

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry
Families of Choice

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, June 2018

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“As surely as we belong to the universe
we belong together.
We join here to transcend the isolated self,
to reconnect,
to know ourselves to be at home,
here on earth, under the stars,
linked with each other” - *Margaret A Keip*

Check-in/Sharing: This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share. This is a good time to discuss meeting plans for July and August.

Topic: Families of Choice

In our families of origin we passively learn a meaning of family. As we grow we have opportunities to actively find families of choice looking perhaps for things we liked or lacked before. When we are young, sometimes we find people to include for "family" membership such as extended relatives, parents' friends or a friends' parents. We can form close friends, friend groups, or communities that can provide us with a virtual family. We might find a partner or spouse and maybe raise children or pets. As we grow older, sometimes we find ourselves in the role of extended parent, aunt/uncle/grandparent for special younger people. Let us explore together people who have been in special roles for us and how that meant "family" to us.

“Family is [...] about who is willing to hold your hand when you need it the most” - *Unknown*

"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life. Rarely do members of one family grow up under the same roof." - *Richard Bach, Illusions*

“Family is the people in your life who accept you for who you are, love you unconditionally, and who will always hold a special place in your heart” - *Chelsea Whaley*

“We're not related, but here's good news
Friends are the family you can choose - *The LEGO Batman Movie*

“...a friend is a brother[/sister] your heart chose for you” - *Proverb*

“It takes a village to raise a child.' African culture recognizes that parenting is a shared responsibility - a communal affair - not just the concern of parents or grandparents, but of the extended

family. Uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbours and friends can all be involved and all have a part to play”. - *Katharine Hill*

“...you are my family by choice. You have given me advice, even when it was hard to hear, and have loved me through every circumstance that came my way. You have smiled with me during the highs of my life and cried with me through the lows. At times in my life, you have been my safe haven, my refuge, and my escape.” - Chelsea Whaley

“Even if we do not have extended family of our own on our doorstep, we can be 'family' to others in our community, giving and receiving mutual help and support.” - *Katharine Hill*

“When you grow up in an extended family, or in a stable neighborhood with two or three generations of families who live there, you feel seen. Not just the good things you've done, the stuff you put on your resume. You know they've seen you in your dark times, when you've messed up - but they're still there.” - *Dean Ornish*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Tell us about someone who filled an extended family role for you as a child. What made this relationship a “family” relationship?
2. Think of someone who has become like family to you. What drew you to them? What are you getting from the relationship and what are you giving to it?
3. Could you describe any close or long-lasting friend or group of friends?
4. If you have created a family with a partner, are there ways you have explicitly chosen to be the same or different from your family of origin?
5. Have you become a virtual family member to someone younger? How does that feel?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

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

Closing Words:

“Each day I am thankful for nights that turned into mornings, friends that turned into family, dreams that turned into reality, and likes that turned into love.” -*unknown*