

# First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry

## Session : Friendship

Facilitator/Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Supplies:** Chalice, matches, printed questions for each participant, pencils, pens

### 1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 2 min

“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

### 2. Check-in/Sharing: up to 30 min (Divide the time by number of participants, allowing for short interval of silence in between sharing.) Invite people to check in by sharing:

- *How is it with your spirit? —or—What has stirred your passion this week?*

- *And/or: Did you have any further thoughts about last week's topic?*

### 3. Topic: TOTAL TIME 60 min

#### A. Introduction and Questions: 5 min

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand.

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.

~Henri Nouwen

For none of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes.

Therefore, let us be gentle with one another.

Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge.

Let our open, outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.

~Elizabeth Tarbox

**(Distribute Questions, last page, & Read out loud)**

#### B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: 10 min

Invite group into 5-10 minutes of silence during which they are asked to reflect on the questions. Participants are invited to use this time for writing and drawing their responses if they wish.

### **C. Sharing: 40 min**

Invite each person to share their response as they feel moved, rather than clockwise. Give each person equal time to share. *If time* after each person has shared, invite people into a more free flowing discussion of the theme. Coaches may need to direct the conversation back to the questions.

### **4. Check-out: 10 min**

Encourage people to check out with a final thought or reflection about the theme (or any other thoughts about the session) and how the session might shape or impact their life in any way in the week ahead.

### **5. Introduction of Next Week's Topic 1 min**

### **6. Closing Words 1 min**

A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart,  
chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest hands will take and sift it,  
keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.

~Dinah Clark

□□To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial.

To be known and not loved is our greatest fear.

But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by a greater Spirit.

It is what we need more than anything.

It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness,  
and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

~Timothy Keller

### **7. Blessing to Extinguish the Chalice (Distribute Blessing) 1**

May the efforts we have made here today  
to listen with caring and compassion sustain us in the days ahead.

May these efforts bring peace into our lives  
and into the lives of all those whom we touch.

And now, may love surround us, may joy gladden us, may peace lie deep within.

May our lives and the lives of all those we love go well.

# Questions for Reflection: Friendship

1. Why is it important to have friends? What role do friends play in your life?
2. How do friends influence the way you see yourself?
3. Think of when you might have had a friend who was able to listen more than speak, accept more than judge, someone who stirred you to trust them. Think of what you were willing to share and how it felt. If you have tried to be that kind of friend, how did it go?
4. When, if ever, did you learn that you had to give space to your friends to be themselves? When, if ever, did you feel that you needed more space? If you have ever had to ask for better boundaries in a relationship, how did the other person respond?
5. How are you a good friend?