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.

What Do the New People Say?

The following description of Harvest UMC in Bradenton, FL comes from someone who has been a member less than one year.

"HUMC is viewed as a progressive church in the community. It is an open and welcoming congregation. It lives and practices the lessons of the Bible and the example of Christ. HUMC is noted for its charitable and community service in the local and regional community.

The Eucharist is shared at every worship service. Prayer, both silent meditation and spoken group prayer, is practiced frequently during the worship service and at all levels of smaller groups and meetings. One of the most significant things about this congregation, is that worship is coupled with education and reflection.

Another significant item is the way in which the congregation supports its membership and welcomes all to participate. This is done in a spirit of love and belonging that encourages people to look deeper into their spiritual life and supports them in moving further along the Christ Path. This is accomplished in subtle ways such as Sunday morning greeters and the friendly faces at the Hospitality Hub to more direct invitations to participate in the worship service, join a small group, or serve in some other capacity in support of the church.

HUMC provides formal training for those members who choose to accept a leadership role in the church. HUMC offers a myriad of various small groups and classes providing the opportunity to develop further as a disciple in an environment that is conducive for you as an individual. The co-pastors and lay leadership set an example of discipleship and challenge the congregation to find their own path and use their talents as disciples.

HUMC has developed a number of outreach ministries and community service opportunities. The congregation strongly supports those ministries to ensure success of the mission and to further advance and support those who participate."

Some Questions for Discussion

- How do new members describe your congregation?
- What opportunities are provided for new members to share their experiences of the church with congregational leaders?

To visit the web site of Harvest UMC go to www.harvest-umc.org

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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 #26. © 2009 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.