

## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

### Language

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA

September 2025

#### Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“The entire living universe is an act of communication as well as creation. We play our destined parts well when we strive to make our entire conscious existence an act of connection and celebration... purpose and prayer.” — *J.W. Hardin*

**Check-in/Sharing:** Let's each take a couple minutes to check in with how we are feeling and anything we would like to share. Reminder confidentiality, share air time, no crosstalk. Finalize community service.

#### Topic: Language

While all animals communicate, and many in sophisticated ways, it can be argued that only humans have *language*, that is the ability to communicate abstract ideas, to express our inner thoughts. We communicate with others via reading and writing, but also by speaking, listening, and creating. But our experience of linguistic communication is not identical or universal. What is the story of your relationship with the world, as reflected through language? In this topic we'd like to explore those different linguistic stories and our relationship to words and communication.

“Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.” — *Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.*

“If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world.” — *Ludwig Wittgenstein*

“There are four ways, and only four ways, in which we have contact with the world. We are evaluated and classified by these four contacts: what we do, how we look, what we say, and how we say it.” — *Dale Carnegie*

“There is a reason it used to be a crime in the Confederate states to teach a slave to read: Literacy is power.” — *Matt Taibbi*

“Literacy isn't just about reading, writing, and comprehension. It's about culture, professionalism, and social outlook.” — *Taylor Ellwood*

### **Possible Questions for Discussion**

- What is one of the earliest memories you have of interacting through language?
- Do you have experiences of communication in more than one language?
- How does your sense of language connect to your identity? Your family/ community?
- What views towards literacy did your family/community hold? How did that impact your own experience?
- Could you share any books or other reading material that had an impact on you?
- Language is only one kind of literacy. Are you comfortable with other types such as art, music, science, history, math, other?

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

### **Closing Words**

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” — *George Bernard Shaw*