

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 in 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 ROMEOs at Warrens Corners

How do you start a vital men's group in a small, rural congregation? The men of Warrens Corners United Methodist Church in Lockport, New York, who call themselves "ROMEOs," have discovered an answer that works for them.

The men of the church come from a variety of backgrounds including the local auto plant, farming, military, education, and health care. Most have attended church together for a long time. Several of these men grew up together. But unlike the women in the church, they weren't connected or connecting much with each other.

For three years the church tried to get a men's group started. The pastor tried several tactics that didn't work. He invited them to get together for a study, or a Saturday breakfast gathering, or even working together on a project for a neighbor.

Then one day he asked a couple of the men if they might schedule lunch together sometime. They replied, "Yeah, we can do that. Where should we go?" This simple invitation birthed the Retired Old Men Eating Out (ROMEo).

As the pastor describes it, "Once a month six to ten, mostly retired men, meet at a local restaurant to catch up, tell lies, and share a meal together. Out of consideration they ask me to say grace, and I know enough to keep it short." He does, and then they all talk together.

Now their friendships are real. They check on each other in the hospital and make sure the guy with a bad hip gets a ride to lunch. They are gentle with the eldest who has dementia, and they don't have to be asked to work at the annual roast beef or turkey dinners. They have a real relationship with their church, in part because they are now "church" to each other.

Questions for Discussion

- How do the men of your congregation connect with one another for mutual support and shared ministry?
- The power of the ROMEOs is in their relationships developed by meeting regularly and "watching over one another in love." How might you generate more opportunities for people to offer simple support and accountability to each other?

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