

Why I Am a Member and Supporter of Fellowship Circles

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I first became involved in a Fellowship Circle when they were initiated at the UU Fellowship of the Peninsula about nine years ago. We all wondered what was the purpose of these groups that met twice a month and numbered about six to nine members. We learned that our Fellowship Circle was not a conversation group, nor an opportunity for intellectual debates; rather it was a place that encouraged the inner journey of each participant in a safe and compassionate community.

All of us were new to the Fellowship Circle concept and we supported each other as we refined our abilities to both express ourselves and listen deeply to each other. The members of my circle grew closer together and learned to appreciate both our similarities and, most importantly, our differences. I soon realized that I truly looked forward to my circle’s time together every other week and that this experience was making a profound difference in my life.

As our Fellowship Circle Program evolved, I was happy to continue and have been a member of five different circles over the past years. The experience has been transformative. I have learned so much from the amazing people I have had an opportunity to share my life with in these circles. So many rich ideas and new perspectives on a variety of topics (both serious and playful) have helped me grow personally and spiritually.

First, I have become a better listener—seeking to truly understand what someone is communicating, without judgment or comment. Listening with both your ears and your heart is how one Fellowship Circle friend described the process. I now understand that it is not only unnecessary to comment on another’s statements, but sometimes it is actually detrimental to active and compassionate communication. Developing this skill carries over to my other relationships and impacts most conversations I have. I have found that it is very liberating to just simply listen quietly without feeling a need to verbally respond.

Second, I believe I have learned a lot about myself. My Fellowship Circle participation has helped me define what I believe and truly value. And I have had the opportunity to articulate these beliefs to a group of caring and supportive friends, my Fellowship Circle. As a result of participation in my circles, I feel much more connected to the entire UUF community. My time as a Fellowship Circle member has been one of the most enjoyable and meaningful experiences of my life.