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.

That All May Worship

We can do all sorts of things to welcome people; however, if our church facilities are not free of physical barriers, our actions of hospitality may be negated. First United Methodist Church in Moorestown, NJ has taken this seriously and gone to the next level of hospitality by being certified by the National Organization on Disabilities as an "Accessible Congregation."

Their website states: Our church has been certified by the National Organization on Disabilities as an "Accessible Congregation" based on our commitment to the following principles:

- In our congregation, people with disabilities are valued as individuals, having been created in the image of God.
- Our congregation is endeavoring to remove barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude that exclude people with disabilities from full and active participation.
- People with and without disabilities are encouraged in our congregation to practice their faith and use their gifts and talents in worship, service, study, and leadership.
- Our church will work to remove all barriers that restrict full participation of people with disabilities in our congregation.

In addition, First United Methodist Church offers the following accommodations throughout its church facility:

- Special needs and van-accessible parking
- Special seating in the sanctuary for wheelchair-bound worshippers and their companions
- Assisted listening devices
- Power-assisted entry doors
- Handicapped-accessible restrooms
- Large-print bulletins

Some Questions for Discussion

- Who are the people in your congregation who have quietly backed away from participation from church life? What role might accessibility have played in their diminishing participation?
- How is your congregation being proactive to encourage people with disabilities to use their talents in worship, service, study, and leadership?
- Do you use your website and other communication methods to make potential visitors and newcomers aware of accessibility accommodations available to them?

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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 #30. © 2009 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.