

Gathering for Something Greater

United Methodist Men is more than a Monthly Meeting

It is important for us to remember that the point of each and every United Methodist Church is make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make more disciples of Jesus Christ.

In many churches, “men’s ministry” is viewed only as a monthly meeting where there is a meal, a report from the last meeting, a report on how much money this group has in the bank followed by a “program” which usually relates to mission of the church. This traditional style of meeting works for many men, and the interesting presentations and the fellowship serve a purpose for those men who attend.

But many men want more. Men have told us that “I am more moved and challenged at a Rotary or Kiwanis meeting than at my UMM meeting.” Add into this mix that many of the times for these meetings don’t match the schedule of young families, and many of these meals are not exactly “health foods” it is no wonder these groups are experiencing shrinking numbers. For many men, these “meet and eat” meetings have no value. Many churches put great energy into getting men to come to these monthly meetings; the fact is everyone who wants to come to this meeting is already coming.

Men’s ministry within the United Methodist Church must be a life enhancing, life changing experience that impacts every man in the congregation and the men of their community.

In some churches, men are attempting to break this monthly meeting stereotype by forming affinity groups. These may be softball teams for church league play, fly fishing clubs, classic car clubs or motorcycle riders. These are great “back door” ministries because they welcome men from the community who may not want to attend worship at this time, but might venture in that direction because of the relationships formed with church members. These groups also serve a purpose, and through those relationships men are moved into a deeper relationship with the church and with Christ.

For generations, we have depended on curriculum based programming to make disciples and to grow our churches. These programs have made us smarter on social issues and more knowledgeable about the Bible, but for most of us it does not increase our disciple making behaviors.

So what is the new way of doing men’s ministry that really makes disciples and that reaches men of all ages? Actually, it is the way Wesley and his followers created a movement in England that spread like wildfire here in the “colonies.” As you may know, Wesley had three simple, general rules for this movement: “Do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God by practicing the ordinances of God.” Wesley broke congregations into “classes” and each had a leader. The leader initially was to visit each member of the class to make sure he or she was following the ordinances of God; daily prayer, searching the scriptures, tithing, taking Communion. It quickly became clear that they were failing. And so the “class meetings” began for members to sit face to face and answer questions about their relationship with God during the last week. This relationship with God is a prerequisite for following the ordinances of God.

Today, we recommend weekly meetings of 8-10 men where each person is asked, “Where have you and God intersected this week?” or “How is it with your soul?” or “Where did you respond to the Holy Spirit this week?” The best way to learn how this works is to get a group of men to agree on a meeting time, and have the group do an 8 week study in the book, ***The Class Meeting***, by Dr. Kevin Watson. We also suggest that the meetings be done electronically, using Skype, Google+, Zoom or any other platform that allows everyone to see and hear each participant. These meetings are usually an hour, depending on the size of the group.

There are multiple advantages to doing these meetings electronically:

1. There is no travel or prep time required, so an hour meeting actually lasts one hour.
2. Men who travel, can still be in the meeting.
3. Some groups combine a meeting in the same room with laptop or tablet for men, who for a variety of reasons, are unable to be physically present.
4. This can be a meeting with people from other parts of the district, conference, or another part of the country.
5. This uses widely available technology that is used by younger men every day.
6. These meetings are transformational.
7. These meeting really make disciples.
8. The weekly gatherings really change lives.

For more information, watch the webinar on our website, www.gcumm.org, about the Class Meeting, or give us a call.