

Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

Toward a Richer Sacramental Life

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.

Hayes Memorial United Methodist Church in Fremont, Ohio is on a journey to enrich its spiritual life by increasing the frequency of celebrating Holy Communion. The journey has included meetings, study, prayer, sermons, teaching, answering questions, and responding to concerns. Three major concerns emerged, and each was addressed in appropriate ways.

Some believed weekly communion was not part of the Protestant tradition. Patient teaching about the early church and the widespread practice of weekly communion among the earliest Protestants, plus reminders of John Wesley's teaching to receive Holy Communion as often as possible helped to allay these concerns.

Others worried that more frequent celebration would make worship last too long. The pastor, the Rev. G. Alan Brown II, and the other worship planners used existing Communion Sundays to demonstrate how they could lead worship including communion that stayed within typical time limits.

Finally, some were afraid that more frequent celebration would make Holy Communion less significant. Here, sermons and small group learning about the meaning of the sacrament (Christ coming to and offering himself to us in bread and cup) and the nature of what makes something significant (infrequency or the promised encounter with Christ) opened new doors.

After 18 months of study, teaching, and conversation, Hayes Memorial began celebrating communion weekly in both of its services, contemporary and traditional. In just a few months several improvements were evident. A number of church members commented that they now experience Holy Communion as a moment to encounter Christ in their lives and that they understand grace on a deeper level because they receive it each week in a tangible form through the bread and cup. The congregation has also seen an increase in younger people entering into church life, some of whom specifically say they have chosen this church because it not only offers life-applicable preaching and teaching but also sends them out each week strengthened for daily life with the body and blood of Christ.

Questions for Discussion

- What could your congregation do that would enrich its spiritual life? What objections might be raised? How could you respond to those objections appropriately?
- What steps might your congregation take to make Holy Communion an even more spiritually enriching experience?

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