

Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

Produced by Discipleship Ministries, 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.

A Garden for the Community

Eden Prairie United Methodist Church is a mid-size suburban congregation located southwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota. One of the congregation's goals is to live their discipleship through outreach as a congregation and as individuals. To reach that goal the congregation works to explore the groups and needs of the community and to identify options for specific action to address those needs.

The community boasts many large homes with well-kept yards. It is not unusual to spy pools, tennis courts, and the occasional private basketball court. Upon visiting Eden Prairie one would assume that poverty and hunger are not problems that residents face. Yet the congregation discovered that access to good quality fresh produce was limited for low-income people and families in the community.

The congregational leadership had participated in the Healthy Church Initiative a few years ago. As a part of this process, members had been considering ways the congregation could meet a neighborhood need. Realizing the church owned a lot of land that was not being used, they decided to use some of the church's property for a community vegetable garden, thereby providing fresh produce for those who needed it. EPUMC members volunteered for planting, weeding, and harvesting duties. The Minnesota Vikings grounds keeper even showed up with his rototiller to prepare the garden for planting.

All of the vegetables from the garden are donated to People Reaching Out to People (PROP), a local service agency. Over two thousand pounds of tomatoes, beans, peppers, and other vegetables were harvested and donated to PROP in Eden Prairie's first year of gardening! Check out photos from this year's garden on the church's website: <http://www.prairiechurch.org>.

Questions for Reflection

- How is your congregation discerning what God is up to in your neighborhood?
- How is your congregation making a difference in the lives of your neighbors?
- What is your congregation doing to be good news for the poor of your community?

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