

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry

Travel as a Spiritual Journey

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, February 2020

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 briefly any major issues or events on your mind that you would like to share.

Topic: Travel as a Spiritual Journey

For many people, travel can be a spiritual exploration, offering new perspectives on ourselves as well as opportunities to connect to other people, other cultures and the natural world. Whether we enjoy armchair travel, walking outdoors, or journeying to distant locations, we can find inspiration in new vistas.

For many of us, nature offers sacred experiences: watching a butterfly hatch, hugging a redwood tree, viewing the endlessness of the ocean, or hiking mountains. We can find ourselves more connected to all of life, and sometimes our personal problems can seem smaller in contrast.

When we visit neighbors, friends, family, or completely new cultures, whether close to home or at a distance, we have the chance to open ourselves to hearing what is important to others, what their struggles are and how they deal with problems. This can help us find new parts of ourselves, and can offer us fresh ways to look at problems and even alternative solutions.

Sometimes during a journey or upon returning home, whether from a book or a physical trip, stepping out of our day to day existence can help us to step back and see both ourselves and others afresh.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” - *Marcel Proust*

“And into the forest I go to lose my mind and find my soul.” - John Muir

“The more I traveled the more I realized that fear makes strangers of people who should be friends.” - *Shirley MacLaine*

“Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.” - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“A book is a magical thing that lets you travel to far-away places without ever leaving your chair.” - *Katrina Mayer*

“Our happiest moments as tourists always seem to come when we stumble upon one thing while in pursuit of something else.” - *Lawrence Block*

“The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you leave something good behind.” – *Anthony Bourdain*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Could you describe any eye-opening experiences or new awareness you have had from meeting or being exposed to people in other cultures?
- Have you ever found a way to connect to someone you could barely communicate with due to a language barrier?
- Could you tell us about special places in nature you have visited and any magical or mystical experiences they bring you?
- Have you found any memorable experiences when you let yourself wander?
- Have you ever returned home and seen your own way of living from a fresh perspective?
- Are there places you are drawn to? Do you have any sense of what draws you to them?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share).

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

Closing Words

“We gather as many drops, each winding our own path down life’s surfaces and ruts.

Here we pool together as a single body, flowing together for a time.

Together we are a stream, at times even a river,

for with our shared force we can travel toward oceans of meaning and seas of connection.” - *Leslie Takahashi*

Adapted from: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, Feb 2014