

# Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

## Running From Malaria

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.

When it became clear that a “traditional” weeklong mission trip would not work with the schedules of the youth at Trinity United Methodist Church in Waverly, Iowa, the pastor reframed the question. No longer did she ask, “What mission project will we do together this summer?” Instead she asked, “What are each of you willing to do to be engaged in mission in a meaningful way?”

After pondering this question, three teenage boys from the congregation decided to run across the state of Iowa, covering over 330 miles in twenty-one days. Why did they run? To raise awareness of and support for efforts to end malaria. After the three teens suggested that they join the malaria run in conjunction with youth from Redeemer Lutheran Church (ELCA), the folks of both congregations made sure the youth had the support team in place to make their run possible.

During their cross-state run, they visited ELCA and UMC congregations along the way to raise awareness and support for both Imagine No Malaria and ELCA churchwide anti-malaria efforts. The ecumenical team helped out with VBS programs, launched Imagine No Malaria initiatives, and raised over \$17,000 to combat malaria, including \$6,500 for Imagine No Malaria. You can learn more about the blossoming of this project at <http://www.facebook.com/RunningfromMalaria>.

The project didn't end there. Another summer two other youth offered to dye their hair wild colors to raise money for a charity. One of them sported bright pink hair throughout Annual Conference to keep raising awareness there. He raised over \$1000 for Imagine No Malaria. Reframing ministry questions and giving ownership for mission to young people have proven to be effective strategies for engaging whole congregations in addressing global health issues and in intentionally living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## Questions for Reflection

1. If you asked youth (or adults, or children) in your congregation what they would commit to do to engage actively in mission, and then offered to walk alongside them to make their ideas a reality, what might they say and do?
2. How might you and congregations of other denominations work together to support youth (or adults, or children) in engaging mission where you are?
3. How can you build support processes, so all involved will learn and grow from what doesn't work, as well as celebrate what does?

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