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.

GBOD®
EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES

Nurturing Faith in the Middle Adult Years

Think about an adult you know who falls into the middle adult years—35 to 65 years of age, give or take a few years. Adults in this age range have small children, teenagers, young adult children, grandchildren, and no children. These mid-life adults may be caring for aging parents, with the help of family or all alone. Whatever their situation, these mid-life adults are busy people!

So how can congregations nurture these hard-working adults as disciples of Jesus Christ? How do we provide mutual support and accountability? One of the primary ways is through small groups.

Sunday school classes and small groups are found in the majority of Romans 12 congregations. Those with strong ministries with mid-life adults intentionally initiate these classes and small groups for the purpose of Christian discipleship and have developed plans for helping newcomers find a class or small group. They also provide classes and small groups along a continuum from basic, introductory classes to classes and small groups designed for adults who are experienced in the faith. The intent is to invite adults into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ and into more loving service to those in need. Cornerstone UMC in Caledonia, MI has identified several "core classes." Evangelical UMC in Greenville, OH describes faith formation as a "Discipleship Pathway." In some of these congregations, a certain number of classes or experiences are required before adults can officially "join" the church.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What opportunities do mid-life adults have to develop significant relationships with mature Christians in your congregation?
- If you asked mid-life adults in your congregation where they find help in dealing with the deepest issues of life, how would they respond? What does this indicate about your congregational ministries?
- Do most mid-life adults view your congregation as a place where they are "used-up" attending meetings, serving on committees, and so forth or as a place where they are "filled-up" with supportive relationships, opportunities to serve in meaningful ways, and small groups that help them make meaning of life experiences?

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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 #9. © 2009 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations. To subscribe to this newsletter or for copies of previous newsletters go to http://www.gbod.org/Romans12