



## **The Vision**

Small group ministry gives participants an opportunity to get to know others while developing a deeper self knowledge by sharing their lives in small, facilitated groups. The spirit of community radiates outward, fostering a sense of kinship and increasing connection to the congregation as a whole and to the larger community.

## **How Will Chalice Circles Work?**

Chalice Circles meet regularly to nurture group members' interior lives, to build community, and to practice shared ministry. Circle facilitators also meet monthly in their own Chalice Circle with one or more ministers.

## **Size (In 2021-22, the maximum Circle size is nine.)**

Chalice Circles consist of seven to ten people, large enough to promote group interaction, but small enough to allow intimacy and equal participation. Groups are always open to new members as long as the group has no more than ten people.

## **Elements of a Chalice Circle Gathering**

Each Chalice Circle session plan is designed to permit us to connect with one another more deeply and to focus on the topic of the meeting. The format always includes:

- Opening Words and Chalice Lighting
- Check-in
- Focus of the Meeting
- Check-out
- Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice

## **Covenant**

Making connection with others is easier when we understand how they would like to be treated. During the first few meetings of a Chalice Circle, members will develop a covenant that defines the ways they commit to interact with one another. Members can also contribute to the ongoing activities of the group: choosing the readings, hosting the gatherings, and reminding members of meeting time and places. Having clear expectations for communication and shared responsibility for group activities ensures that all members benefit from the Chalice Circle experience.

## **Service Projects (Projects will probably not take place in 2021-22)**

Twice a year each group will engage in service to the congregation or to the larger community. Serving together as a group gives members an opportunity to connect in a different way, to understand others' values and actions, and to develop synergy as a group of Unitarian Universalists, rather than as individuals. A list of service projects is available to facilitators and groups.

## **Focus and Approach for Chalice Circles**

The focus of each meeting is a topic that serves as a springboard into reflection on deeper issues of who we are and what gives our lives meaning. At the core of each session is deep listening. Questions are posed and each person responds in turn. The other participants provide the speaker with rapt attention. They don't ask questions; they don't give advice - they listen deeply.

## **Shared Ministry**

Chalice Circles encourage attentive listening, rational thought, empathy, and compassion --- **knowing others more deeply and with consideration**. The positive qualities developed by group members will spread into the wider congregation and community as group members engage with others with their new-found skills.

## **Commitment**

Participants are expected to commit to attend all meetings if possible September (or October in some years) through May. Since members participate in Chalice Circles not only for themselves, but to care for one another, attendance is vital.

## **Membership**

Groups are open to youth over 14 and all members and friends of the church.

## **Meeting Times and Places (Circles meet via Zoom in 2021-22)**

Each group meets often enough for group members to create meaningful connections: at least once a month; twice a month is strongly encouraged. Groups meet for about two hours, long enough to follow the format and engage in deep listening. Groups meet at Church or in members' homes. By sharing our homes with others, we share our stories and a little bit about who we are.

## **Registration**

Registration is open throughout the year as long as space is available in Circles. Registration takes place at Church or online the month before Circles begin, usually in August or September.

## **Questions?**

Chalice Circle Executive Team:

Jan Armstrong (812-278-8711,

[janet\\_k\\_armstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:janet_k_armstrong@hotmail.com))

Anne Haynes (812-360-2619, [anne.haynes3@gmail.com](mailto:anne.haynes3@gmail.com))

Linda Pickle (812-369-4430, [linda.pickle@wku.edu](mailto:linda.pickle@wku.edu))

Rev. Barbara Child, Ministerial Consultant (812-345-4506),  
[revbchild@aol.com](mailto:revbchild@aol.com)

Chalice art courtesy of George Milburn, UU Church of Sarasota, FL.  
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# **Chalice Circles A Small Group Ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church Bloomington, Indiana**