

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.

Adopt-A-Heart

Several years ago some concerned members of Crieveewood United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, realized how separated and disconnected the older generations were from the youngest members of the congregation. Each week the children would gather on the lower level of the church for their programs while the older adults participated in classes and worship on the ground level of the building. Without an elevator or a unified ministry to bring them together, the older adults had few opportunities to interact with the children. As the church paid attention to this discovery, they heard God calling them to bring the generations together.

In response Crieveewood UMC created the Adopt-A-Heart ministry. On a designated Sunday, numbered paper hearts are placed around the sanctuary. During the worship service members of the congregation are invited to take a heart. At the end of the service the hearts are exchanged for an information sheet that includes a child's name and picture (provided with parental permission). The adult then contacts the child through the parents and makes arrangements to sit together in church or go to lunch with the family after the service.

This ministry has nurtured many intergenerational relationships. Families begin to know the older people as they take dinner to their homes, make plans to eat ice cream together, or pick up the heart partner to attend a child's soccer game or dance recital. The child is given the gift of a mentor, faith guide, and friend. Many appreciate their newly created relationships so much that the heart partners remain closely connected far beyond the end of the initial commitment period.

By paying attention to their context and prayerfully discerning how God is calling them to bring the generations in their church family together, Crieveewood UMC has created an intergenerational model that nurtures growth in discipleship while cultivating intentional and mutual relationships among people of different ages.

Questions for Discussion

- When is the entire body of Christ together in your congregation?
- How does your congregation intentionally create a space for different generations to nurture and support each other?
- How is God calling you to participate in intergenerational ministry that affirms the presence of all of God's children as part of the body of Christ?

Tanya Eustace is the Director of Children and Intergenerational Ministries at the General Board of Discipleship. You can contact her at teustace@gbod.org.



Romans 12 Newsletter. Issue #206. © 2014 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this newsletter for use in United Methodist congregations. This newsletter is provided as a service of the General Board of Discipleship and is funded through World Service apportionment giving by local United Methodist congregations.