

# Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

## Small Group Ministry

### Acceptance

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, February 2021

#### Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“Because there have been times when shame has crushed our ability to be whole-hearted.

Because we have not always had the courage to be imperfect.

Because we have struggled to have compassion for ourselves or others.

Because we have been afraid of our own vulnerability.

Because we are sometimes too scared to live authentically.

Because we want to be whole-hearted people, confident in our worthiness and our belonging.

We let go of who we ought to be and embrace who we are.” - *Rev. Dawn Skjei Cooley*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention briefly any major issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. Welcome to our first session of the new year. Please discuss the Covenant, listening, and read “I will Listen” together.

#### Topic: Acceptance

In the oft-quoted first stanza of the “Serenity Prayer” by Reinhold Niebuhr, the reader is encouraged to accept the things that they cannot change and to change the things that they can. However, the reality is that there is often a willingness to accept things that can be changed and effort and yearning to change things that cannot be changed—a sense of commitment to “stay the course” or a need to “make things right.”

In her book *Mad Ship*, Robin Hobb writes that “The wise [person] takes the shortest path to peace with [themselves]. Acceptance of what is, that is the shortest path.”

It is that nature of acceptance that participants are invited to consider in this month’s topic—a “letting go” that gives us peace by releasing what binds and limits us, not a “letting go” that is giving up on needful things. And, it is an invitation to ponder an acceptance that acknowledges what we can and need to change—and gathers the courage and resources to make that change.

“Acceptance is the harshest lesson life teaches and the most important to learn. “ - *Rose Tremain*

“Accept – then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it...This will miraculously transform your whole life.” - *Eckhart Tolle*

“Acceptance makes an incredible fertile soil for the seeds of change.” - *Steve Maraboli*

“Owning our story and loving ourselves through the process is the bravest thing we’ll ever do.” - *Brene Brown*

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from [their] point of view.” - *Harper Lee*

“The antiquity and general acceptance of an opinion is not assurance of its truth.” - *Pierre Bayle*

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” - *Angela Davis*

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” - *C.S. Lewis*

“Happiness is letting go of what you assume your life is supposed to be like right now and sincerely appreciating it for everything that it is.” - *Anonymous*

“For all that has been, Thanks! For all that will be, Yes!” - *Dag Hammarskjold*

### **Possible Questions for Discussion:**

- Are there things that you need to accept and not struggle with/against? What and Why? Are there things that you need to *not* accept? What and Why?
- Has there been a time when you accepted something that you had been struggling with for a long time? Why did you accept it? How was the experience? What did you learn? Have you had any regrets?
- What have you gained or lost by accepting or by not accepting?
- When has your acceptance been harmful?
- Could you share any of your struggles or growth in accepting yourself or accepting others? Could you describe any positive experiences of being accepted by others?
- If there are things that you want to accept yet have been unable to, what would help you in this process? What resources could you embrace to help you?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share).

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

**Closing Words** “Everything I let go of has claw marks on it.” - *Anonymous*