

Smart Church

Chalice Circle Handbook - Connie Goodbread

Small Group Ministry for Unitarian Universalist Congregations



**The Big Three
Ten Sessions**

Introduction

Unitarian Universalism is a covenantal not a creedal faith. Therefore, how we do what we do, the way we treat each other and behave, and the processes we use to help discern the path we will take, make all the difference in the world.

This Smart Church - Chalice Circle Handbook is designed to help your Chalice Circle Facilitators lead deep discussions. We begin every session with covenant.

Unitarian Universalism is a living tradition. Therefore, we must always be aware of the fact that the covenants we write, serve for as long as they hold meaning for the people. Some stand the test of time:

*“Love is the doctrine of this church.
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace
To seek knowledge in freedom
To serve humankind in fellowship
Thus do we covenant.”*

These are often more poetic - as Michael Dowd would say, *they are written in night language, the language of poetry and holy books*. They are love poems that we say to one another about our faith. They sing to us across time and hold deep meaning.

Others are more behavioral and straightforward. As Connie Barlow would say, *they are written in day language - the language of science and facts*.

*We covenant to:
Live up to our commitments
Treat one another with respect
Be prepared
Serve our mission
Stay in relationship*

These covenants are written so that we can begin to build healthy norms into our congregational culture thus helping to create a safe environment so that we can align our efforts and trust one another as we work to build the just and loving world. The life time of this type of covenant may be shorter.

But whether we are writing a poetic covenant or a behavioral covenant we should come back to them often and ask ourselves if these are the promises we still wish to make to one another and if we are upholding them.

The work that your Chalice Circles will do on it's covenant is so that everyone will know how they can expect to be treated and how they are expected to treat others.

Remember - that covenant begins with one's self and lives inside one's heart. When covenant is broken we begin the healing with ourselves. We ask; *How am I abiding by the covenant? What is my role? How could I behave differently in order to be in deeper relationship? What am I feeling? What do I need to own? Who do I need to get right with? Do I need to apologize? Can I ask to be forgiven? Can I forgive?*

Purpose of the Smart Church Chalice Circles

Participants in Small Group Ministry (SGM) that I refer to as Chalice Circles should understand that this is a way for us to go deep. It is a way for us to get to know one another. Chalice Circles are not merely social groups nor are they affinity groups. These particular sessions are not meant to stay as a group for more than the allotted time of 10 sessions. Often people complain that - now we know each other and feel safe together so we just want to stay in this circle. You see that defeats the purpose. This handbook is written as a maturational growth tool. It is meant to help members of your congregation go deeper into Unitarian Universalism. It is meant to help members of your congregation get to know one another better. Not just one group of 6 - 10 but rather several groups of 6 - 10 people. If your Chalice Circle becomes friends - go be friends and then join another Chalice Circle. I bet you make friends there too.

Suggested - Join the Small Group Ministry Network - <http://www.smallgroupministry.net>

Facilitators (some of this was adapted from the Small Group Ministry Facilitator Training Manual Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane)

Downloadable PDF

http://www.uuspokane.org/images/SGM_Facilitator_Training_Manual.pdf

Only trained facilitators should lead Smart Church Chalice Circles. They should be trained by the Minister (If your congregation has more than one Minister - good for you - the Senior Minister decides who trains and leads the Chalice Circle facilitator group.) This is a shared ministry experience. Your congregation may also develop a Small Group Ministry Steering Committee that would help to organize all of your congregation's Small Group Ministry. This could include Smart Church Chalice Circles as well as your Affinity Groups (the Men's Group, The Past Presidents Covenant Group, Humanist Forum, The Unitarian Universalist Parenting Group, The Campfire Crowd, The Book Club - etc), and other Small Group Ministry that you may also have in place.

Criteria for Choosing Chalice Circle Facilitators:

With input and insight from the Minister and other leaders such as the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee (two congregational leaders who help the Minister co-ordinate the program) we select leaders who:

- Are trusted members of the congregation - elders who hold in their hearts the deepest meaning of the faith
- Are clear about their role as partners in the shared ministry of the congregation
- Agree to participate in facilitator meetings and trainings
- Understand the difference between confidentiality and secrets
- Understand the difference between a class and a covenanted group
- Will follow the simple structure of Chalice Circles
- Are aware of the difference between leading a meeting and facilitating a meeting. Facilitators expect to listen a lot and talk only a little!

Facilitator Fundamental Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the facilitator is to oversee the structure of their Small Group Ministry:

- Set the meeting time date and place
- Keep the discussion on track
- Ask deep questions
- Model deep listening skills
- Make sure to include everyone in discussion
- Focus on process rather than outcome
- Identify and handle awkward situations
- Help the group maintain covenant

Each facilitator is appointed and trained by the Minister and the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee and each is expected to:

- Participate in the training
- Attend the Chalice Circle Facilitator Group
- Follow the Chalice Circle format
- Commit to facilitate their group for 10 sessions.

Group Members Roles and Responsibilities

The role of group members is to care for the well being of the group by attending to its primary purposes: the building of community, deepening spiritual understanding of Unitarian Universalism, and service.

Group members' responsibilities include:

- Attending all meetings unless illness, family, or other situation prevents

- If absence or lateness is unavoidable, letting facilitator know in advance
- Offering support to group members if welcomed and appropriate
- Keeping covenant

Host Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the host(s)

- Provide a place for the group's meeting
- Provide clear and concise directions to the meeting place
- Provide chairs or other appropriate seating for members
- Provide water, but not food

The host for a Chalice Circle may vary from month-to-month or remain the same. If the Chalice Circle is meeting at the church, the host should arrive early and set up the space.

Minister & SGM Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The Minister with help from the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee will choose and train the facilitators.

The Small Group Ministry Steering Committee is appointed by the congregational Board of Trustees with input from the Minister. The Minister and the Committee must work very closely together in shared ministry team work. Therefore, the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee should be made up of 2-3 trusted congregational elders who will be able to work well with their Minister. This is not a place for faction representation.

The Steering Committee will meet regularly to support the program and help with the planning of the Facilitator training and Facilitator Chalice Circle meetings. The Steering Committee will act as mentors for the facilitators as needed. The topics are in this handbook.

