

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.

Something Spiritual Happens Here

Every Sunday morning at about eight o'clock a small group of leaders gathers to pray at Chapel Hill United Methodist Church in Mansfield, Ohio. The team spends several minutes sharing joys and concerns and then begins their prayers. They pray at every pew in the sanctuary, as they remember the needs in the congregation and the community. Then the team lifts up specific ministries of the congregation. They discuss possible ministry opportunities and decisions that need to be made, and they pray for guidance. After about 45 minutes to an hour, the team concludes with the Lord's Prayer.

Rev. Beverly Hall, the pastor, says that this intentional time of prayer has helped the team grow spiritually. The team members are more confident in praying aloud and look forward to these "conversations with God." She believes that these prayers help guide the leadership in decision-making and create an awareness of need. The team responds to needs that have been identified in their prayer time. For example, the church provided support for two families in the community at Christmas. Rev. Hall says, "The church senses there is something different; something spiritual is happening to us."

Some Questions for Discussion

- How does your leadership team model the importance of prayer to the congregation?
- In what ways does the congregational prayer life guide the decision making process of your congregation?
- What opportunities are provided for congregational leaders to pray aloud in worship and other ministry settings? What additional training and experiences do leaders in your congregation need to help them be more effective as prayer leaders?

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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 #75 © 2011 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.