

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network
Learning

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA. March 2026

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“We Unitarian Universalists don’t drink from our chalice. Instead, we use it to hold the flame. The circle of the chalice helps keep the fire small. The flame doesn’t blind us. It doesn’t burn us. It gives us light, so we can see all the different things in the universe: even the invisible ones, because the Unitarian Universalist flame is a light of learning.” — *Elizabeth Harding*

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. Review talking points as needed. Group read aloud “Deep Listening”.

Topic: Learning

Life is a journey of learning. From infancy to old age our time is filled with moments of learning, from the profound to the mundane. But this journey is not the same for everyone. People have different learning styles, different experiences, different attitudes towards learning – indeed these can change over the course of our lifetimes.

For many of us, our first thoughts about “learning” are about the various experiences we have had in one school or another. Of course, many of the most important things we have learned in our lives were not things we learned in any school.

In this session we’d like to explore our relationship to and share stories of learning, reflecting on our own experiences.

“I’ve seen how you can’t learn anything when you’re trying to look like the smartest person in the room.” — *Barbara Kingsolver*

“You don’t understand anything until you learn it more than one way.” — *Marvin Minsky*

“I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.” — *Winston Churchill*

“One learns from books and example only that certain things can be done. Actual learning requires that you do those things.—” *Frank Herbert*

“I had discovered that learning something, no matter how complex, wasn't hard when I had a reason to want to know it.” — *Homer Hickam*

Possible Questions for Discussion

- What have you discovered about your own learning over the years? What has been easy for you to pick up? What has been difficult? Has that changed?
- Could you share situations in which you have a preferred learning style? What enhances or interferes with acquiring new knowledge or skills in these situations for you?
- What have you learned for fun? How did you learn it?
- How have you felt when confronted with a new project or external challenge that you didn't know how to handle? How did you work through to making it happen?
- If you want to figure out how to do something you have never done, how would you do that? How would you acquire a new skill? How would you become really good at something?
- Could you describe any kinds of things that you have been taught that just don't seem to stick?
- What is something you're really glad you learned? Something you regret not learning? Something you would like to learn?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share, ensuring each person has a turn before sharing again).

Closing Words

“You live and learn. At any rate, you live.” — *Douglas Adams*