The Steering Committee will:

- Meet each fall to organize all the congregation's SGM
- Solicit Smart Church Chalice Circle and other SGM group members (not steering committee members)
- Sort these members based on their time and place preferences and needs
- Organize participant information for the Facilitators. This will include each person's contact information (name, phone numbers, e-mail, street address) and special needs
- Indicate who has agreed to act as Chalice Circle hosts
- Help the Minister select and train the Facilitators (in small congregations without a Minister, the Steering Committee would select and train the Facilitators)
- Be available when Facilitators have questions
- Track the progress of the groups and topics of SMG outside of the Smart Church Chalice Circles

- Ensure that data is available on the congregation's calendar
- Assist in the choosing of Service Projects when help is needed
- Compile a list of Service Projects for others to utilize - remember that service projects can be either inside the congregation or outside in the larger parish. This is more easily accomplished if the congregation has a demographics study of the parish.
- Survey all SGM and Chalice Circle facilitators and members annually to tweak the program to fit the congregation (if you are doing other SGM programs as well as these Smart Church Chalice Circles)

A Checklist for the Facilitator

Your group information will include each person's contact information (name, phone numbers, e-mail, street address) and special needs. It will indicate who has offered to be a host (Facilitators should not act as hosts) and may suggest a good home to line up first. A group may have several offers of meeting places, but usually it works best to have a primary place and a second as back up. Another option for meeting location is to meet in a room at church if needed for accessibility or other reasons.

Please let the Steering Committee Chair know if there is anyone on your list that you would be uncomfortable working with. No need to explain. Just don't call that person. Call or e-mail the Steering Committee Chair and they will attempt to find another group for the person. Some folks may have changed schedules.

Decide on your first meeting date. You'll need to look ahead at your calendar and aim for a schedule that works best for you. Set the meeting dates for your group through all of the monthly sessions. Of course there will be sessions that people will occasionally miss. The group does have the option to reschedule a meeting date if agreed to by the group members.

Find your first host. Be sure that s/he has enough chairs or appropriate seating for the number of people in the group. Assure the host that s/he does not need to prepare refreshments. Get really clear directions to his/her home so you can tell the others as you call them. Ask the host if you can give his/her phone number and e-mail address to other group members in case they need more directions. You may want to line up a back up host, but it will probably work best if the groups meet at the same place each time.

Make arrangements for food if food will be served. (This is highly dependent on the time of day that your group will be meeting.)

Call each member of the group. Introduce yourself, and warmly invite him/her to the first gathering of the Smart Church Chalice Circle. Encourage people to come to the first meeting and let them know that the group plans to begin on time. Get confirmation that each does

indeed want to be in the group. Discourage changes since it may be difficult to reassign people.

If someone withdraws from your group please let the SGM Steering Committee chair know. It opens up a space for others.

Briefly clarify the expectation that the group will begin and end on time. Give them your phone number/e-mail address in case they have questions, and let them know it is very helpful for them to contact you if they're unavailable to make a meeting, so that you and the group won't worry about them.

Determine if each person prefers e-mail or telephone contact from you. Reminder emails or calls are usually appreciated.

Meeting Format Summary

- Light the Chalice / Ring Chimes
- Read the covenant (If the congregation does not have a covenant that they have written choose one from the gray Hymnal. If the congregation does have a covenant make sure that all the participants have a copy of it for the first meeting. You may give it out before or during the meeting.)
- Check-in
- Food (optional)
- Opening
- Meeting Topic - hand out the Smart Church Chalice Circle article for this session
- Ask the questions provided in this handbook
- Check-out
- Closing
- Extinguish the Chalice / Ring Chimes
- Group Business

Meeting Format Detailed

- Chalice lighting, sound a chime and a moment of silence (1-3 minutes) This will help center your group
- Opening Words - read the covenant (if the congregation does not have a covenant that they have written choose one from our gray Hymnal) At the first meeting the group will write its own covenant or talk deeply about the congregational covenant. (See the first session)
- Check-in. Participants share brief news of what has been happening in their lives. Each group develops its own customs as to the length of sharing. This portion of the meeting may expand from time to time if circumstances call for it. Helpful lead-ins are:

“What is most on your mind today?” “What do you need to share to be fully present to the group?” “Share something that has happened to you since we last met that is significant to you.” Or use “Mind/Body/Soul” check in.

- Meeting Topic - hand out the Smart Church Chalice Circle article for this session. (this may also be done ahead of time)
- Ask the questions that are provided. These questions are meant as a way of simulating deep reflection and thoughtful sharing. Each person has an uninterrupted time to share what comes up for him/her in response to the reading and questions.
- There should be time for discussion after all have shared. You may wish to have a talking stick of some sort to remind the group who is speaking.
- Covenant should be upheld.
- Check-out - Each person briefly states what they are feeling as the meeting draws to a close. One word of how they are at the moment.
- Closing Words from the Topic (poem, quotation, etc.) - one is provided, however you may choose something different if it speaks to you and seems appropriate for the topic.
- Extinguish the chalice/candle and sound a chime (and other possible closing ritual if the group chooses including songs or group hug).
- Group Business. This may include: service projects; date, time, and location of next meeting; other.
- At the first meeting determine if members would like to receive the Smart Church Articles for the next sessions in advance of the group times, and if so, how to best receive the information.
- At the first meeting ask if it is okay to share contact information with group members. If okay, arrange to provide a contact list for each group member.

The Congregational Covenant - First Session (done at the beginning of every new set of Smart Church Chalice Circles)

Does your congregation already have a covenant? If so please use it in your Chalice Circles for this first session. But use it in a very real way. Here is an example of a congregational covenant:

We, the members of the Harmony Congregation, covenant:

- To extend a warm welcome, generous hospitality, and loving acceptance to all people,
- To keep the wellbeing of the whole community in minds and hearts,
- To practice caring for one another,
- To contribute to our shared mission,
- To practice mutual responsibility, shared ministry and leadership,
- To set and uphold healthy boundaries,
- To engage in direct, respectful communication and practice deep listening,
- To honor and celebrate differences.

In the spirit of humility, openness and vulnerability thus do we pledge to uphold this covenant.

If your congregation has a written covenant - the first session of every set of Smart Church Chalice Circles will consist of:

- Chalice lighting / Chimes / Silence
- Give out your congregation's covenant. Make sure that everyone in the circle has a copy (like the one above)
- Read it together, out loud
- Check in
- Food (optional)
- Ask:
 - ❖ What do we mean by *to extend a warm welcome, generous hospitality, and loving acceptance to all people?*
 - ❖ Go line by line. through the congregational covenant.
 - ❖ How do we uphold this covenant?
 - ❖ Is there anything missing that we, as a group would like to add?
 - ❖ Capture additions
 - ❖ If something comes up about not being able to abide by the original covenant - remind them that this is not the place to rewrite the congregational covenant. Rather we are here to move deeper into it. There will be other opportunities for them to contribute to a congregational covenant rewrite.
- Discussion
- Check-out

- Closing Words
- Extinguish the chalice/Chimes/Silence
- Group Business.
- Determine if members would like to receive the Smart Church Articles for the next sessions in advance of the group times, and if so, how to best receive the information.
- Ask if it is okay to share contact information with group members. If okay, arrange to provide a contact list to each group member.

