

# GROVES



S m a l l   G r o u p   M i n i s t r y

*“They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord’s Supper and in prayer.  
A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had.  
They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need.  
They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper and shared their meals with great joy and generosity –  
all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.  
And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”*  
Acts 2: 42-47

Years ago, our Long Range Planning Team desired for our church to have a vital small group ministry... so that our church might “be a large church with a small church feel.” It’s not that this is a new concept here at KIUMC, it’s just that it’s time has finally come. We have been blessed with growth in our church, but that comes at a steep price if people don’t remain connected to God and one another in authentic Christian community.

The scripture above describes the vibrancy of the early church and gives us our model for living in community as well. Authentic community today should share some common characteristics with that early New Testament church: close proximity, real intimacy, regular interaction, and sharing of life. That kind of community can’t naturally happen at our worship services only... worship serves a wonderful but different purpose. When we gather to corporately worship God... when we honor him, praise him, share our gifts and hear his word proclaimed... we bless him as his body and “We Grow Up.” Although, we see each other during worship, the purpose is not primarily for our connection with each other.

Truly being in connection with each other describes “community.” However, authentic community is beginning to seem like a lost concept in today’s world. Many of us don’t know our neighbors, don’t have front porches, prefer to live safely within our fences, and are fearful of venturing too far out into a scary world. Unfortunately, that concept has crept into many churches today as well.

So, how do we connect with others and live out our faith in real ways right where we live? One way is through small groups! Each of us can’t know everyone at church, but we could truly know our own neighbors who attend here. In our busy and often fragmented lives, we all desire a true connection with people, a place to belong and experience life-changing growth. Our lives can reflect the true nature of Christ as we care for each other, seek God’s word, and serve him. That’s one way “We Grow Deep... We Grow Out.”

As we prayed and sought God for his vision of a Small Group Ministry here at KIUMC, we were drawn to the image of a grove. A grove is a small planting of trees with little underbrush. It’s an area of shelter, shade, refuge... it’s clear, uncomplicated, alive. Perhaps the trees are different sizes, but they are usually the same kind and they grow close together. It reminded us of groups of Christians, perhaps in every neighborhood in our area, perhaps at varying levels of maturity, growing together for a common purpose.

Please read the Vision and Mission of “GROVES” Small Group Ministry. Be listening during the upcoming sermon series about authentic Christian community this fall. Be open to how God may speak to your heart about being involved... as a leader or a member of a small group. We pray that you’ll want to be part of a “grove” in your neighborhood.