WELCOME TO GROW GROUPS AT PLATTE WOODS UMC!

You have made a courageous decision to dive deeper into your faith and GROW closer to God. These materials are designed to help guide you either for personal devotion or, ideally, in conversation with others. It is our hope that you can invite friends, family or neighbors so that you can GROW together!

These materials were created to be adapted and shared. What does that mean? They should be used to fit your personal needs and the needs of the group. This isn't a task to be completed; rather, this is a guide to bring additional insight into your life. It's another voice to encourage you as you learn and grow as a follower of Jesus.

This journey, and these resources, are not meant to be kept private. In fact, we want you to share them with others! Matthew 5:16 tells us to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." With you, we believe that sharing these resources will reach people we never dreamed of reaching. We hope that everyone would know the comfort of community and the fullness of God's love!

– The Pastors at Platte Woods Church

TIPS FOR YOUR GROW GROUP

As a host, you want everyone to have the best possible experience in a Grow Group and we realize when people get together it can be a bit messy. Everyone has different experiences, backgrounds and understandings of God and the world around us. Here are some helpful tips for your group!

1. **Check in with each other.** Make time each session to check in as a group. Lead this by sharing "highs" and "lows," using a scale of 1 to 10, or another fun method. It is suggested to do this before your group dives into the material.
2. **Pray for one another.** The group that prays together grows together! Prayer opens our hearts and expands our world. When we pray, we increase our compassion and empathy for one another; groups will have disagreements along the way and prayer helps us overcome those barriers.
3. **Be concise.** Healthy groups create space for one another. One of the best things you can do is listen. Make sure not to overshare which may cause others to feel they don't belong.
4. **Communicate regularly**. A simple message of "I hope you have a great week!" goes a long way. Think about how your group would like to communicate. You can use a group text messaging app, email or create a Facebook group. Regular communication has a big impact.
5. **Meet regularly.** Our recommendation is to meet weekly or bi-weekly. Don't worry if your group needs to take a break. Schedule it in and come back when the group is ready!
6. **Share your needs.** The pastors and staff at Platte Woods UMC are here to serve you. If there are questions that need further exploration or a major need comes up, we want to know about it!

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Week 1 – Walk Lightly – The Gift

OPENER
Who in your life has a green thumb or deeply loves creation?

FOCUS TEXT – Genesis 1:31 (CEB)
31 God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.
There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS
- Genesis 1
- Psalm 19
- Psalm 65

GROUP DISCUSSION
- Make an Earth Gratitude list! Share three ways that you are thankful for the earth.
- How do you tend to the living and care for creation?
- What is your favorite way to be in nature and connect with God?

TAKEAWAY
God carefully, lovingly and intentionally put the fullness of imagination on display when God created our world. Carve out time each day this week to begin the sacred practice of appreciating the gift of creation. What gives you life? What enhances your life? Where has God shown you awe and wonder? Celebrate beauty!

PRAYER
Author of Imagination, you have no limits in your beauty. Each unique leaf, each patterned animal, every sunrise, all wonderfully made and offered daily as a gift. God, open my eyes to see the world as you see it. Show me the beauty in the lives of those around me. God you are good. Thank you for this gift. Amen.

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Week 2 – Walk Lightly – The Reality

OPENER
What is a thing that somebody calls trash, but you call a treasure?

FOCUS TEXT – Isaiah 24:5 (CEB)
[5]The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants,
for they have disobeyed instruction,
swept aside law,
and broken the ancient covenant.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS
- Genesis 1:28-31
- Isaiah 24

GROUP DISCUSSION
- What do you think is our responsibility to care for the earth?
- How have humans impacted the earth? Negatively? Positively?
- How do you think God views our care of creation?

TAKEAWAY
Our existence, each and every one of us, has an impact on our world and those around us. In the beginning, God gave humans the charge to be stewards of this beautiful planet. How have we done? How are you doing? Consider the impact that you have on the world around you. What is different because you are here? What is better?

PRAYER
Gracious Giver of Creation, thank you for this gift of our world. You saw in me the power to care for your world and entrusted it in my care. Open my eyes to see where I impact your creation. Give me the strength to tend to the living in impactful and important ways. God, you give new life, and in you all things are made new. Thank you for inviting me on the journey to bring healing to your gift. Amen.

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Week 3 – Walk Lightly – The Impact

OPENER
How have you noticed or been affected by climate change?

FOCUS TEXT – Leviticus 25:3-5 (CEB)
[3]You will plant your fields for six years, and prune your vineyards and gather their crops for six years. [4]But in the seventh year the land will have a special sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord: You must not plant your fields or prune your vineyards. [5]You must not harvest the secondary growth of your produce or gather the grapes of your freely growing vines. It will be a year of special rest for the land.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS
- Romans 8:19-23

GROUP DISCUSSION
- Have you heard of Climate Justice? What does it mean to you?
- What is one resource or animal that you think would be devastating to go extinct?
- Where do you see God in this conversation?

TAKEAWAY
This beautiful gift of creation is one that all of humankind gets to share with one another. When a part of the whole chooses profit over protection and neglect over nurture, all of us ultimately suffer. We are called by Jesus to love our neighbors and the poor, yet they are the ones affected most by climate change. For this reason, we must care: for the planet, and for our people.

PRAYER
Powerful Protector, you entrusted creation into our care, and we have fallen short. As a result, our marginalized sisters and brothers are suffering more than others. Give me a voice for those who do not have one. Give me the power to impact change. Give me the eyes to see the relief I can offer now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Week 4 – Walk Lightly – The Hope

OPENER
What sustainable change have you made that was surprisingly easy?

FOCUS TEXT – Colossians 1:19-20 (CEB)
[19]Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him,
[20] and he reconciled all things to himself through him —
whether things on earth or in the heavens.
He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS
- Colossians 1:15-20
- Revelation 21:1-8

GROUP DISCUSSION
- As we have talked about tending to the living this series, what new ideas or inspirations have you found?
- Where does creation reveal hope to you?
- How is God calling you to Walk Lightly?

TAKEAWAY
All things will be made new in Christ, therefore, we have hope! You and I are called into rebirth, here and now, tending to the gift that we will leave for many generations to come. What faithful action can you take now? How can you use your voice, energy, connections, passion, preparation and love to take action now? Your existence here makes an impact: what legacy will you leave?

PRAYER
Author of Hope, you have given us new life. Show me what it means to slow down and revel in your gift of creation. Teach me to turn from the sin of convenience. Instill in me a heart for the future, living beyond the disposable present. You have given us abundant life to the fullest, and I am eternally grateful. In your gentle name, Amen.

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