

# About BeFriender Ministry

## **What BeFrienders do**

BeFrienders are lay volunteers who provide pastoral care to people in difficult and transitional situations, such as illness, loneliness, or loss of a loved one. They embody the caring presence of God and of the faith community.

BeFrienders accept people as they are and listen with compassion. Through spiritual and emotional care, BeFrienders allow those they befriend to make their own decisions.

Since their role is to care, not cure, the skills BeFrienders learn in training allow them to respond to any pastoral care need with confidence that they can provide a nonjudgmental and compassionate listening presence. BeFrienders gain a deeper understanding of unity in Christ by appreciating the value of each member of the community. BeFrienders experience how Christ calls us to be together in joy and in pain.

## **Benefits of BeFriender Ministry**

- Skills can be applied to any pastoral care situation.
- Skills are transferable to any personal or professional relationship within or outside the faith community.
- Stories of those befriended enrich a BeFriender's life.
- Continued spiritual growth is possible through regular meetings.
- There is an opportunity to live out one's baptismal call to ministry.
- There is an opportunity to share gifts with the faith community.
- A heightened sense of community is generated through service to one another and through regular small group meetings.

## **Foundation principles of BeFriender Ministry**

***God is present.*** BeFrienders are aware that they are in God's presence when befriending someone and that the time shared is a blessing to both the person befriended and the BeFriender.

***Caring, not curing.*** BeFrienders serve as a living reminder of God's love. They are companions on the journey as others recognize, value, and use their own God-given, Spirit-led wisdom.

***Nonjudgmental presence.*** BeFrienders understand the importance of hearing another's story from that person's perspective. Openness and respect allow them to respond with empathy and without judgment.

***Active listening.*** There is a healing power in being able to tell one's story. BeFrienders know the value of active listening skills, which are a critical component of training.

**Program emphases**

***Spiritual growth.*** Befriending is an opportunity for both the person befriended and the BeFriender to grow in faith. During training, BeFrienders learn a small group process for learning from ministry. The process is used when BeFrienders gather to help them make connections between their ministry, their faith, and their relationship with God.

***Ongoing learning.*** The same small group process for learning from ministry also provides an opportunity for BeFrienders to practice the skills they use in ministry and to grow in self-awareness about how their lives affect their ability to provide pastoral care to others.