If your congregation does not have a written covenant - the first session of every set of Smart Church Chalice Circles will consist of:

- Chalice lighting/Chimes/Silence
- Read a covenant from our gray Hymnal
- Check in
- Food
- For the topic we will be talking about how we will be together. Ask:
 - ❖ What do we need to have present in the group so that we feel safe?
 - ❖ What do we need to have present in the room so that we can share deeply?
 - ❖ What are the promises we need to make to each other?
 - ❖ Capture these concepts
 - ❖ As a group write them into a covenant.
- Discussion
- Check-out
- Closing Words
- Extinguish the chalice/Chimes/Silence
- Group Business.
- Determine if members would like to receive the Smart Church Articles for the next sessions in advance of the group times, and if so, how to best receive the information.
- Ask if it is okay to share contact information with group members. If okay, arrange to provide a contact list to each group member.

Smart Church Chalice Circles
The Big Three
Session #2

The Smart church

Faith Development is all we do.

"When we are grasped by the vision of a center of value and power more luminous, more inclusive and more true than that to which we are devoted, we initially experience the new as the enemy or the slayer - that which destroys our "god." Alfred North Whitehead wrote, "Religion is the transition from God the Void to God the Enemy, and from God the Enemy to God the Companion." Only with death of our previous image can a new and more adequate one arise."

— James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*

When your life is filled with the desire to see the holiness in everyday life, something magical happens: ordinary life becomes extraordinary, and the very process of life begins to nourish your soul! Rabbi Harold Kushner

In order to change our way of thinking or something that we believe to be true we need more information - new insight and deeper understanding. We cannot get those things if we believe that we are a finished product, perfect just the way we are, in no need of improvement or incapable of revelation. If we think that we have all the truth, the one and only truth or that there is nothing for us to learn, then we are stuck in a state of stagnation.

Some people are uncomfortable with the idea that they still have much to learn and/or that some of the things that they think are true today are only, maybe at best, a small piece of the truth. Some people cannot let go of what they have in order to gain new insight. It is too scary. Others are comfortable with the idea that they are never finished and, therefore, come to new and renewed understanding everyday. Some people are a little of both.

Unitarian Universalism is a spiritual discipline that supports the individual as they develop. It urges people ever deeper into their understanding of what is true and holy. It is not a spiritual discipline that uses the fears of one stage of faith to coerce people to fight a holy war or sacrifice their children to some cause or god. It is, however, insistent in its pluralism and the individual's responsible search for truth and meaning.

Here are Fowler's Stages of Faith:

Pre-stage: Undifferentiated Faith (Infancy)

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood)

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith (School Years or beyond)

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence)

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood, later or never)

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith (Midlife and Beyond or never)

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

James Fowler studied Unitarians in Northern New England to develop his theory - all white people. How do you think this plays out in different cultures?

We could use the story of Santa to describe these stages of faith.

Stage 1: You sit the child on Santa's lap. She screams and reaches for you.

Stage 2: You go and stand in line to see Santa. The child is intrigued but hides behind your legs and really does not want to sit on Santa's lap.

Stage 3: Your child is a true believer and wants to know all there is to know about Santa, the reindeer, Mrs. Claus, how he can get into your house if there is no chimney, how he knows what she wants, etc. She will fight with other children who tell her there is no Santa.

Stage 4: Early in this stage they want the truth but when they hear that there is no Santa they are devastated. They begin to develop their own thinking on this and do not want to be fooled but still may long for the way they once believed. Later in this stage they believe there is no Santa.

Stage 5: They understand that they are Santa.

Stage 6: They know that there is a very deep truth at the heart of Santa. Santa is the spirit of generosity that, if fostered in the hearts and minds of people makes life a joy. They embody that spirit.

Parents are often in the later portion of stage four when their 10 year old enters it. When confronted by the child demanding the "truth" the parent, because they feel a little guilty about what they know will be seen by their child as a lie - blurts out that there is no such

thing or person as Santa. That is the truth that is available to them at this stage of their own faith development.

In our culture it is unfortunate that so many of our families live far apart. It is the wise grandparent that can help the child see themselves as a person with a great deal of generosity alive inside of them and that while the story that is built up around Santa may be wishful thinking, the fact that *It is more blessed to give than to receive* is the truth at the heart of the cultural myth. Of course Santa is not a common cultural myth for everyone.

As Unitarian Universalists we have been in a discussion around the evolution of our Religious Education programs that mainly focus on children into Faith Development programs. Faith development is all we do and it is for everyone. The issue that comes up in our congregations is the discomfort around the word faith. We have become comfortable with “religious” because of the word “education” Education is a technical word - void of emotion - something we do for others. It is an intellectual endeavor. We provide an education for those who need it.

To be in the place where we are struggling with words is not bad. It is necessary. It is important to deeply understand and appreciate this struggle with words. It is genuine and part of what each individual goes through in the process of faith development. It is a vital part of stages 4 and 5. But we also need to be sure that we do not get in the way of the struggle just because it makes us uncomfortable. Stopping the struggle is not good for the individual, congregation or our faith. It is not helpful. The struggle is important and valuable.

Faith Development is a lifelong process. It is never ending. We cannot stay in the comfortable place that we have found - we must move on and become and become and become yet again. We are always becoming. We are never finished. There is always more to do, more to learn. There is always change, and hopefully, I will be more tomorrow than I am today.

*Faith development is all we do.
Unitarian Universalism is all we teach.
The congregation is the curriculum.*

Questions for “Faith development is all we do.”

1. Look “faith” and “religious” up in the dictionary and think how you might apply them to Unitarian Universalism.
2. The smart church understands that it must embrace change and learn to reinvent itself over and over again. Are we comfortable with the discomfort that comes with needed change?
3. Are we willing to be changed by the wisdom of others?
4. Have you ever experienced the death of a “god”? Or something else that you believed in?
5. Where are you in your faith development? Where did you come from? Where are you now? Are you comfortable with the idea that you are never finished - but always a work in process?
6. Do you have any experience with cultures other than the dominant culture in the United States? How do you think Stages of Faith plays out in different cultures?
7. How does our congregation support the faith development of each individual?
8. How do we relate to our children? Seen and not heard? Not seen, not heard?
9. What is one topic of faith you would like to know more about? Where will you learn it?
10. What do you have faith in?

