

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.

Sack Lunches, Socks, and Holy Communion

After Hours, a ministry of St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Denver, Colorado, is described as “church for people who don't go to church.” Pastor Jerry Herships, who was a bartender and entertainer in a former career, knew that people who work late at night find it difficult to go to church on Sunday morning. So *After Hours* starts later than usual Sunday morning services. The gathering attracts young adults and people who work at night. *After Hours* meets in a mall several blocks from the church.

Worship at *After Hours* includes Scripture meditation, table-group discussions of the content, and an extended time of prayer. The prayer time starts with two full minutes of complete silence—a rare experience for most people in the world today. Then people go to one of several prayer stations.

There are usual stations for reflection and meditative exercises as well as one prayer station where people make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches! This active prayer is popular as people build sack lunches that are delivered to people who need food. The church started distributing fifty lunches and now distributes one hundred lunches, along with new socks and communion, twice a week. Visits to the park to distribute lunches are building new relationships. The ministry involves students from the Wesley Foundation at the Denver University and other congregations have joined by serving food other days of the week.

Several people come to church early to make some of the lunches before worship. Jerry says, “We started as worship with an outreach component, and now I wonder if we have become outreach with a worship component.”

Some Questions for Discussion

- Where are the “people who don't go to church” in your community? How might your congregation connect with these people?
- How does your congregation connect spiritual practices and action?
- How does your congregation connect worship and outreach?

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