

Romans 12

We who are many are one body in Christ.

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 of 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.

Worship With The Frail

Congregations are normally quite good at conducting worship services with people who are able to get to the church building and who can readily follow an established format. But what about our ministry with the frail and other people who are not able to attend our church services or who have difficulty with worship procedures?

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas is committed to all people having the opportunity to worship God. One way that commitment is lived out is through Silver Link Ministries. Silver Link is part of the church's congregational care ministries and includes providing worship experiences for older people who are frail, homebound, or in care facilities. It focuses on volunteer visits and worship services in care facilities as well as a monthly worship service at the church for those who are frail or have dementia.

Worship with the frail and those having dementia is often very different than traditional Sunday morning worship. Sensory deficits of hearing and vision loss, short term memory loss, difficulty speaking and understanding, an inability to read, and physical limitations offer unique challenges for worship planning. However, for frail people who have regularly worshipped their entire lives, continuing the practice of hymn singing, praying, hearing God's Word proclaimed, and receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion are vital elements for their spiritual well-being. Whether the worship services are held in the home, at other living settings, in the church, on Sundays, or at another time, worship opportunities for the frail are just as important as they are for the non-frail.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What might you need to do differently if you had an occasional worship service at the church that offered Holy Communion and specifically took into consideration people with short term memory, hearing, and vision loss?
- Do you have people in your congregation who were formerly active worship participants but are now unable to attend due to care-giving responsibilities for frail parents or spouses? What might be done to ensure worship opportunities for these people?

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In 2007 church leaders throughout The United Methodist Church in the U.S. were invited to identify churches that demonstrated the vision of discipleship described in the twelfth chapter of Romans. Over 200 churches were surveyed or visited. Issue #64. © 2010 GBOD. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to copy this page for use in United Methodist congregations.