Closing: Tapestry of Faith - <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/virtueethics/workshop9/workshopplan/stories/194339.shtml>

The Gift of a Gemstone

A wisdom tale from many cultures, including Buddhist.

A wise woman, a teacher, was passing through a forest. There, among the leaves, was something shiny. She wiped away the leaves and dirt and beheld a beautiful, large gem. "My, this is pretty," the wise woman said. She put the jewel in her pouch and continued on her way.

When the sun was high in the sky, she sat down under a tree to eat her simple lunch. She was barely settled, when she saw a figure approaching. It was a man and, to judge from his dress, a poor man. "Kind and gentle lady, do you have any food to share with a poor beggar?"

"I have plenty," she replied with a smile, digging into her small sack. She pulled out the gem that was on top, a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese. She offered the bread and cheese to the beggar. But the beggar's eyes had grown big at the sight of the lovely gem.

"Sweet lady, that is a magnificent jewel!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, do you like it? Here, take it, too." And she gave the man the gem, the bread, and the cheese.

The beggar could not believe his luck! He wrapped the gem in his cloak and quickly scampered off.

The wise woman arose and started off on her way again.

She was surprised a few minutes later to hear footsteps behind her. She turned and saw the beggar before her again.

The beggar held out the jewel. "Wise woman, may I give this back to you. I don't want it!"

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I want whatever it is you have that allowed you to give it away."

One full minute of silence:

Closing prayer

We pray for the generosity of spirit that opens us up to seeing that others may need what we have. We hope that we are brave enough to give away what we have away.

Smart Church Chalice Circles
The Big Three
Session #3

The Smart church

Worship - as faith development

Worshipping in community can make us whole. – Rebecca Parker

Worship - worth ship - this is the time we set aside each week to celebrate that which we find most worthy. What is it, that is worthy of our devotion? What is it that our beloved community values most? When guests come and witness our worship what do they walk away with? What do they learn about us? What curriculum are we teaching? What is deeply Unitarian Universalist about our worship? Are guests welcomed in and fed?

Worship is a spiritual table that we set each week and invite people into. What is it that we serve? It is like Thanksgiving. Would you invite family and friends to your home for Thanksgiving and not have anything there they could eat? Of course not. You would make sure that the vegans and the gluten free - the vegetarians and the carnivores all had something that was just the right dish for them.

Worship may be our one (especially when we are small) public offering. Worship is not just for those of us who have already found our faithful path in Unitarian Universalism. It is also, and maybe more importantly, for those who might still need the good news of Unitarian Universalism. We must remember that everything that is served at our welcome table will not be our favorite dish. Some things that are served are for others. Worship is not meant to feed only the few - it is meant to feed the many.

Worship at its best is a holy space in time where people can lay their burdens down, be transformed in some way, fed and then challenged to pick up those burdens again and charged with the task of going out to transform the world. This is important, therefore, we need to make every effort to make worship safe, sacred, welcoming, challenging and moving.

A worshipping community is a diverse community of all ages and many cultures. Worship is not designed for any one person or group but rather it is for the entire community. Therefore, there must be something for everyone, young and the old alike. We need to ask ourselves who and what is missing? Why? What could we change to make it possible for more people to be fed?

I have heard, “We need young families to survive.” and “Children are our future.” While these statements are partially true they are not a good enough reason to want children to be part of the congregation. Children need to be part of the now. Adults need children. Children need adults. Together we will make a difference. Together we will build the beloved community. Children in the beloved community make the community whole. While children will carry the vision, that is partially our vision, forward, it will be changed to include their vision. This is as it should be. Adults lay a foundation for children to build upon. If we have lived up to our responsibilities to our Unitarian Universalist children they will change us and we will all become more. In order to have this happen we must be in deep genuine relationship. I want to suggest that part of that deep relationship is developed in worshipping together.

I have also heard, “Children can’t sit still through the sermon. Children will be restless and noisy during worship. Children will not be able to pay attention to the sermon.” Nobody sits still or constantly pays attention to the sermon. If we are saying that our service is too boring for children, I might say that perhaps the sermon is just too boring. As for restless and noisy, so are adults and we must teach everyone worship manners. It is not the children we don’t want in the service, it is disruptive behavior – from anybody. If we covenant to be together in respectful relationship and we call ourselves and one another back into covenant when we make a mistake, our healthy relationships shouldn’t be hard to build or maintain.

Questions for “Worship”

1. The Rebecca Parker quote, *Worshiping in community can make us whole*. What does it mean?
2. What is our worship style?
3. Are some people fed to bursting while others walk away hungry?
4. Who is welcome in our worship?
5. Are children welcome?
6. How diverse is our congregation? Age, Cultural, Socioeconomic, Sexual Preferences?
7. How many learning styles are used in our worship service?
8. How do we teach our children our deepest values?
9. How can a worshiping community make us whole?
10. What is the difference between spirituality and religion?
11. How is spirituality present in our worship?
12. What deep and abiding value is worthy of our devotion?

Closing: Alice Blair Wesley Minns Lectures #5

*We pledge to walk together in the spirit of mutual love.
The spirit of love is alone worthy of our ultimate, our religious loyalty.
So, we shall meet often to take counsel concerning the ways of love,
and we will yield religious authority solely to our own understanding of what these ways are,
as best we can figure them out or learn or remember them, together.*

Smart Church Chalice Circles

The Big Three

Session #4

The Smart church

A Day of Pleasant Bread

They have all gone now and the house is very still. For the first time this evening I can hear the familiar sound of the December wind blustering about the house, complaining at the closed doorways, asking questions at the shutters; but here in my room, under the green reading lamp, it is warm and still. Although Harriet has closed the doors, covered the coals in the fireplace and said goodnight, the atmosphere still seems to tingle with the electricity of genial humanity. – David Grayson

Happy Holidays! Thanksgiving is my brother's favorite holiday. He says that it is because there are no gifts involved. But that is not really true is it? The gifts are actually in the holiday, they are just different. My brother and his family spend time sprucing up their home, making space ready for sleeping guests and shopping for the groceries. For weeks we email back and forth the menu plans. The family spends days traveling to my brother's home. We bake and cook for several days before Thanksgiving. Each person takes great delight in making their special dish. The children cook as well as the adults. Those who have no talent for cooking, clean up, set the table or run to the store. We go to the store in bunches because we always forget the fresh ginger, blue cheese, cheap bourbon for the sweet potatoes or something. We play games while we cook. We watch football and movies. It is family. It is warm and wonderful and it begins our family holidays.

