

*What People Say about past  
Small Group Ministry*

We get to know each other better and, through that knowledge, enrich our spiritual lives, fine-tuning our belief system and reassessing what fits and what doesn't.

None of us would put our minds to these topics if we did not sit down together intentionally to clear the path for our souls to show up.

The Circle is an oasis in my life – a place I go to **be**, not to **do**.

I am stunned by how a simple format of intentional soul-searching opens our hearts.

We practice mindful listening.

Listening to different ones grapple with what makes them human and how they respond to things that affect us all, helps me do my own grappling.

The format has taught me the value of silence. Free of the need to “talk to fill up the silence,” I find, instead, that the silence permeates my being and sets me free of social expectation.

I feel so much more connected to this congregation.

This is the most profound thing I've done in years.

*Small Group Ministry at  
First Parish of Sudbury  
2018*



In our small groups, we look within ourselves and find stories drawn from the wellsprings of our own lives. This group process brings forth stories of individual victories and defeats, personal fears and disappointments, private insights and concerns. As each person speaks, others listen intently.

Everyone speaks. Everyone is heard.

### *What it is...*

Six to ten people, chosen randomly based on availability, meet monthly for two hours, usually in someone's home. A leader facilitates the meeting using a standard format: opening words, Chalice lighting, check-in, exploring a topic, discussion (maybe), check-out and closing words. The format for part of the time requires that only one person speak at a time and that there be no cross-talk.

Each group agrees together on certain guidelines for their group.

### *What's in it for me...*

Learning to listen. Doing some spiritual deep-diving. Getting to know a few others really well. Making time for some spiritual exploration.

You won't be judged, you won't be given advice, you won't be challenged. You will be heard. You will be supported. You will be energized by compassionate listening and the genuine relationships that grow in the circle.

### *What it isn't...*

SGM groups do not replace worship, but rather complement and strengthen the experience of worship.

Groups are not adult courses, but they provide an opportunity for exploration to those seeking spiritual growth, those looking to know themselves better and those who simply want to discuss questions of faith and meaning.

Groups are not a committee or a service group, but they do seek ways for participants to live out their most deeply held beliefs and values by serving one another and the larger community.

They are not therapy, but through good times and bad, the group offers to one another compassion and support, community and connection.

### *What's expected of me...*

You will be asked to commit to a Small Group for one year. Once committed, you will be expected to attend as regularly as possible. Next fall, we will begin the process over and everyone will be invited to join a different group, or opt out.

You need only a positive attitude, a willing spirit, an open mind and heart. There is no preparation required just come ready to listen, share and learn. Make a commitment to your Small group for yourself and the others in it.