

# 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.

## Partners in Ministry

What would it look like for two denominations to combine resources and enter into a partnership of sharing God's love and grace in a community? In the spring of 2010, Marshfield United Methodist Church in Marshfield, Massachusetts, was moving toward closing. Despite their great facility, housing a popular preschool, and having a prime location on a busy road, the members of Marshfield UMC could no longer support the building and a pastor's salary. At the same time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) had sent a young pastor to serve as a mission developer in the growing Boston suburb.

While sipping coffee over several meetings at the local coffee shop, the pastor of Marshfield UMC and the ELCA pastor developed a friendship and began to dream of a partnership and possible resurrection for the dying church. This dream became a reality as Sanctuary was formed becoming one of the first official partnerships of the UMC and ELCA, with the ELCA providing pastoral salary support and the UMC providing the church and parsonage facilities of the former Marshfield UMC. (In 2009 the UMC and ELCA entered a Full Communion relationship.)

The name *Sanctuary* was an intentional statement of the newly combined community's vision to create safe, sacred space where people from a variety of backgrounds are able to connect to others and God and then respond to all God is already doing in their community and the world.

The partnerships for Sanctuary did not stop with the UMC and ELCA. The building has become a community center for many other organizations in town and a hub for joint mission and outreach projects. This summer they are expanding their community outreach to include Popsicle and Play days at their church playground, and they are in the process of creating walking trails on church property.

## Questions for Discussion

- Where are there opportunities for your congregation to share resources with other churches or organizations in your community?
- Is your congregation duplicating ministry that is being done well by others in your community? How could the impact of these ministries be multiplied if you partnered with those who are engaged in a similar ministry?

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