

# 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.

## Serving a Divided Congregation

For many congregations, worship is divided between two services. Sometimes the divide occurs over musical style and content such as contemporary versus traditional. Others may choose similar services in style and content but one service is regarded as the main service, with choir, instrumentalists, and full liturgy. The other may be somewhat reduced, perhaps referred to as “the second service.” In either of these two models, it is natural for two different congregations to develop over time.

Perry United Methodist Church in Perry, Georgia has chosen another way, namely to treat its two traditional services identically and equally. Jane Kimbrel, Director of Music Ministries and Organist says, “I believe that the success of the worship experience is primarily due to the commitment level of the worship participants, who are committed to doing things in twos. The Sanctuary Choir sings and an instrumentalist plays in both services. The service music is identical. If the handbells ring or the children, youth or older adult choir sings, they are committed to participating in both services. Acolytes and crucifers participate in two services. Communion is served at both services monthly; we offer two Christmas Eve communion candlelight services; and Christmas cantatas are even performed twice on a Sunday morning in December.”

Perry UMC has chosen to do traditional worship with excellence out of its congregational identity. They know who they are and what worship suits them best. “We recognize that we are a traditional church, we offer traditional hymns and anthems with excellence, and do not attempt to offer anything otherwise.” The sanctuary is normally full at both services, averaging slightly over 500 combined. Church members freely invite and bring visitors to worship, and there is a high level of commitment by the music and worship leaders. In 2008 Perry UMC experienced the largest net gain in membership in the Americus District of the South Georgia Conference.

## Some Questions for Discussion

- If your church offers multiple worship services, are they more similar or different in content and style? Why?
- How would you characterize the identity of your congregation?
- Do your worship style and content reflect your congregation’s identity?

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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 #43. ©2010 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.