

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**Identity**  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley, Northumberland, PA,  
Stephen Lambert, October 2017

**Welcoming Chimes, Chalice Lighting, and Opening Words (2 minutes):**

*We light the flame in the chalice to remind ourselves that we are part of a beloved community where we are encouraged to bring our authentic selves to join each other in sharing from our hearts and listening with our hearts. May it be so.*

Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self. **B. R. Ambedkar**

**Check-In and Check-Back (25 minutes):**

This structured process (and spiritual discipline) of deep listening and uninterrupted speaking offers participants the opportunity to know and connect with each other more deeply and personally than their busy lives and casual conversations usually allow.

- Check-In (up to 3 minutes, no interruptions)

Free yourself to be fully present with the group by noting any features of your inner or outer life that seem especially important for you today. Also indicate if you are open to comment during check-back.

- Check-Back (up to 2 minutes, no interruptions)

After everyone has finished checking in, briefly comment, if invited to do so, on any of the check-in statements that you have just heard.

**Topic: Identity (40 minutes)**

**Topic Readings:**

"I am not what has happened to me. I am what I choose to become." Carl Jung

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be." **William Shakespeare**

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment." **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

"Let your past be your springboard, not your quicksand." **Dr. Steve Maraboli**

"I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me." **Virginia**

**Woolf**

"If you went back and fixed all the mistakes you've made, you'd erase yourself." **Louis CK**

"I am a different person to different people. Annoying to one. Talented to another. Quiet to a few. Unknown to a lot. But who am I, to me?" **weheartit.com**

In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity. **Erik Erikson**

The ego is only an illusion, but a very influential one. Letting the ego-illusion become your identity can prevent you from knowing your true self. Ego, the false idea of believing that you are what you have or what you do, is a backwards way of assessing and living life.

**Wayne Dyer**

I always had long hair. When you lose it, you realise just how important it is to your identity.

**Delta Goodrem**

Spirituality is meant to take us beyond our tribal identity into a domain of awareness that is more universal. **Deepak Chopra**

To be a good citizen, it's important to be able to put yourself in other people's shoes and see the big picture. If everything you see is rooted in your own identity, that becomes difficult or impossible. **Eli Pariser**

Sexuality is who you are personally attracted to... But gender identity is who you are in your soul. **Caitlyn Jenner**

Spiritual identity means we are not what we do or what people say about us. And we are not what we have. We are the beloved daughters and sons of God. **Henri Nouwen**

Your brand is your public identity, what you're trusted for. And for your brand to endure, it has to be tested, redefined, managed, and expanded as markets evolve. Brands either learn or disappear. **Lisa Gansky**

### **Deep Listening**

One goal of deep listening is to create inviting space for another to share deeply from her/his heart, while we listen with an open heart that is willing to be touched not only by the words that are spoken but also by the feelings that are shared. Please open your heart to listen deeply as each person speaks.

The Topic Discussion is more informally structured. Participants are now free to respond to the topic, limiting themselves only by:

- Keeping to the topic;
- Speaking from personal experience (using “I” rather than “we”, “one” or “you” statements) and sharing only what we are comfortable sharing.
- Valuing the experience of others by sharing the time available and not debating or arguing.

Please choose one of these questions to frame your sharing. As time allows, we may do additional rounds of sharing. Each person has about three (3) minutes to share.

### **Topic Focus Questions**

- When meeting new people, what are the first three things I really want or need people to know about me?
- What is one thing few people know about me, but that I’m happy to share and I feel is part of my identity.
- What is my personal definition of identity?
- In my experience is one’s identity at church, work, or home authentic to one’s true self?
- Do I think of or explain my identity in terms of the past or in terms of who I want to become?
- To what extent is my identity permanent or in flux?
- Does pondering my identity bring me joy, calm, or uneasiness?
- During what periods of my life or under what type of conditions did my identity evolve or change the most?
- How am I affected by cultural influences, other individuals, or my own mental state when other people introduce me or I see my name or work in public view such as in print or verbal announcement?
- Do I believe that someone can experience a “crisis” of identity?
- Upon what do I base the majority of my identity? Educational attainment or a school? Hobby or vocation? Worldview? Gender? Family role? Group membership? Age?

**Likes and Wishes (10 minutes):** What did I enjoy about this session? What would I like to see done differently?

## **Extinguishing the Chalice and Closing Words: Identity**

Let them be as flowers, always watered, fed, guarded, admired, but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed, clinging on cliffs, like an eagle wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone, to live, to feel exposed to the madness of the vast, eternal sky. To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea, carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if then shunned by everyone, than to be a pleasant-smelling flower, growing in clusters in the fertile valley, where they're praised, handled, and plucked by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench than of sweet, fragrant lilac. If I could stand alone, strong and free, I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

### **Julio Noboa Polanco**

As we leave this place and this company, may the fellowship of this circle carry us forward, remind us of what we hold sacred, and encourage us every hour until we meet again.