

Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees

Produced by the Discipleship Ministries 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.

New Day Community in Dallas, Texas, is the worshiping community of Amani House, a mission serving resettled refugees in the Indigo Apartments in Dallas. Anchored in First United Methodist Church in Rowlett, a Dallas suburb, New Day Community relates to a larger umbrella organization called The Missional Wisdom Foundation. The Foundation exists to resource United Methodist congregations and other denominations in creating new paradigms for worship, theological education, and intentional communal living.

New Day Community's unique style of worship allows people from several different language and cultural groups to successfully worship God in Christ together. New Day house churches gather on Sunday evenings in private homes for a shared meal, followed by a service of Word and Table. In addition to the weekly services, once a month several of these "house churches" gather outdoors for a communal barbecue and worship service.

At Amani House New Day Community, worship is conducted in English, Swahili, French, and any other languages that are required in order to communicate with the people who have come. Worship begins with singing two or three simple songs that are taught in multiple languages. After the singing a scripture lesson is read and translated into the various tongues. There is no traditional sermon; rather, the message emerges out of a dialogue with the congregation. A worship leader identifies a key question or focal point from the reading and invites responses, stories, and ideas about the meaning of the passage. Each time a person speaks, his or her words are translated so all can understand. The diversity of cultural, gender, and age groups participating in the dialogue brings unexpected and new insights into the scriptures. After the communal "sermon," the people share in Holy Communion. Worship concludes with prayers, an offering, and a closing song.

When the group gets too large to be accommodated in one space, it divides and begins worship in another home. In this way, the community is able to multiply and grow to any size as long as there are homes in which groups can meet.

Questions for Reflection

1. How can we identify and invite refugees, immigrants, and other marginalized groups to be a part of the body of Christ in our own communities?
2. How might we create or adapt mission goals and worship services so that immigrant or non-English speaking persons may fully participate?
3. How can we be intentionally missional and bring the message of Christ to newcomers as much by our actions as our words?

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