

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry

This I Believe

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA October 2022

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“In these hard times, let us look first to the response of love.

In the midst of challenge, may our chalice flame bear witness to the inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

In the midst of uncertainty, may our chalice be a beacon of encouragement, that our values may guide our choices.

Let us look first to the response of love.” - *Maureen Killoran*

Check-in/Sharing: This is the time to mention any issues or events on your mind that you would like to share. Please plan a community service if you have not already done so.

Topic: **This I Believe**

Unitarian Universalists draw wisdom from many of the world's religions and other sources. If you talk with ten UUs, it is likely that you will hear ten different stories about their religious backgrounds and how they came to be UUs.

UUs do not share a dogmatic set of beliefs or creeds, but our congregations do have a set of seven principles that help govern our interactions with one another. From the UUA bylaws:

“We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part”

Religious/spiritual beliefs are just one aspect of our overall belief systems. We hold beliefs about how human nature works, how the natural world works, and how to survive and thrive in our daily lives. Many of our beliefs have been learned from our parents, teachers, mentors, and others, or developed based on our own experiences. Some beliefs change over the course of our lives; others appear to be more permanent or even inborn. It can be enlightening to think about our beliefs, where they came from, and how they have changed over time.

"Nobody can impose your beliefs on you. It's always you who in the last instance can permit a belief to be true for you or not. – Marc Reklau

"Within you is the power to do things you never dreamed possible. This power becomes available to you just as soon as you change your beliefs."
– Maxwell Maltz

"Anyone who thinks sitting in church can make you a Christian must also think that sitting in a garage can make you a car." – Garrison Keillor

"Hindus believe in reincarnation. When a person dies their soul merely moves from one body to the next on its path to reach Nirvana (Heaven). So, while it is a sad time when someone dies, it is also a time of celebration." – Cindy Cheng (adapted)

"Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants."
– Epictetus

"The best things in life are free." – Coco Chanel

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Why did you become a Unitarian Universalist (or simply decide to attend FPC)?
- How do you think your beliefs are similar to or different from other UUs?
- Could you share parts of your spiritual journey or any of your spiritual practices?
- How have your beliefs influenced the groups you have chosen to be involved with over the course of your life (at work, school, in the community, with organized religion, etc.)?
- What beliefs have you changed during your lifetime? Why did you change them?

- What are the beliefs you hold most dear? What would it take for you to change them?

(Group will 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

“Your beliefs come through your thoughts, your thoughts come through your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny”

– *Mahatma Gandhi*