

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**Friendship as a Grown-up**  
First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. April 2023

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

As we light this flame, we remember friends and loved ones near and far and we give thanks.

As the fire burns brightly, we open our minds and hearts to new ways of being and we feel alive.

As the room glows with warmth and kindness, we extend our circle ever wider to welcome those who want to come in, and we know love. - Leia Durland-Jones

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention any issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. Please brainstorm community service options.

**Topic: Friendship as a Grown-up**

In a recent Boston Globe column, Beverly Beckham begins her description of friendship with a comparison to the gravitational pull of the moon. The moon pulls certain individuals together, but the force of the pull is not constant. The moon's changes in appearance and influence are gradual, almost imperceptible without close observation.

Research tells us that over time, as we age, we will have fewer friends. That's truer than ever today. People are more mobile in where they work and where they live. We're getting married later and having fewer children. The sorts of things that once drew people together in young adulthood are less likely to solidify into lifelong connections. And even if they do, life circumstances, both personal and global, can pull us apart. As an older adult, we encounter fewer opportunities to make new friends.

Friendship is an ongoing choice. Figuring out how to choose friendships over time and through change can be complex. Sometimes we shorten or lengthen the closeness of a friendship. Sometimes we realize that we may be the friend who's now closer or farther away.

There are good reasons to persevere. People with strong social networks are healthier, happier and live longer. Having more friends of different ages means they won't all die at once. Younger friends, or older ones, will challenge you with different perspectives and activities.

"Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold." - *Girl Scouts*

“We need more people who are willing to demonstrate what it looks like to risk and endure failure, disappointment and regret – people willing to feel their own hurt instead of working it out on other people, people willing to own their stories, live their values and keep showing up.” - *Brene Brown*

“We need old friends to help us grow old and new friends to help us stay young.”  
- *Letty Cottin Pogrebin*

“We aren’t obligated to our friends the way we are to our romantic partners, our jobs, and our families. We’ll be sad to go, but go we will. This is one of the inherent tensions of friendships.” - *Andrew Ledbetter*

“Three of my best friends are trying to organize a girls’ trip to Miami this winter. I really wish I could go, but I just can’t afford it.”- *Advice Seeker, thecut.com*

“You should assume people like you. That is based on research into the “liking gap” — the idea that when strangers interact, they’re more liked by the other person than they assume.” - *Catherine Pearson*

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

- Describe how you make friends. Are you a person who finds friends wherever you go? Are you someone who carefully calls some people “friends” and others “acquaintances”?
- When was the last time you made a new friend? Can you tell any stories of becoming friends with someone?
- In your life, what factors have affected preserving old friendships or building new friendships (for example: mobility or health, romantic or family circumstances, long work hours or need for solitude, good chemistry but differing interests, shared interests but little chemistry)?
- What contributes to the longest-lasting friendships you have? Conversely, what has contributed to the ending of friendships? Are there friendships you wish you could end but don’t know how to?
- Are any of your social media friendships as important as your in-person friendships? Does one complement the other?

(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**

“Right now, someone you haven’t met is out there wondering what it would be like to meet someone like you. - *Unknown*