

First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry

Session: Gratitude

Facilitator/Date: _____

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

1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 5 min.

We are most alive when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.

This is the gift—to hear and enjoy life’s music everywhere.

To be more aware of what we have than what we don’t have.

To appreciate again and again all the wonderful things in life that money can’t buy—
the wind in your hair, the sun on your face, a child’s laughter, a loving family, a great friend.

Truly, there is something in every day and in every season to celebrate with thanksgiving.

In the end, of course, it’s not what we have in our life,

but who we have in our life that brings us joy.

~Thornton Wilder

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

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, "thank you," that would suffice.

~Meister Eckhart

Jane Kenyon wrote the poem, “Otherwise”, upon hearing her husband’s cancer diagnosis.

I got out of bed on two strong legs. It might have been otherwise.

I ate cereal, sweet milk, ripe, flawless peach. It might have been otherwise.

I took the dog uphill to the birch wood. All morning I did the work I love.

At noon I lay down with my mate. It might have been otherwise.

We ate dinner together at a table with silver candlesticks. It might have been otherwise.

I slept in a bed in a room with paintings on the walls, and planned another day just like
this day.

But one day, I know, it will be otherwise.

Ironically, it was Kenyon, not her husband, who died a year later from a fierce and swift
onslaught of leukemia.

This is the gift—to have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again,
freshly and naively, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder and even ecstasy.

~Abraham Maslow

The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.

~Oprah Winfrey

Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence,
and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.

~Helen Keller

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought;
and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.

~GK Chesterton

(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

Life itself is a gift.
It's a compliment just being born:
to feel, breathe, think, play, dance, sing, work, make love
for this particular lifetime.
Today let's give thanks for life.
For life itself. For simply being born!
~Daphne Rose Kingma~

7. Blessing: 1 min.

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: Gratitude

1. What are you grateful for?
2. In the rush of living, what do you forget to be grateful for?
3. As you reflect back on the last few days with an attitude of gratitude, what small things do you notice now that you weren't aware of then?
4. Have there been times when you felt gratitude but didn't express it? Are there people you are still meaning to thank?
5. How can we stay aware of that in life that is sheer blessing?