

H.O.P.E.

Most of us know that the mission of every local congregation in the United Methodist Church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (Paragraph 120 of The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012). Did you know that we have the opportunity to offer HOPE to the world by following “The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission” as described in paragraph 122 of *The Book of Discipline*?

As I see it, the core process of every local congregation is to offer H.O.P.E. to the communities in which it is located. Taking paragraph 122, it looks like this:

- H – Hospitality:** *proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ. What would happen if your congregation began to pray, “Send us the people no one else wants?” or “Help us receive the people you are sending to us?”*
- O – Opportunity** - *lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ. What would happen if you took John Wesley seriously and began to “Offer them Christ” as they became part of the fellowship of your congregation?*
- P – Purpose** - *nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing. What would happen if your congregation began to meet in small groups and developed relationships through the practice of spiritual disciplines?*
- E – Engagement** - *send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and structures that are consistent with the gospel. What would happen if your congregation began to develop relationships in the community with local schools, with persons living in poverty, with health care facilities?*

What do you think would happen if your congregation began to offer hope? I believe your congregation would begin to experience new life and to grow in health and vitality. I believe the presence of your church in the community would become a reminder of God’s love for all creation.

Offering HOPE is not a “quick-fix” or an empty promise. Our Book of Discipline gives us a guide for making disciples and for developing vital congregations. I am sure you have seen it for yourself. Think about where have you witnessed world-changing ministry? Now, what would happen if your congregation began living into the process for carrying out our mission?

Will you accept the challenge to begin working this process? Will you offer HOPE to your community? It will take prayer, planning, and implementation, but I am convinced God will honor your trust and obedience.

We who are called United Methodist will change the world by offering HOPE with the love of God experienced in and through Jesus Christ. Over the next four weeks we will explore each of the areas of HOPE. Please know that the General Board of Discipleship is in this process with you. Know also of my prayers for you and your ministry.

Tim Bias, General Secretary, Discipleship Ministries

