

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.

The Love Feast

Fairmount Avenue United Methodist Church is a medium sized congregation in St. Paul, Minnesota. Covenant Discipleship groups have been part of their ministry of accountable discipleship since 2007. Currently approximately 45 people participate in several Covenant Discipleship groups. Each group develops a covenant that includes things such as regular Scripture study, prayer, participation in acts of compassion, and so forth. The groups meet weekly to support and hold each other accountable as Christian disciples.

Like all small groups, Covenant Discipleship groups require intentional pastoral and congregational support. Every three months at Fairmount Avenue United Methodist Church all members of the various Covenant Discipleship groups are invited to a time of fellowship and worship. This “Quarterly Conference” is a time for the members of the various groups to share stories and give testimony to how participating in the group has helped them to grow in holiness of heart and life. They share some of the problems and challenges each group encounters, and how they deal with them.

The Quarterly Conference closes with a Love Feast. In the 18th and 19th centuries the Love Feast was a very important expression of Methodist spirituality. John Wesley borrowed and adapted it from the Moravians. The Love Feast is an informal time of worship that includes prayer, hymn singing, Scripture, preaching, testimony, giving to benefit the poor, and sharing bread and water. Since it is not sacramental, the Love Feast is often lead by a lay person. It is a time for Covenant Discipleship group members to give personal testimony about their experience and struggles with God and discipleship.

At Fairmount Avenue UMC the Love Feast continues to be a powerful means of grace that encourages members who are striving to grow in holiness of heart and life with the support and accountability of their Covenant Discipleship groups.

Questions for Discussion

- How does your congregation help members to be accountable for their Christian discipleship?
- What ministries of your congregation might be enhanced by including a Love Feast?

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