



• **E**xpose . . .
• **E**xalt . . .
• **E**stablish . . .
• **E**quip . . .
• **E**ngage . . .

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Back River United Methodist Church

Community Groups at Back River UMC Explanation and Overview

So what are the community groups all about? We know there are still some questions and some misunderstanding. We hope this explanation and overview will help.

The overarching purpose of Community Groups is to support our church goal to “establish people in the community of faith by fostering committed, authentic, and accountable relationships.”

The important word here is *relationships*. At the core of every human being is the need to be loved and cared for in community. We believe God made us like this because community lies at the heart of who God is. God exists fundamentally in relationship as the three-in-one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created us in God’s image to fundamentally exist not as individuals but as relational beings who live life in community with one another and with God.

Community Groups give us a “place” in which Christian community can be nurtured and grown by building friendships, providing service, offering witness, and giving support beginning with people right in our own church. Each Community Group is made up of eight to twelve households of people actively involved in our church. By living out our faith together in practical and intentional ways in the very places we live and work and go to school, our lives become incarnational – that is, they embody the very Spirit of Jesus and the community truly becomes the Body of Christ. And as the Body of Christ we are empowered to carry on the work and ministry of Jesus and make a holy impact on the world. Ultimately, this is our goal.

Some practical ways in which our Community Groups are being called to exist incarnationally are as follows:

Members of each Community Group are encouraged

1. To be care-givers to one another by:

- finding ways to celebrate group members birthday’s, anniversaries, and other milestones and special achievements
- visiting group members who are sick and providing appropriate care and support
- calling on group members who have missed worship 2 weeks or more to ask if everything is OK
- offering rides to group members who need help getting to worship, doctor’s appointments, grocery shopping, etc
- supporting group members facing financial difficulties or other challenges

Striving to be a Church with a Holy Impact on the World

Exposing people to the Gospel

Exalting God

Establishing faith-filled relationships

Equipping people for ministry

Engaging people in mission

- 2. To build relationship with each other by:**
 - regularly calling, emailing, writing, or visiting group members (especially when someone is in need)
 - greeting and welcoming group members before and after worship each week
- 3. To forge community by:**
 - planning social outings and events for the group
 - planning and participating in Congregational Community Group functions at church
 - attending other church activities as a group
 - working with group members to complete important projects and ministries
- 4. To welcome others by:**
 - sponsoring newcomers to the church who want to be baptized and/or become members
 - welcoming and befriending newcomers to the church – especially those who may live near people in your community group
 - inviting unchurched friends and family to community group and church functions
- 5. To communicate important news/information in the life of Back River UMC by:**
 - sharing important church news with group members who missed worship, an important meeting, or who don't have email
 - sharing important personal news (celebrations/prayer concerns) with group members (and with the larger congregation)
 - bringing weekly announcements, flyers, and worship DVD's to group members who missed worship
 - communicating with the Pastor, Lay Leader, Community Groups Coordinator, and the Church office about group needs, concerns, special celebrations, scheduling, etc.
- 6. To create opportunities for their group to further grow as followers of Jesus by:**
 - starting a Small Group (Bible Study, Support group, Accountability group, 12 Step Groups, etc.)
 - working with group members on mission projects and in other church ministries
 - taking Holy Communion to group members who missed it
 - helping group members discover their spiritual gifts, talents, skills, etc.
 - regularly praying for one another (in person and when apart)
 - worshipping with group members at church and during other group activities

May God who made you for community, bless you with many loving, faith-filled relationships that embody the very Spirit of Jesus. **Amen.**