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.

Worship for All God's People

Fulton Seimers Memorial/Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf in Baltimore, Maryland knows how to include all participants in worship.

- The worship space is accessible, and people are ready to help those who need help to get in or out.
- Worship begins with the words "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One." These words are spoken and signed in American Sign Language by the lay leader, and at each naming there is a loud clashing of a cymbal that all can feel, if not see and hear.
- The deaf choir leads the congregation in a signed song using dance and American Sign Language accompanied by a steady and powerful drumbeat. The words of the song are also spoken by an interpreter and typed onto a screen as they are spoken.
- All worship leaders wear vestments or clothing that contrasts with the color of their skin so their hands can be seen clearly against the background as they sign.
- A live camera and projector produce real-time, enlarged images of everything being said and signed from the pulpit onto a large screen in the front of the worship space, right behind the communion table.
- Other interpreters use Tactile American Sign Language (TASL) to communicate everything that is happening and being said to worshipers who are both deaf and blind.

At any given time, there are up to six different ways the actions of worship are communicated: ASL, TASL, words on a screen, spoken interpretation, speech by worship leaders, and the live feed to the front screen. Though simultaneous, none is distracting to these worshipers. Each knows how to connect with the form that works best.

Result? Worship in this congregation reflects the richness of the ways God has given us to communicate and the diversity of Christ's body in culture, age, ethnicity, and ability. Heaven may be like this!

Some Questions for Discussion

- How do you make worship accessible to all—not just as viewers but participants?
- Does your current use of technology support or distract from the aims of worship? How do you know?

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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 #32. © 2009 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.