**The Ministry of All**

In the Episcopal tradition, the ministers of a congregation include every baptized person, not just the priest. We speak of being “a community of ministers, and a ministering community.” But what is ministry at its most basic level? What is the blessing that we offer to each other when we minister to one another? Today’s session invites a conversation about the nature of lay ministry and how it shapes our lives.

**Reflective Reading**

“Ministry is all that we do – together” says Gordon McKeeman. But what is the quality of our togetherness? A way to say YES to life is to be with one another in a way that affirms human dignity, opens closed doors, that, as McKeeman says, “beckons forth possibilities.”

A professional minister’s job calls forth that sort of connection. We lay people have an equally important role as we minister to one other. We can see ourselves as second to none (i.e. clergy!) in our practice of ministry. And since community always implies reciprocity, we can be attentive to how we experience others’ ministry in our lives.

To minister doesn’t always involve material aid (such as money or food, etc.); sometimes what is needed is comfort, attentive listening, bringing a non-anxious presence, just being there. And sometimes, perhaps, it is something more elusive than simply “aid”, like bringing a sense of the sacred into our encounters with others so that they can recognize it in themselves. The possibilities for ministry are as endless as our ability to give and receive.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What does it mean to minister to someone? To be ministered to? What are the ways in which you personally find yourself in the ministerial relationship – on either side?
2. Think about the ministry you do in your own life; both within our congregation and beyond. What gifts do you offer to the lives around you? How did you come to discover those gifts within yourself?
3. Though we use the word ministry to describe various programs that the church offers, ministry occurs at a level much deeper than simply logistical planning. How do you bring a sense of the sacred, the holy, the foundational dimensions of life to those with whom you interact? How do you tend the souls of others from day to day?

**A Prayer**