

## **Rituals and Rites of Passage**

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, May 2018

### **Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

“We light this chalice each time we meet as a ritual act which says, this is a sacred time we are marking in our lives. The flame reminds us that we are not alone, that our being together sustains us, sustains life itself, and will light our way into new territory”. – *Rev Maj-Britt Johnson*

**Check-in/Sharing:** This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share. If you have not yet chosen a community service activity, this would be a good time.

### **Topic: Rituals and Rites of Passage**

Rituals are a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order. A ritual can range from a child’s bedtime, to a family holiday celebration, or a solemn ceremony. Families can have their own Rites of Passage acknowledging age, abilities, skills mastered or privileges earned. Rites of Passage can involve ritual activities which prepare an individual for a significant life transition, such as induction, graduation, marriage or even death. Throughout life we experience significant milestones, often sharing these Rites of Passage with our families, with institutions, and with our communities, such as our religious community. Today we explore what these rituals and Rites of Passage mean for us personally.

“Worshippers may assume they hold common beliefs, but, it is religious ritual that creates and sustains continued fellowship” - *Daniel Lee*

“Let us build memories in our children, lest they drag out joyless lives, lest they allow treasures to be lost because they have not been given the keys”. – *Antoine De St.-Exupery*

“Ritual is, therefore, a primary site of contact between self and society, a place where our individual selves are transformed into collective selves”. – *Mark Pedasty*

“Rituals are not fixed—they are constructed and reconstructed over time, to fit people’s needs.” – *Gleb Tsipursky*

“The ethical life is maintained in being a common culture, which also upholds the togetherness of society. Unlike the modern youth culture, a common culture sanctifies the adult state, to which it offers rites of passage.” – *Roger Scruton*

“Ritual is a more effective means than law to achieve order.” – *Jonathan Chan*

"Graduation day brings with it a roller coaster of emotions for grads and their families alike. It's a time of celebration and achievement. There is reflection on past trials and successes as well as hope for the future." - *Shutterfly*

"In truth a family is what you make it. It is made strong, not by number of heads counted at the dinner table, but by the rituals you help family members create, by the memories you share, by the commitment of time, caring, and love you show to one another, and by the hopes for the future you have as individuals and as a unit." - *Marge Kennedy*

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Could you share any memories of rituals from your childhood and what they meant to you?
2. Could you describe how any rites of passage you have experienced affected you?
3. Have you created personal or family rituals, or rites of passage?
4. What religious rituals have worked for you? Have you found any that have not?
5. Do you participate in the routine rituals of weekly religious services? How does participation make you feel?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

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

**Closing Words:**

"Traditions, traditions. Without our traditions our lives would be as shaky as, as a fiddler on the roof". – *Tevye of Anatevka*

Thanks to UU Community Church Chapel Hill NC