

# Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

## Small Group Ministry

### Connection

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, February 2019

#### **Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.” - *Rachel Naomi Remen*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention briefly any major issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. At this first meeting of the year, we review the covenant (especially confidentiality), hand out the SGM Handbook, and read the “I Will Listen” poem.

#### **Topic: Connection**

We are connected in so many ways to people, places, experiences, and activities in the present, to say nothing of the past, that even thinking about them can be almost overwhelming at times. Yet we can be deeply lonely despite these many connections.

Some of us seek connection consciously, and make it a priority in our lives. To others, connection is something that happens, seemingly by accident. Yet we all know when we are connected to a person, an event, a place, or a thing.

What, then, is the role of connection in your life? It is something that you seek, something from which you hide? Together, let us share what connection means in our lives.

“Self-absorption in all its forms kills empathy, let alone compassion. When we focus on ourselves, our world contracts as our problems and preoccupations loom large. But when we focus on others, our world expands. Our own problems drift to the periphery of the mind and so seem smaller, and we increase our capacity for connection – or compassionate action.” - *Daniel Goleman*

“Throughout our lives we long to love ourselves more deeply and to feel connected with others. Instead, we often contract, fear intimacy, and suffer a bewildering sense of separation. We crave love, and yet we are lonely. Our delusion of being separate from one another, of being apart from all that is around us, gives rise to all of this pain.” - *Sharon Salzberg*

“Only through our connectedness to others can we really know and enhance the self. And only through working on the self can we begin to enhance our connectedness to others.” - *Harriet Goldhor Lerner*

“Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.” - *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

“Successful relationships are those relationships where conflicts are successfully resolved, and in fact people’s intimacy, closeness, and love are enhanced through the resolution of conflicts. I have always become closer to my wife and to my friends when we have conflicts and work through them successfully because conflicts will always arise. They are an opportunity for intimacy, self-knowledge, and a greater connection.” - *Stefan Molyneux*

“The history of your happiness is the history of your feeling connected.” - *Vironika Tugaleva*

“Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That’s the problem.” — *A.A. Milne*

“When people do things they weren't even sure they were capable of, I think it comes back to connection. Connection with teammates. Connection with organization. Feeling like they belong in the environment. I think it's a human need - the need to feel connected.” - *Theo Epstein*

“It’s really interesting how music can knock down a wall and be an open connection between you and someone else where something else can’t. When music comes along, it just opens your heart a little more.” - *Phillip Sweet*

“I really love yoga. I love the mindfulness of it, where not only are you exercising your body, but you’re also building that mind/body connection as far as being aware of every movement - what your body’s doing, how your body’s feeling.”  
- *Miranda Rae Mayo*

“Loneliness is proof that your innate search for connection is intact.” - *Martha Beck*

“I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” - *Dr Brené Brown*

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

- What people from my past stand out as those to whom I was most connected? Do these people have anything in common? How did I feel when I was with them?
- To whom do I feel connected now? What do I have in common with each individual or group?
- What are the qualities in a relationship that I value most?
- Can I describe any places with which I have a special connection?
- What ways work for me to connect with different people, and how do I choose when and with whom to use different ways? (e.g. text, phone, social media, scheduled activities, in-person).
- In what ways would I like to increase the number or depth of my connections? How might I do this?

(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**

“There are two questions that we have to ask ourselves. The first is ‘Where am I going?’ and the second is ‘Who will go with me?’” - *Howard Thurma*