

# First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry

## Solitude

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

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

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

Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone.  
It has created the word 'loneliness' to express the pain of being alone.  
And it has created the word "solitude" to express the glory of being alone.  
~Paul Tillich

We light the chalice today to honor the two sides of being alone.

### 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

There are many ways to go home...  
rereading passages of books and single poems...  
spending even a few minutes near a river, a stream, a creek.  
Lying on the ground in dappled light...Music...sunrise...praying...a special  
friend...writing...getting hands muddy...beholding beauty, grace.  
...None of these ways to return home are dependent on economics,  
social status, education or physical mobility.  
Even if we...only have one blade of grass...a quarter foot of sky...  
we can see our cycles in and with nature.  
For myself, solitude is rather like a folded-up forest that I carry with me everywhere  
and unfurl around myself when I have need.  
I sit at the feet of the great old trees of my childhood.  
From that vantage point, I ask my questions, receive my answers,  
then coalesce my woodland back down to the size of a love note till next time.  
The experience is immediate, brief, informative."  
~Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D *Women Who Run With the Wolves*

[We] need solitude in order to find again the true essence of [our]selves.

If you surrender completely to the moments as they pass,  
you live more richly those moments.

~Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea

**(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. [Tell your group to feel free to invent their own better-suited questions if they prefer.]

**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**

It is only when we silent the blaring sounds of our daily existence  
that we can finally hear the whispers of truth that life reveals to us,  
as it stands knocking on the doorsteps of our hearts.

~K.T. Jong

**7. Blessing (Suggestion: Make copies of this blessing distribute each time so everyone can read together at the end of all sessions)**

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.

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: Solitude

1. If solitude is important to you, do you intentionally make time for it? How & Why?
2. How do you cope with loneliness?
3. Re-iterating the previously read verse about many ways to go ‘home’ by Dr. Estes: *“For myself, solitude is rather like a folded-up forest that I carry with me everywhere and unfurl around myself when I have need. I sit at the feet of the great old trees of my childhood. From that vantage point, I ask my questions, receive my answers, then coalesce my woodland back down to the size of a love note till next time. The experience is immediate, brief, informative.”*  
What are the special ways you might seek solitude? If not, is this concept something you might want to nurture?
4. What is your version of returning to the “soul-place”?
- 5.