

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