

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.

Finding the Jewel

When CrossRoads United Methodist Church in Phoenix, Arizona, decided to intentionally connect with the growing Hispanic population in their community, it used an unusual strategy that has resulted in a great mix of people in worship and ministry.

The pastor reports, “Instead of focusing on a Spanish-language service that reaches first-generation immigrants, we decided to focus on the second generation. And here is the jewel—when second generation children come to church, they bring their parents, children, and grandchildren.”

Having at least one parent who was born outside of the United States, often these second-generation children of immigrants primarily speak English and serve as the bridge between U.S. culture and the culture of their parents' homeland.

As CrossRoads UMC tried this new approach, many second-generation immigrants brought their friends and family with them to church. Many grandparents who did not speak English found that the church was a great place for them to practice speaking English. Far more importantly, these first-generation immigrants were grateful to be able gather with their children and grandchildren in a place that understood the dynamics of immigrant families and the importance of worshipping and praying together.

As the pastor says, “If Hispanic families go to Spanish-speaking churches, they often lose their children to the English-speaking culture as the children choose to attend English-speaking congregations. But when the parents go to English-speaking churches, their children remain, and their family community is together. This is more important than language. And the church becomes a place for learning the language of their children.”

Questions for Discussion

- How does your congregation listen to the heartfelt needs of people in your community?
- What “common-sense” strategies does your congregation have in place for reaching your community? How might those strategies change if you examined those strategies from a different perspective?

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