Christmas is my favorite holiday. Christmas with all its pagan pageantry and Christian trappings, delights me. I love the tree and the manger; our little manger includes a Santa, fairies, multiracial angels, the holy family, camels and reindeer. I love Santa, the carols, the lights, the candles, the wrapping paper and ribbons. I love the Yule log. I love the house all decorated and the smell of cinnamon and ginger. I love the message of love, renewal and joy. I love the celebration. But most of all I love the spirit of generosity at the heart of it all. I know that we spend too much money and I agree that we should spend less and make the gifts that we give more meaningful. I know that the true joy of the season is not in what you get but in what you give. Far too often we give from our pocketbooks, not from our hearts. It is too easy to go and buy something. It is much harder to figure out what would be the most valuable thing that you could give to another person, a group or the world.

I have two little granddaughters. They are 9 and 6 years old. For the last several Christmases whenever they talked about what they wanted for Christmas we would ask them what they

were going to give to Mommy, Daddy or each other. This year, for the first time, before they told us what they wanted, they came and told us how much they were looking forward to what they will give to the people they love. I am sure that the conversation was led by the 9 year old. The fact that this season began this way is a great joy to me. My fondest wish for them is that they will be people with generous spirits. It is the only road to happiness.

The opening quote above is from a little book written in 1926 – “A Day of Pleasant Bread” by David Grayson. I think this is a wonderful story and I highly recommend it. The message in this story is that far too often we leave it up to Christmas to make up for all that is wrong in our lives. Our expectations are too high. How could one day possibly make right all the wrongs? When the day falls short of meeting the impossible expectations that we have set up, we are disappointed. Christmas gets blamed. If instead, we simply allowed the day to be one of generosity, gratitude, companionship, warm hearth and enough to eat, the day would meet our expectations and end in our contentment.

So whatever your December holiday is, Hanukkah, Yule, Solstice, Kwanzaa or Christmas I wish you a day of pleasant bread and genial humanity.

Happy Holidays!

Questions for “A day of Pleasant Bread.”

1. Is there a holiday memory that you would like to share?
1. Holidays are both happy and sad - what are your feelings about the holiday that is celebrated in your cultural tradition that takes place close to the winter solstice?
2. What is your family’s culture and tradition?
3. Is there a holiday movie that you are fond of - that speaks about your favorite holiday?
4. Is there holiday music from your culture that you are fond of?
5. What is genial humanity?
6. How is this group genial humanity?
7. How is the congregation genial humanity?
8. Is genial humanity and the beloved community one reality?
9. What are your hopes?

Closing: Sri Chinmoy Poem

*Hope
Knows no fear.
Hope dares to blossom
Even inside the abysmal abyss.
Hope secretly feeds
And strengthens
Promise.*

Have enough candles so that everyone can light a candle for their hope.

Have everyone light a candle saying, “I light this small flame in the hope of....”

Close holding hands saying - “In this season of light and darkness may our hopes light our way.”

Smart Church Chalice Circles
The Big Three
Session #5

The Smart church

Unitarian Universalism is the faith we teach.

"We Unitarian Universalists have inherited a magnificent theological legacy. In a sweeping answer to creeds that divide the human family, Unitarianism proclaims that we spring from a common source; Universalism, that we share a common destiny." - Forrest Church

Unitarian Universalism preaches/teaches that all paths that lead to love, truth and human wholeness are good and true. Unitarian Universalism teaches that individuals are never finished but always becoming. Unitarian Universalism leaves room for doubt. Unitarian Universalism is open to all possibilities and revelation.

There is no Fundamentalism in Unitarian Universalism, no Fundamentalism of any flavor. Fundamentalism divides people into those who have "the truth" and those who don't. Fundamentalism preaches/teaches that there is only one truth and that all other truth is wrong, misguided, stupid, superstitious, ignorant and/or evil. This is not our way. We are a pluralistic faith - the people of the many paths.

All who wander are not lost. - J. R. R. Tolkien

Unitarian Universalism is born in covenant (love) and love is where we make our stand. We are in love with creation.

What is the foundation of a free and liberal faith? Let's begin not with the Puritan's leaving England - we will save that for another session - but rather after the two halves of our Association found a way to come together. One of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century was James Luther Adams. Let's begin with what he said about Liberal Religion.

James Luther Adams - (November 12, 1901 – July 26, 1994), an American professor at [Harvard Divinity School](#), [Andover Newton Theological School](#), and [Meadville Lombard Theological School](#), and a [Unitarian parish minister](#), was the most influential [theologian](#) among American [Unitarian Universalists](#) in the 20th century.[1] (Wikipedia)

Five Smooth Stones of Liberal Religion – From his Essay *The Five Smooth Stones of Liberalism*

- *Revelation is open and continuous* – Each of us is holy. Each of us is capable of profound wisdom. Any one of us at any moment could have the idea that could save something, someone or the world. This should give us great hope.
- *Relationships are consensual and never coerced* – Being born in covenant we understand that it is important how we behave toward one another and together. We do not manipulate others. There is no coercion in Unitarian Universalism. There is no threat of hell or damnation. *Covenant (love) replaces sin and holds us accountable to our faith and one another.* - Doug Zelinsky. Our covenant is to love all of creation. To treat all people and the Earth with respect and love.
- *We work for the establishment of a just and loving world community* – By our works we shall be known. Our works must lead to justice tempered in love and love tempered in justice. *Justice without love is legalism. Love without justice is baloney* - Paul Tillich. We come together of our own free will. We stay together in love to build the just and loving world. Not merely in our congregations, where it should be easy, but out in the world where people not only disagree with us but where they are willing to fight for that difference of opinion and/or belief.
- *We deny the immaculate conception of virtue* – good things are brought about by hard work done by human hands. We are responsible – there are no others to do the work that must be done. We cannot sit back and do nothing. We must act. We are the leaders we have been waiting for. There is no one who will come and save us. We must save ourselves.
- *Resources are available – both human and divine – that can help to bring about the changes we seek.* These resources are a cause for ultimate optimism! Rejoice! Celebrate the good news of hope and love that is Unitarian Universalism! We have everything we need and we can do it!

We have a deep and rich past. As the children of the Puritans we should celebrate our revolutionary spirit. Let's be sure not to just believe the hype about our Puritan ancestors. Let us rather get to know them for who they really were and what they really did. We must know where we came from. We must stand on our firm and holy foundation; proclaim who we are and what we stand for, so that we can have a positive influence on the future.

Questions for “Unitarian Universalism is the faith we teach.”

