

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry

Honoring Our Elders

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

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

"And I have become the child of the clouds, and of hope.
I have become the friend of the enemy, whoever that is.
I have become older and, cherishing what I have learned,
I have become younger." – *Mary Oliver*

Check-in/Sharing:

Please share anything you are carrying into this gathering that may crowd your mind and your ability to be present here and now. Please brainstorm a Community Service.

Topic: Honoring Our Elders

The National [Native American] Indian Council on Aging put out the following statement during the COVID 19 pandemic: "By honoring and showing love for your Elders, you can help them overcome physical and mental issues that loneliness and a lack of social interaction can cause. Furthermore, you can gain a wealth of knowledge, history, and tradition by spending time with them and learning about their lives. Elders "are held in high regard for their wisdom—they are valued for being the bridge between the past and the present." " - *Clark, P., & Sherman, N.*

In American culture, we haven't always honored our elders. Advertising and the fitness craze pressure us to look young. We don't always take the time to sit and listen to the stories and experiences of those who have lived long lives. And so we miss the opportunity to learn history, life lessons, perseverance and the wonder of experiencing the ever-changing world in which we live. Let's explore the role of the elderly in our lives, and how we can honor their lives.

"When an old [person] dies, a library burns to the ground." - *African Proverb*

"Age should not have its face lifted, but it should rather teach the world to admire wrinkles as the etchings of experience and the firm line of character." - *Ralph B. Perry*

"I am not young enough to know everything." - *Oscar Wilde*

"The greatest untapped resource ...is the collective wisdom of our oldest generations."
- *Ron Schlegel*

“Although the hands of the elderly may not be
Smooth, supple, and unblemished,
They have a beauty all their own.
Each line, each spot, each scar
Has its own tale to tell.
Some are tales of tragedy, others are tales of triumph,
But they all combine to tell the unique story
Of that treasured person's life.
So the next time you're with an elder,
Gently take that person's hands within your own,
And look with wonder at a life truly lived.” - *Kelly Roper*

“I am very proud to be a part of the brand that made millions of woman feel younger...Olay Total Effects has everything that will make your skin glow and give it a youthful appearance. So why not try [it] and join me in the battle against aging.” - *Kajol*

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” - *Mother Teresa*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Was there a person in your life growing up who was considered an elder? Who and why? Is there anyone in your life like that now?
- Could you tell us examples of collective wisdom carried down through multiple generations?
- Could you share any special times you have spent with an elder or any precious stories they shared?
- If you could bring back an elder, what questions would you like to ask them?
- Describe a time you have experienced when elders were not honored. How did it make you feel? How did you respond?
- How has your view toward the elderly changed over the years? Why did it change?

(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:

“The afternoon knows what the morning never suspected.” - *Robert Frost*