

## *Deep Listening*

Mary-Elizabeth Cotton

Let us listen...

Just for a while let us silence our minds  
and open our hearts.

Just for a while let us listen from within.

Listen...

Not to gain knowledge, not to formulate  
questions, rather to chance upon sacred  
bonds and profound wisdom.

Just for a while let us not seek  
information or answers.

Let us not rouse the intellect but embrace  
the spirit.

If thoughts cloud the brain may we let  
them pass.

If replies tingle on the tongue, let us  
breathe them away silently.

Return to them later, but here...

Here in this precious time of sharing  
Let us listen...

Let the words wash over us and seep into  
a still quiet pool.

Let us listen.



## **FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF STOW & ACTON**

Sunday Services virtually at 10 am

*An LBGTQ Welcoming Congregation*

Reverend Dr. Cynthia Landrum	<i>Minister</i>
Michelle Cote	<i>Religious Education Director</i>
Brad Dumont	<i>Music Director</i>
Deedee Perkins	<i>Parish Administrator</i>
Joleen Trotta	<i>Membership Development</i>
Sanghee Kim	<i>Pianist/Organist</i>
Janet Beatrice	<i>Publicity</i>
Mike Silkonis	<i>Sexton</i>
Marissa Evans	<i>Youth Coordinator</i>

First Parish Church of Stow & Acton  
353 Great Road, Stow, Massachusetts  
[www.fpc-stow-acton.org](http://www.fpc-stow-acton.org)

## **SMALL GROUP MINISTRY**



*photo courtesy of Sue Abramamsen*

## **FIRST PARISH CHURCH OF STOW & ACTON**

## What is Small Group Ministry?

The goal of the Small Group Ministry (SGM) program is for small groups of members to grow in "Intimacy and Ultimacy", i.e. to get to know themselves and their group members better.

The program is designed to provide a safe space for personal spiritual growth and friendship, "bound together in a spirit of trust and belonging."

Each SGM group has a trained facilitator or co-facilitators, who help facilitate a monthly meeting on a session topic. Since the goal is to share in the present, and we do not want members to prepare, the topic is not distributed in advance.

Benefits of joining a small group include both knowing people at coffee hour or any church activity, and developing deeper long-term relationships in our beloved community.

## A Typical SGM Session

*Chalice Lighting*  
Enter a sacred space.

*Checking In*  
Members briefly share significant recent events in their lives.

*Session Topic*  
Group reads some quotes and a small question list.

*Sharing*  
Members share whatever the topic brings up for them at whatever depth they feel comfortable.

*Closing*  
Read final quote together.  
Extinguish chalice.

Past Session Topics:  
Hope, Community, Stuff: The Final Frontier, Our Parents, Learning From Failure, Stress Reduction, Core Values, Food, Transitions, Our Principles, Our Immigration Stories

## Get Involved

The SGM program at FPC kicks off each year in February and runs for a year. Groups have ~8-10 members. New members are welcome to join existing groups that have space at any time during the year.

The time commitment is two hours per month. In addition, the group performs one community service project per year.

Normally, SGM groups meet in the Parlor, a lovely, cozy space behind the sanctuary, accessible via the elevator. During the pandemic, SGM groups meet virtually.

**Sign Up Online**  
[fpc-stow-acton.org/sgm](http://fpc-stow-acton.org/sgm)

## Contacts

Karen Kinnear *SGM Coordinator*  
[sgm@fpc-stow-acton.org](mailto:sgm@fpc-stow-acton.org)

Joleen Trotta *Membership Development*  
[mdc@fpc-stow-acton.org](mailto:mdc@fpc-stow-acton.org)