

# Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

## Mission Here At Home

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.

Evangelical United Methodist Church in Huntington, Indiana is located in an area that continues to decline in population and economics. Yet this congregation, which averages 215 in worship, is one of only 117 United Methodist congregations in the United States to have had three straight years (2010, 2011, 2012) in which there was at least one profession of faith, five people in Covenant Discipleship Groups, at least 10 participants in Vacation Bible School, at least one community outreach ministry and one mission team. The congregation has also experienced increases in attendance in worship and spiritual formation opportunities for all ages, all while also paying 100% or more of apportionments.

Each January the staff, church council members, and other church leaders gather for a training day on a Saturday. This day functions partly as orientation for new leaders and partly as a time of visioning and setting direction by all of the leaders in the congregation, lay and clergy. At the 2012 training day, church council leaders noted that the congregation had a strong history of financial support and sending mission teams to a variety of mission projects outside of Huntington. However, as a congregation they were doing very little to help their people engage with the wider community. They resolved to change that.

Since that decision to connect with their community, the congregation:

- Adopted an elementary school where their Director of Spiritual Formation is the principal
- Laid the groundwork to create "Mission Huntington," a weeklong initiative launched in 2013 and repeated in 2014. Both years over 100 volunteers from the congregation, which averages 215 in worship, gave over 2000 hours of time in collaboration with local community agencies to provide hands-on service in the community
- Hosted a Vacation Bible School program that serves families in low-income apartment housing a few blocks from the church. Out of that experience they have also hosted occasional "family reading nights" in several of the apartment complexes
- Sponsored a first-annual cookout to appreciate local firefighters and police for their service in the community.

Pastor Marti Lundy noted a number of church members have said things like "I've lived in Huntington for a long time. But only now do I feel like I'm part of this community."

### Questions for Reflection:

1. How are the people of your congregation currently engaged in mission in your local community?
2. How does the church focus its leadership and resources to support the missional work people already do, as well as build opportunities for more people to become engaged?

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