1. Does Unitarian Universalism have a life saving message?
2. Are we a group of refugees from other faiths – building walls around us for personal safety?
3. What is true for you about God, faith, spirituality, sacred, holy, sin, salvation, damnation?
4. Do we think that finding our Unitarian Universalist congregation was an end? Thinking, now that we have found our safe home we can close and lock the door behind us? Or is our congregation, our faith - Unitarian Universalism - an open door ? How do you open the door?
5. Who are you opening the door for? Real difference, or only those who look, act and think just like us?
6. What is the difference between people of like minds and people of open minds? To which group would you rather belong?
7. Do we think that Unitarian Universalism is easy?
8. How are the Five Smooth Stones counter cultural?
9. If we were to be counter-cultural in this time of divisive, rude, violent, over sexualized, mean spirited behavior - what would we be? What would we fight for? What would our congregation look like? Who would we be serving? Who would be spiritually fed?
10. How might that change the world?

Closing: Hymnal # 657

“It Matters What We Believe” by Sophia Lyon Fahs

Some beliefs are like walled gardens. They encourage exclusiveness, and the feeling of being especially privileged.

Other beliefs are expansive and lead the way into wider and deeper sympathies.

Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies.

Other beliefs are bonds in a world community, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.

Some beliefs are rigid, like the body of death, impotent in a changing world.

Other beliefs are pliable, like the young sapling, ever growing with the upward thrust of life.

The Big Three
Session #6

The Smart church

The congregation is the curriculum.

"The congregation does not have a curriculum, the congregation is a curriculum." - Maria Harris, in her book, *Fashion Me a People*

What does it mean, the congregation is the curriculum? Maria Harris in her book *Fashion Me a People* talks about the three expressions of a congregation's curriculum and then also the five aspects of how those expression are manifested ~~and~~ or played out in the congregation.

Here are the three expressions of the congregation's curriculum.

- **Explicit-** Clearly stated curriculum. It can be purchased or downloaded. It is ~~written up~~ referred to in the program brochure. It is advertised. It is present in the written representations of beliefs such as Mission/Vision statements, principles & purposes, by-laws, goals, strategic and long range plans. It is in the visual symbols used throughout the sanctuary, meeting rooms, classrooms etc. It is in the holy books that are used and the stories that are told over and over. It is the sermons and the education programs.
- **Implicit-** The norms and practices of the congregation that are not articulated fully, but are evident and communicate in the customs and values of the congregation. Such as: children and youth involvement in the worship services or social hour, dressing casually, lay pastoral care practices, the way we live in covenant, the way we greet new people and practice shared ministry. It is present in the way we treat behaviors that are different from the norm. My colleague Rev. Susan Smith is fond of saying, "We say we like differences until one shows up." Implicit curriculum shows up in the patterns that we repeat, the way we treat staff and our attitudes about money.
- **Null-** The paradox of curriculum that exists because it does not exist; what is absent but communicates the values of the congregation. For example: a church with no wheel chair access or sound system, or one with only male elders on the Finance Committee. It is what we do not talk about and the stories we do not tell. It is the absent holy literature. It is present in the diversity of our membership and whether we say we work for the common welfare of humanity but do nothing about making a difference in our larger community. Null curriculum is present in the people who do not feel welcome.

Here are the Five Aspects of congregational life that communicate its curriculum:

- **Worship** - Worship services, liturgical celebrations and rituals practiced in groups within the congregation. The style of worship, the music, the topics, the stories, the challenge and the comfort that is offered. How the worship is safe, holy, sacred, intellectual or boring.
- **Community** - The people and relationships of the church, pastoral care networks, social events, community celebrations, and sharing our faith through campus and other community-based ministries. How we interact with the life of our parish.
- **Social Justice** - Service projects, social justice activities and public witness that serve the common good and build a just and loving world. It is care for the parish in relationship with the needs of the parish. It is work done for the good of others, not for our own glory. It is the work we do in our parish and what we are known for.
- **Learning** - Formal learning in Faith Development classes, training workshops, programs for all ages, as well as the informal learning that comes from engaging in the other aspects of congregational life.
- **Leadership** - Opportunities for all ages to learn and practice leadership skills; also the coaching and mentoring practices of professional staff and congregation leaders in empowering others. Taking advantage of events and workshops offered by the larger association and outside sources.

When you look at these explanations of the three expressions and the five aspects of congregational curriculum and you think about your congregation, what is it we are teaching? Who is obviously comfortable with what is offered? Are we living up to what and who we say we are?

Questions for “The congregation is the curriculum.”

1. Name an explicit curriculum in our congregation.
2. Name an implicit curriculum in our congregation.
3. Where would you look for a Bible in our building?
4. What are the religious symbols present in our building?
5. What is our style of worship?
6. Who is left out because of our style of worship?
7. What are our stories?
8. What kind of music is present in our worship services?
9. How do we make children feel welcome?
10. Who is fed by our worship services? Who is not?
11. How do we welcome people into our congregation?
12. Do you think that there is one more person in our parish that needs Unitarian Universalism? How would you invite them into our congregation?

Closing: John Murray

Go out into the highways and byways
Give the people something of your new vision.
You may have but a small light, uncover it, let it shine,
use it to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women.
Give them not hell but hope and courage.
Do not push them deeper into their theological despair, but preach the kindness and
everlasting love of God.

Smart Church Chalice Circles

The Big Three

Session #7

The Smart church

Love of Creation

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Teaching is also a learning experience. I have the great good fortune to learn and teach as part of my job. It is a great joy. There are moments in my work that the learning and the teaching collide and I am transformed. One such experience was when I was at an event as the Chaplain. I had many moving moments with people. The theory that was being taught was deep and difficult. People struggled. I had played many roles at this event in the past. Somehow being the Chaplain brought it all together for me in a way I had never seen before. People mis-heard the teachers. I know because - not only was I in the room during the lectures but I have also told the stories and taught the lessons. They would mis-hear because of something going on in their lives that they could not put down even for a moment. Because of my unique relationship with this event I knew it from many different perspectives. As Chaplain I found myself listening deeply, then asking questions. I tried to stay in a place of wondering so that the people might find a way to lay their burden down for a moment, so that they could hear anew, see with new eyes.

It made me hear the stories differently. both the stories during the lectures and the stories that the people told me about their lives. I was moved by this experience. I was transformed. I found myself seeing this event in a different way. I was on the mountain top, seeing the process as a graceful dance of give and take. I don't know why I was so moved but I was. I was moved to tears more times than I can count. I don't cry easily so I found myself pretty amazed. I was moved by stories I have heard, and even told. I was deeply moved by worship. I was moved by the willingness of the people to come into community. I was moved by the struggles of others. I was moved by my own struggle. It was a deep experience.

