

## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry

### Hope

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. December 2023

#### Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“In the bleak and cold winter,  
We gather ourselves in  
To light the fire to warm our spirits,  
To kindle the flame of love and hope.” - *Cynthia Landrum*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is the time to mention any major issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. SGM 2024 early registration is open at [fpc-stow-acton.org/sgm](http://fpc-stow-acton.org/sgm) . Please consider re-enrolling and feel free to invite a friend.

#### Topic: Hope

Hope looks forward, towards something that is better or more desirable than the current situation. It falls shy of certainty, yet suggests confidence in at least the possibility of a desired outcome. While we may have trouble knowing exactly what hope is, we usually know pretty clearly when we don't have it. Of course, to hope is to risk disappointment and at times the risk may seem too great to allow hope.

Most of us live with at least a minimal amount of hope all of the time. It is an interesting exploration to attempt to discover where and how we learned to hope. Did you learn to hope from your family, or perhaps because of your family? Was there some difficulty where you had to work hard to find hope for a resolution to the difficulty? Or is hope something that you seem to always have available, something that is innate within you? What role does hope play in your life?

“Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it and to work for it and to fight for it.” - *Barack Obama*

“Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.” - *Nelson Mandela*

“All kids need is a little help, a little hope, and somebody who believes in them.” - *Magic Johnson*

“God grant me the courage not to give up what I think is right even though I think it is hopeless.” - *Chester W. Nimitz*

“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” - *Vaclav Havel*

**Possible Questions for Discussion:**

- Have you ever helped someone else regain hope? Has someone else helped you regain hope? How?
- Sometimes our hopes are for ourselves, sometime for others. Can you share some of each?
- Have you ever lost hope and learned anything from that?
- For you is there a difference between optimism and hope?
- Could you share any memories of hopes from childhood and how they turned out?
- Could you share areas in which you are hopeful and other areas in which you find much less hope? What keeps you from hoping?
- Have you found ways to increase or restore your hope? How do you do that? What helps?

(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 very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.” - *Barbara Kingsolver*