

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Session Plan  
**“Friendship”**  
First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, ME February 2016

**Chalice Lighting:**

“When we honestly ask ourselves which people in our lives mean 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 J.M. Nouwen*,

**Check-in / Sharing:** This is a time to state your name and to briefly mention any major issue or event on your mind that might make it difficult to focus on today’s topic.

**Welcome to SGM:** Distribute Handbook and Covenant (unchanged from 2015). The facilitator can summarize the goals of SGM from the Handbook and mention key points of the SGM Covenant, such as respect, confidentiality and how we give each member a chance to feel heard without crosstalk. Members will be asked to agree to the covenant at the March SGM meeting.

**Topic: Friendship**

“A friend is someone who knows all about you and still loves you.” — *Elbert Hubbard*

“A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.” — *Walter Winchell*

“You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.” — *A.A. Milne*

“Let us give thanks:

For generous friends...with hearts...and smiles as bright as their blossoms;

For feisty friends as tart as apples;

For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we’ve had them;

For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

...

For old friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts, and witherings

And, finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, and who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter

For all these we give thanks.” - *Max Coots*

Friends can make a big difference in our lives. Sometimes we find ourselves in new situations and wonder how to even get to know people. And then comes a moment in which we sense a kindred spirit. Together we can explore ways in which we have nurtured a new friendship, let go of an outgrown or unhealthy friendship, or sustained a long-term friendship.

Questions:

1. Can you describe some of the qualities you look for in a friend?
2. Can you share any stories of friends from your childhood?
3. Can you remember times when you really could have used a friend?
4. Have you found ways to keep a friend through difficult times - whether difficult for you or for them or for the relationship?
5. Can you think of any times when a friend has opened your eyes to insights about yourself or a situation?
6. How do you balance friends and family, work, play, etc. ?

Group will take a few minutes of silence to think about the topic. Then each member will have a turn when they are ready to share. After everyone has had a turn, then members can feel free to have additional turns.

**Wrapping Up:** How did you like this topic and session?

**Closing Words:**

“Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but pouring them all right out—just as they are—chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping—and with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.” - *Dinah Marie Bullock Craik*

*Adapted from the Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA*