

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry
Our Identities

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

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“We seek our place in the world
and the answers to our hearts’ deep questions.
As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.
May the light of our chalice remind us that this is a community of warmth,
of wisdom, and welcoming of multiple truths.” - *Julianne Lepp*

Check-in/Sharing: This is the time to mention any issues or events on your mind that you would like to share.

Topic: Our Identities

“It’s a girl (boy)!” From our very first moments, other people make assumptions about who we are, which groups we belong to and what roles we are expected to play in relationships and situations. As we grow, we become more self-aware, able to see these dynamics, discover what works for us and make choices to fit our own sense of self.

Many of us spend considerable time and energy constructing our identities, both discovering who we are and evolving who we would like to be. As we go through different stages in our lives and expand our relationships with others, we find additional roles we play and groups with which we might or might not identify.

Some of these identities, such as personal attributes, values, or social identities may become more central to our sense of self over time. Life offers us some major transitions, even crises, which give us opportunities to re-evaluate who we think we are and why we are here.

“One isn’t born one’s self. One is born with a mass of expectations, a mass of other people’s ideas — and you have to work through it all.” - *V.S. Naipaul*

“I am out with lanterns, looking for myself.” - *Emily Dickinson*

“Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”- *George Bernard Shaw*

“We live in a society that wants to label you with a color, sexuality, religion, or ethnicity. It divides us, but it also allows us to find pride in our identity.” - *Logan Browning*

“So many people go through life, and they never deal with their own issues, no matter what the issues are - ours happen to be gender identity. But, how many people go through life and just waste an entire life 'cause they'd never deal with themselves to be who they are.” - *Caitlyn Jenner*

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” - *Kurt Vonnegut*

“There's a point, around the age of twenty, when you have to choose whether to be like everybody else the rest of your life, or to make a virtue of your peculiarities.” - *Ursula K. Le Guin*

“Women’s liberation and the male midlife crisis were the same search - for personal fulfillment, common values, mutual respect, love. But while women’s liberation was thought of as promoting identity, the male midlife crisis was thought of as an identity crisis.” - *William Farrell*

“you are not a name / or a height, or a weight /or a gender /
you are not an age / and you are not where you are from
you are your favorite books / and the songs stuck in your head /
you are your thoughts /and what you eat for breakfast on Saturday mornings
you are a thousand things / but everyone chooses /
to see the million things / you are not
you are not / where you are from / you are / where you are going /
and i'd like / to go there Too” - *m.k*

“It’s never too late to be what you might have been.” - *George Elliot*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Could you share any stories about parts of your identity that were formed in childhood?
- Have you adopted any behaviors, attitudes or presentation (e.g. clothing, vehicle) to feel more part of a social group with which you identified?
- Were there external expectations or stereotypes that didn’t fit for you? How have you embraced or rejected, needed to prove or disprove specific identities?
- What attributes or values do you consider important to your identity?
- Are there groups others might put you in that are essential to your identity? Are there others that feel less relevant to you?
- Can you think of any relationships or situations in which people think of you differently than you think of yourself? Have you ever felt like an imposter?
- Have you grown in awareness or chosen to change any parts of your identity through different life passages or relationships? Any specific triggers? Identity crises?

(Take a few minutes to consider the topic and questions and then share).

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

Closing Words

“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.” – *Oscar Wilde*