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## ARTICLE

### Session 12: Becoming the Body of Christ

#### PREPARATION

Read Scripture and background information. Reflect on the questions in the participant book. Review links suggested in the lesson outline below.

#### Train of Thought

Leaders help develop spiritual, professional, and improvement knowledge as they create a learning organization. The interplay of spiritual growth and learning helps focus the church on its primary task. Fulfilling the mission of the church requires awareness of the gifts God has placed in individuals and congregations.

#### Desired Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Recognize the centrality of spiritual gifts to the identity and nature of the church.
- Focus on the acts of service and ministry in which they are gifted without feeling guilty about those for which they are not gifted.
- Explore the metaphor of the body of Christ as an appropriate image for today.

#### Lesson Supplies

- [Posters](#)
- Candle and matches
- Questions for Bible study written on newsprint

#### EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

*Total time: 50 minutes*

Light the candle and pray together the prayer on page 101. Turn to Ephesians 3:16-21, Paul's prayer for readers of this letter (Day 2 reading assignment). Remember, Paul is writing for the church community at Ephesus rather than to an individual. Read the Scripture and ask, "How is the prayer fulfilled in your congregation?"

#### Bible Study Focus Verses: Ephesians 4:7-16

Ask participants to share personal insights and questions from their home study of these verses. This study method assumes the text had meaning in its own time and continues to have meaning in our time. Read the text aloud, then have the participants work in pairs to examine the text as objectively as possible. Ask them to focus on the meaning it had at the end of the first century. Each pair should discuss these questions:

- Why might the author add the aside in verses 9 and 10?
- Why does God give gifts?
- What does the author say about the nature of children?
- What does the author mean about children in comparison to Jesus' comment that we must become like children?

Ask the pairs to briefly share their insights.

Ask individuals to work quietly to answer the following questions:

What elements are the same or different, then and now? What does this mean for the church today in contrast to what it meant to the first-century church?

Allow pairs to work together for five to ten minutes to search for the meaning the passage has for us today. Then ask, "What were the most interesting responses in your discussion, and what major problems do they present for today?"

Sing "We Are the Church," number 558 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*.

### **Transition to Our Time**

Allow participants to share their reflections about your congregation from their preparation of the Reflective Moment Along the Way on 104. Conclude the reflection by praying, "Knit us together as an authentic Christian community so that we may model to the world what it means to be the body of Christ. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen."

## **DISCOVERY – APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION**

*Total time: 45 minutes*

### **Discussion Questions** (30 minutes)

Ask individuals to mark their name in the margin (pages 107-109) beside three gifts they have. This should not take long as the discovery exercise asked them to reflect on their gifts in preparation. Divide the participants into groups of 3. Ask each individual to write the top gifts they see in the 2 people they are with. Allow 3 or 4 minutes for individual work, then comment that spiritual gifts are confirmed by the faith community. Gifts are not given for individual glory but for building the body of Christ for the transformation of the world. Ask trios to share with each other what they have written. After a few minutes, ask for a show of hands of those whose self assessment of a gift was confirmed by someone else.

This exercise helps the group begin to envision what a gifts-based ministry might look like. It is recommended that the group explore spiritual gifts discovery more fully at a later time, but this brief overview of spiritual gifts helps to break open the traditional view of the institutional church to offer a compelling alternative.

[Click here for more information about gifts assessment.](#)

The exercise on page 110 asks individuals to consider how they might use their gifts on three levels in figure 12B. Individuals can share as there is time.

### **Feedback & Evaluation** (5 minutes)

Ask how gifts-based ministries can be applied to your congregation. Some *FaithQuest* groups have sponsored spiritual gifts workshops for the congregation. Others have applied this new knowledge to the [committee on lay leadership](#) (formerly the nominating committee).

### **Sending Forth** (10 minutes)

Share prayer concerns for the week ahead. Conclude the session by asking individuals to reflect on this session and identify one thing they need to be more effective leader. Ask pairs to share and pray for each other.



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# **SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISCOVERY**

**The process by which  
individuals and congregations  
discern the presence of  
God's gifts for ministry**

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**SESSION 12**

# **SPECIALIZATION**

- **Individuals and communities “specialize” in ministries built upon strengths they possess.**

*and the corollary*

- **Individuals and communities give up attempts to excel at everything.**