What If We Stopped Fixing Churches and Started to #SeeAllThePeople?

Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church is launching a grass roots initiative called #SeeAllThePeople, designed to inspire a disciple-making movement across the denomination.

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (PRWEB) May 19, 2017 -- What if United Methodist congregations stopped looking for quick fixes to revitalize their churches and started seeing the people right outside our doors that Christ called us to reach?

What if churches recommitted themselves to focus on being in relationship with those around them and created an intentional system to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?

Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church is asking those questions of the denomination. The agency believes the denomination has looked too long for a quick fix to help guide discipleship efforts, and the church is now called to fully embrace the spirit of the Wesleyan tradition by being in relationship with the communities that surround our churches.

Discipleship Ministries is launching a grass roots initiative called #SeeAllThePeople, designed to inspire a disciple-making movement across our denomination. The agency is in the midst of shifting priorities to create resources, events and a discipleship system that emphasizes congregations being in relationship with those outside its walls.

“We cannot disciple people that we are not in relationship with. Discipleship begins with relationship,” said the Rev. Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary (CEO) of Discipleship Ministries. “When churches create an intentional discipleship system, they move from tinkering and fixing to relationship and discipleship. We do this not to just fill our pews, but to boldly show Christ’s love to those around us.”

To launch the initiative, Discipleship Ministries has produced a discussion starter video and a free study booklet for congregations written by Dotson: Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations.

Dotson urged church leaders and lay members to become part of the movement by downloading the free resource at www.SeeAllThePeople.org. He also urged church leaders to start a conversation using the hashtag #SeeAllThePeople and to share the resources available on the website.

“Let’s start a new conversation that looks outward and begins with creative and innovative ways to see and reach the people around us, so we can make disciples for the transformation of the world,” Dotson said.

Bishop Mark J. Webb, president of the Discipleship Ministries Board of Directors and Episcopal leader of the Upper New York Area, said he believes the #SeeAllThePeople initiative “will help our church work to reach the goal of making one million new disciples of Jesus Christ by the year 2020.

“We are called to be fishers of people – to do whatever it takes to meet people where they are and offer them the amazing good news of Jesus Christ! I believe this call to focus on and engage in intentional discipleship pathways will help bring clarity to our mission as a church and will ignite a passion for making disciples across
our denomination,” Bishop Webb said.

Information about the #SeeAllThePeople movement and creating intentional discipleship systems will be presented by Discipleship Ministries staff at some 45 Annual Conferences this year, and Dotson will be speaking at about five of them.

“We're asking churches to think a little deeper about how they are connecting with their community,” said Jeff Campbell, executive director of Conference Relationships at Discipleship Ministries.

Many churches already have a disciple-making system, which produces exactly what it is designed to produce, Campbell said. #SeeAllThePeople seeks to help church leaders refocus and be intentional in their efforts, rather than discipleship that just happens.

“If you really push leaders and ask, ‘How do you make disciples?’ many don't know. They do a lot of activities and programs and hope that in the end they help people grow in their faith and they make new disciples. But there's no intentionality,” he said.

Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of Worship Resources at Discipleship Ministries, looked at how #SeeAllThePeople reflects the wisdom and work of the Wesleys and the early Methodists themselves.

While for centuries churches have served as reliable institutions in the local community where people publicly worship God, learn basic doctrine and care for each other, Burton-Edwards said something is often missing in congregations. “And that is our stated mission, making disciples of Jesus Christ who are able, enabled and supported in joining God's mission to transform the world.

“As we begin to engage this vision of seeing all the people, perhaps the Holy Spirit will open our eyes to the gifts of all the people around us that we may no longer artificially divide worship and mission, but see them as leading into and building on each other so that we worship our way into discipling and disciple our way into worship,” he said.

In addition to the video #SeeAllThePeople, a variety of resources are available online at www.SeeAllThePeople.org, including:
- Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations. The free resource guide offers clarity to questions like “What is a disciple?” “How are they formed?” and, most importantly, “Why are we called to make them?” It also provides help for congregations wanting to develop a discipleship system or improve their existing discipleship efforts.
- A Social Hub, with numerous social media opportunities to follow and participate in the movement using the hashtag #SeeAllThePeople and images to share with friends
- Rev. Dotson’s video explaining the importance of creating an intentional discipleship system
- The Wesleyan Roots of #SeeAllThePeople, a downloadable pdf prepared by Burton-Edwards, along with a video of Burton-Edwards describing the historical significance with the Wesleyan movement.
- Future #SeeAllThePeople updates by email

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The mission of Discipleship Ministries is to support annual conference and local church leaders for their task of equipping world-changing disciples. An agency of The United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries is
located at 1908 Grand Ave. in Nashville, Tenn. For more information, visit www.UMCdiscipleship.org, the Press Center at www.UMCdiscipleship.org/about/press-center or call the Communications Office at (877) 899-2780, Ext. 1726.
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