I looked out the window on the plane headed home and the sun was setting. The clouds began to become that sky-blue-pink that only happens sometimes, if we are lucky, at sunrise or sunset. The rays from the sun grew slanty-er and slanty-er and in no time at all the clouds were on fire below the wings of the plane. Billowing branches of cumulonimbus clouds mimicking tree tops. It looked as though we were flying over a forest of peach, pink, coral and orange trees. Then in the top branches of one of the tallest cloud trees, a rain circle appeared like a god's eye hanging on a Christmas tree. It formed and became a solid rain circle of prismatic brilliance. I held my breath and then slowly it faded as the sun sank lower and the plane moved out of its exact correct position. *Wow*, I said out loud. Tears

began to well up in my eyes. Then I thought - *What a pretty little planet. What a miracle of creation. How lucky am I to have witnessed this? I am so in love. I am in love with creation.* Faces of beloved people appeared in my mind - my family first and then the faces of the people I had just been with. New faces. Faces of dear friends. Their eyes. Their bright and shining eyes.

People cannot spend their whole lives on the mountain top. People must come down into the valleys and get their hands dirty in the soil and deal with the things of life - but for every moment that I spend on the mountain top, for every moment that is filled with possibility, for every time I get a small look at the magic all around us, I am profoundly grateful.

Questions for “Love of Creation”

1. When have you taught something and learned as much as you taught?
2. How is this Faith Development?
3. How do you teach Unitarian Universalism?
4. Who are the greatest teachers in your life?
5. What made them great?
6. What moves you?
7. Think back to something that happened in your life that was transformational. Share it.
8. What is your calling?
9. How does your life speak? What difference have you made in the life of another?
10. Do you believe in magic?

Closing:

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Smart Church Chalice Circles
The Big Three
Session #8

The Smart church

Transcendent Values

"Values provide perspective in the best of times and the worst."

"It takes no genius to observe that a one-man band never gets very big" Charles Garfield

Every Unitarian Universalist congregation should be able to find its transcendent values in the Seven Principles of our Association. However, our Principles and Sources are great for an association of congregations because they are vast, broad and invite all into the covenant. Therefore, it is very important that each congregation do the work of discerning its unique values and the deepest reasons for its existence and ministry. How we do this communal work is important. The process by which we discern our transcendent values is everything. The process and the struggle of being together as we discuss the most important things in our lives and in our beloved community will make all the difference to our congregation.

Once we have engaged in a deep and open discernment process we can then use our shared values as we examine our bylaws, policies, mission statement, long-range-plan and covenant to see if we are living our deepest truth. These documents are part of the explicit curriculum alive in our congregation. Understanding our values also makes it easier to write these documents. Understanding our deepest reasons makes the path clearer. It makes it easier to call ourselves, first, and one another back into covenant. Understanding why helps us create better tools. Better tools help us build a better way. *We are building a new way... Getting stronger every day...*

We cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that created them. - Albert Einstein. How will we think differently? Can we be more open, less afraid and clearer about the deepest principle at stake? Can we be more vulnerable? Can we be more trusting?

When we do not understand the deepest reasons for our existence as a faith community, we often find ourselves in conflict with no clear path out. This is partially due to the fact that we cannot articulate the deepest principle at stake. Therefore, we are unsure of our foundation. We get caught up in the details of the issue. We get confused by the emotions of others. We are easily thrown off track. I will give you an example.

We called a new minister two years ago. In the first six months we did a discernment process to help us discover our congregational transcendent values. They are Hope, Love and Justice. We did a vision/mission retreat and then spent eight months on cottage meetings so that everyone had a chance to enter into the discussion and to be heard about the congregation's vision and mission. Our vision and mission are both values-based. The long-range plan was created with our values in mind and presented to the congregation. It was discussed and tweaked. Now the congregation is three months into the first phase of the long-range plan and four founding members of the congregation are telling the Board that they will withhold their substantial pledges if things don't get back to normal. Their demands are that they do not want the children in worship. They think that the new minister should spend more of her time doing pastoral care and less time on community outreach. They do not like all the modern music in worship or the focus on spirituality. All of these changes were clearly stated as what the congregation wanted in the vision/mission work. It is also part of the long-range plan and the Board thinks the changes help the congregation live out its values. What is at stake here?

We have great confusion about the importance and the value of money. We sometimes think that we are in the business of putting money away for the future. We need to remember that congregations are not human beings saving for their old age, retirement and eventual death. Rather congregations are legacy organizations. What would you like your legacy to be? What difference would you like to make now, that will live long into the future?

Congregations have financial responsibilities, that is true. Congregations must take those responsibilities seriously. However, if we confuse the congregation with a money making endeavor, we are missing the point altogether and will find ourselves at moral crossroads with no principled way to decide which path to take. When we understand our transcendent values we can ask, "Which direction will best serve and uphold our congregation's transcendent values?" They are the foundation upon which we build the beloved community that will be empowered to make a real difference in the world. They help keep us on track and away from petty bickering. They help us to understand who we are and what we stand for. They help us to become the people, the leaders and the movement that the world needs us to be.

Questions for “Transcendent Values”

1. What is at stake in the scenario presented? What are the deepest values? Don't try to solve the problem(s) that we present in the scenario - when that begins to happen, call attention to it and move back into discerning what is at stake.
2. What role does money play in the scenario?
3. What role does money play in our congregation?
4. Do we think of our church as a business? If it is a business, what is its business - to make money? That is why most businesses exist.
5. How are we different from other faith traditions?
6. What do we have in common with other faith traditions?
7. What does transcendent mean?
8. What is an example of a transcendent value?
9. What do we serve?
10. Who do we serve?
11. What are our congregation's shared transcendent values?

Closing: Have everyone sit in silence - ring a bell (tibetan cymbals or singing bowl) three times.

Explain - We will create a group prayer. Each will add a line when they are ready. The beginning of the prayer will be: With gratitude and grace we...

After each line that is added by a Chalice Circle member we will say in unison: With gratitude and grace we...

When the last group member has added their line we will end: With gratitude and grace we humbly pray - amen

ring a bell (tibetan cymbals or singing bowl) three times.

Smart Church Chalice Circles
The Big Three
Session #9

The Smart church

Mission

Make People Happy - Disney Corp.

Build the Best Bike - Harley Davidson

Low Fares - Southwest Airlines

Put a Ping in the Universe - Apple

Joy for Today, Hope for Tomorrow, Love Always - Unknown Unitarian Universalist Congregation

To Delight God - United Church of Christ

We explore, celebrate and cherish our interconnectedness, encourage growth and transcendence, and act with justice and compassion. - The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton

Graced by the Spirit, We Seek to Incarnate Love in the World - MidSouth District Religious Education Committee

A really good mission statement should be short and pithy. It should make you want to know more about the group whose mission statement it is. Anyone should be able to remember it, understand it and repeat it. All of the examples above fit this description. It doesn't matter if you like Disney, motorcycles, flying or Macs, these business mission statements work and they tell you something deep about each company. Everyone from the ticket taker to CEO Robert Iger of Disney Corp. can tell you that their mission is to *Make People Happy*. If you are not happy at Disney World, telling them will make them try harder and harder until you are happy. I know this from experience.

