

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.

Hope and Renewal

McKendree United Methodist Church, a historical downtown congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, has experienced a steady growth in worship attendance over the last few years. Rev. Stephen Handy, senior pastor, believes the following items have contributed to this growth, making McKendree UMC a place of hope and renewal.

1. Everyone is asked to be in a “life group” (small group) of no more than eight people. Groups meet weekly and are designed to be missional, disciple forming, nurturing, and accountable. Life group members often invite others to join.
2. The church is multicultural and multigenerational, with two services, contemporary and traditional. People want to be connected to God, so the church avoids making the style of worship an obstacle by offering choices.
3. We talk about spiritual disciplines a lot, but also now more and more about generosity—not just money, but time, work, energy, and prayer.
4. The word is out on the streets that McKendree invites diversity, and a diverse church is a healthy church. The worship and small groups encourage a holistic approach to health—mind, body, and spirit. We also provide a wellness clinic, a community organic rooftop garden, and a free clothing closet.
5. McKendree collaborates with other entities such as the Veterans Administration and the Homeless Commission. We are on the streets and in the community, not just in our building.
6. We meet people where they are. Staff spend time engaging people in conversation on the streets and in the downtown coffee shops. Each week “The Encounter” offers a music, message, and missional challenge in a downtown coffee shop.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What is the “word on the street” about your congregation?
- How are you encouraging people to be healthy—in mind, body, and spirit?
- How are you encouraging a spirit of generosity in your congregation?

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