

Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

Why We Do What We Do

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.

In just a little over eight years, a small group of thirty-two people worshiping together for the first time blossomed into a chartered congregation called Embrace. The congregation has four campuses: the 57th Street Campus and Summit Ave Campus in Sioux Falls, SD; the Tea Campus in Tea, SD; and the Online Campus, reaching people worldwide at iamembrace.com/online. Recognized as the 58th fastest growing church in the United States by Outreach Magazine, Embrace averages over 3,000 people in attendance each week. While the numerical growth is staggering, the real story is “why”.

Did Embrace decide to become one of the fastest growing churches in United Methodism? No. Were they hoping to add people to their rolls? No. Embrace's number one reason for all that they do is to reach the next person for Jesus and bring glory to His name! That's the “why!” The original group of thirty-two had no idea what the future held for them, but they did know that God was leading them to provide a fresh and meaningful encounter with Jesus.

Soon after their first worship service, small groups began meeting in homes to pray and seek God's guidance. When they gathered for corporate worship, new faces were always present. Even more exciting was that people were coming to know Jesus as evidenced through changed lives.

Through the ministry of Embrace people learn how to grow daily in their spiritual disciplines. They also learn how to connect with others outside the church. Each month Embrace focuses on doing “one thing” to show the love of Christ to others in their communities and beyond. They learn how to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world as they participate in “One Thing.”

Yes, Embrace welcomes everyone. Yes, they have four weekly services at the 57th Street Campus, three at the Tea Campus, three at the Summit Ave Campus, and sixteen through the Online Campus. Yes, they engage in social media via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Yes, they take seriously the development of small groups, and they take huge and crazy steps of faith. But what's most important is the “why:” To welcome and bring people back into relationship with Jesus Christ, to help them grow in their faith, to equip them for service, and to send them out. That's the “why”—lives transformed.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the “why” of the ministry of your congregation?
2. How might the “why” inform your current and future ministry? What would be different?
3. What discipleship plan do you now have in place for equipping the saints for ministry?

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