I mention Disney for a number of reasons - One is because it is a great mission statement and another is because we often confuse the mission of our congregation with the mission of the Disney Corp. Our congregation does not exist to make us happy. Rather it exists to challenge each of us to become the very best and deepest human being we can be. It supports us as we live up to our potential. Faith development is all we do. Therefore, we urge people to become and become and become yet again. Unitarian Universalism is the faith we teach. Ours is a faithful path of adventure, discovery, hope, love, justice and joy. We seek. We find and we seek again.

Religion isn't about changing the world; it's about changing the man in the mirror - if you can save him, the world will follow. - Rev. Peter Morales

The challenge of changing ourselves does not always feel good and in the short run we are often unhappy about begin challenged. It is sometimes painful and we turn away. It is sometimes difficult and we look for easy. We sometimes have monsters lurking inside the actions and reactions we exhibit. But still our task is to struggle with our own demons and doubts and to become our very best selves. Our job, as great Unitarian Universalists is to learn to live out and in love. Our job as great Members of our congregation is to help the congregation to uphold its covenant and mission as we work together toward our vision.

Will we be happy in the long run? I don't know but we will have lived fully - alive, awake, aware.

Our congregation is the curriculum. If we understand that everything we do teaches something - then understanding our transcendent values at the heart of our mission will give us focus. Focus helps us - well, to focus - and not be easily thrown off course by our struggle or discomfort or the struggle or discomfort of others.

Transcendent - larger in meaning - something that is larger than me. Something with which I will struggle. Something that cannot be wrapped up in a box. Something that must be talked about in metaphor. Something that is not easy. Something that is misused, abused, misunderstood and/or overused. Example - we say justice when we mean revenge. We say love when we mean need.

Our congregational mission helps us to live in deep community. It is only in deep loving community that the beloved community exists.

"The Beloved Community" was first coined by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce in the early 20th century. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. popularized it and gave it deeper meaning.

For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. - <http://www.mlkflc.org/the-beloved-community/>

The mission of our congregation should fall into this concept of the beloved community.

Questions for “Mission”

1. What are the transcendent values in these three mission statements?

Joy for Today, Hope for Tomorrow, Love Always - Unknown Unitarian Universalist Congregation
We explore, celebrate and cherish our interconnectedness, encourage growth and transcendence, and act with justice and compassion. - The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Binghamton
To Delight God - United Church of Christ
Graced by the Spirit, We Seek to Incarnate Love in the World - MidSouth District Religious Education Committee

2. Does our congregation support us? Give a personal example.

3. Does our congregation challenge us? Give a personal example.

4. Whose job is it to teach the faith? Who is most qualified?

5. Do you have a personal mission statement? If you were to write one, what would your transcendent values be?

6. What is justice?

7. What is love?

8. Does our congregation have a mission statement?

9. What are the transcendent values at its core?

10. How do our transcendent values relate to the concept of the Beloved Community as understood by Dr. King?

Closing: Ring the bell three times .

Please have everyone listen to the song by Here II Here - Holy - this can be purchased on iTunes. Here is the link to a Youtube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHZwUbCsgyo>

Have everyone sit in silence for a full three minutes.

Ring the bell three times.

Smart Church Chalice Circles

The Big Three

Session #10

The Smart church

Saying Good-bye

The story of life is quicker than the wink of an eye, the story of love is hello and goodbye...until we meet again. Jimi Hendrix

Remember me and smile, for it's better to forget than to remember me and cry. Dr. Seuss

I would really rather be the Beatles than the Rolling Stones. Now I understand that this is a generational reference, so I will explain. The Beatles quit when they were on top, young - no one was tired of them. They did not stay at the party too long. They still had songs left to sing. They were making money. They were successful. They were winning. The Rolling Stones, on the other hand, even look like they stayed at the party too long - way past closing time and last call. It isn't that I don't like the later Stones music - I do, but there is something inspiring about people who leave the gambling table when they are ahead. There is always the temptation to throw the dice one more time. After all, you are ahead.

I would rather be remembered with a smile, as Dr. Seuss says above, than with a tear. Knowing when it is time to stop doing something is every bit as important as knowing when to begin something. Often they go hand in hand. Sometimes we must stop something in order to make room for something else. Adventure is not in doing the same thing that we have always done. Adventure is a beginning.

Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore. - Andre Gide.

This is the last session for our Chalice Circle this round. We have shared deeply. We have grown fond of one another. We are comfortable together. We are tempted to stay at this party and not move on to what might happen next. But these sessions have been designed for us to stop and begin again.

From the beginning of your Chalice Circle experience you knew that this was a ten month process. This is your last session and while this was the agreement that you made, there might be a temptation to say, "Gee, now that we know and trust each other, let's just keep this Chalice Circle going. Why is there a need to mix this up? I am friends with everyone here. I don't want to stop. They aren't the boss of me!"

No one is telling you not to continue to be friends. Friends are wonderful - go make some more. The purpose of Small Group Ministry is to help individual people get to know many other individual people with whom we might be friends. If we choose to do Small Group Ministry and don't make room for the new people in our groups, we have defeated the whole purpose of Small Group Ministry. If we refuse to get to know anyone but the first group we are part of, we have also defeated the purpose. If we become a closed group, a clique, a club, we defeat the purpose. There is always a temptation to stay too long at the party when one is having fun. It is always better to say good night and head down the road when one is leaving on a good note and a smile.

In many ways - this is only a good-bye to meeting in this way together. We can and should remain friends. We can and could work together on committees. We can and will worship together.

Questions for “Saying Good-bye”

1. What have you enjoyed most about these sessions?
2. How has this experience informed and influenced you?
3. What will you miss most about this group?
4. Will you join another Small Group Ministry circle?
5. This is the last session with this Chalice Circle - what would you like to share?

Closing:

Meditative music plays. - Native American flute - Carlos Nikai - *Inward Journey From the Canyon Collection*

Form a circle around one person. Have everyone in the group heap blessings upon this person - do this until everyone has had their say. Then the next person comes into the center. Everyone gets a chance to be in the center.

When the last person has been in the center - they come out and join the circle. Everyone joins hands - Leader asks everyone to repeat after them in saying:

We join hands
We join hearts
We part as friends
Until we meet again.