

Circle Ministry 2007-2008

Airports

Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull for Circle Ministry at First Parish UU Cohasset, MA

Note: See the Circle Ministry Session Sequence for process guidelines.

Gathering, Welcoming (2 minutes)

Chalice lighting & Opening words (1 minute)

Gather around.

It's story time—

time for each of us to give voice to our stories,
stories written and yet to be written,
stories told and never told,
stories of years past and stories waiting to unfold.

Gather around

It's sacred time—

time for each voice to be cherished,
time for each laugh to be relished,
time for each tear to be affirmed.

Gather around,

It's our time together.

Check-in/Sharing (3-4 minutes@ - 30-40 minutes)

Discussion of final session of this season (10-15 minutes)

Note that for our June Circle Ministry session, the topic is “Unfinished Business.” Each of our groups is selecting a topic from this year that feels unfinished. The opening words and closing words will be fresh for this session, but the topic will lend closure on a session that we feel is unfinished. What will it be for our group? The past season's session topics have included:

- How We Are Named (the beginning topic for all our groups)
- To Meet My Heart's Yearning
- Caring and Covenant
- Our Parents Ourselves
- Welcoming the Stranger
- The Christmas Story
- Doing It Differently
- What is sacred?
- Our Bodies, Ourselves
- Parenting
- Living and Dying
- Hope
- Siblings
- Sin
- Mentors

[Choose the topic that will shape your group's “Unfinished Business.” After this session, let Jan know your choice, and she will prepare your “Unfinished Business” session in time for your June gathering.]

Topical Discussion (60 minutes)

[See Circle Ministry Session Sequence as a reminder of the structure of this segment.]

First response

Cross-conversation

Topic: Airports

Gail Boyce of Manchester, New Hampshire, tells the following story in the November 2007 issue of *The Sun*.

In the late fifties, when I was dating my first husband, one of our favorite ways to spend a Saturday night was to head over to Idlewild Airport (now JFK), park ourselves at the cocktail lounge by the international terminal, and watch the arriving and departing travelers. Neither of us had been any farther from New York than Maine. London, Paris, and Rome were places I'd seen only in movies. I was fascinated by the elegant women dressed in high heels, hats, gloves, and furs, and I fantasized about their lives, which I knew had to be ten times more exciting than mine. I wanted to go with them.

Sixteen years later my husband and I divorced, never having taken so much as a weekend trip together. When I remarried, it was to a man who worked for Pan Am airlines, and he immediately whisked me off to London for my first transatlantic vacation. Paris and Rome became familiar places to me. I had become a voyager instead of a voyeur.

Now I am a grandmother taking my sixteen-year-old granddaughter to the airport, where she will board a flight to New Delhi, India, to join her parents in their second home. She walks up to the ticket counter totally at ease, having done this many times before. After she passes through security, she turns to wave to me one more time. I watch her until I cannot see her anymore, and a feeling wells up that I haven't experienced in years: I want to go with her.

Arriving flights, departing flights, a long night of waiting, a trip long anticipated, a farewell wave, a yearning rekindled—airports hold far more stories than planes or passengers. What does an airport conjure up for you?

[Options for the conversation to follow:

- 1) Read and consider one question before going to the next; or
- 2) Choose and consider only one question; or
- 3) If you decide to consider both questions, you may not do a “go-around” for the second.]

Take a moment of silence and consider these questions.

1. What is your airport story?
2. What lives in your memory that could only have happened at an airport?

What concluding thoughts would you like to share?

Feedback (15 minutes)

Thank the group. Explain that for the next and final session of this Circle Ministry year, we'll consider the topic you have chosen for this group's “Unfinished Business.”

Note that the session plan for this gathering is available for group members as we leave.

Closing (1 minute)

Go in peace. Arrive safely.

Circle Ministry Session Sequence for Facilitators

First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Cohasset, MA

The suggested sequence and time allocations spelled out below will help you who facilitate our Circle Ministry sessions to ensure that every participant will have a voice over the two-hour timeframe that comprises a Circle Ministry session.

Gathering, Welcoming (5 minutes)

During the **first meeting** of your group, you might want to offer clarification on questions that people have raised:

How long do the groups meet? We're asking that each of the initial groups commit to meeting at least through May. At that time or before, you can each decide whether you want to continue in this group, move to another group, or not continue.

Why a designated facilitator and a co-facilitator? As similar groups have met in other congregations, facilitators provide assurance that each person has a voice, that we stay on topic, and that we sustain respectful dialogue. Even experiences at First Parish have taught us that groups without designated facilitators tend to fray. There are exceptions; but this is the general learning. The structure provided by facilitators is ultimately satisfying for everyone.

Introduce your co-facilitator. Clarify that this person will step in if you can't be there, and if additional congregants want to join groups and there aren't enough open spaces, s/he stands ready to be the lead facilitator for this new group.

Where will we meet regularly?

This first meeting is at [facilitator or co-facilitator]'s home. For our subsequent sessions, we're asking that one of you volunteer to be a home host. That's all you have to do! Don't clean your house for us. Don't prepare refreshments. Just open your door and welcome us in. By the end of this evening's session, I hope we'll have a home host.

How can we ensure respectful dialogue and the structure that was introduced about Circle Ministry? Our focus next week will be a behavioral covenant. I'll provide a basic covenant, and we'll go from there.

You'll continue to have questions. Toward the end of each session there will be a time to raise them.

Chalice lighting (1-2 minutes)

Check-in/Sharing (2-3 minutes@ - 20-30 minutes)

Ask each person to share **what's on their mind and heart**. You may wish to have a timekeeper to gently remind anyone who moves beyond the allotted check-in time that their sharing is valued and we need to ensure a voice for everyone. If the speaker persists, ask her/him firmly and respectfully to conclude. IF as the sessions unfold, someone arrives who has had a particularly rending experience, decide as a group your willingness to give this person extra time.

NO feedback, NO cross-talk during this segment. Simply be with each other in deep listening.

"Business" matters (up to 10 minutes)

At year's beginning, review Behavioral Covenants and session structures.

Later in the year, you'll want to discuss and plan your service projects.

Discussion (60 minutes)

Introduce the topic and the questions (2 minutes)

Ask folks to **pause and ponder** this in a period of silence. (2 minutes)

First response: Ask folks to register their initial thoughts—in random order, but with **no feedback** during this segment.

Then: Cross-conversation. IF one person dominates, gently remind that person that we need to allow time for every group member to speak.

Conclude discussion with request for **final statements/last thoughts on this topic**—in random order, but with **no feedback**.

Feedback (5-10 minutes)

Ask participants **what they liked** about this session. **What would they change? How?** Take note during succeeding sessions of **who isn't present**. Let the other members know that you'll follow up to determine if all is well or not. Remind members that if they absolutely can't make a session, to please let you know.

Closing (2 minutes)

Note: Have copies of the session available for participants at the conclusion of each session, but don't distribute them up front. If someone asks about having an outline in hand, explain that we all tend to connect more freely when we're not tied to a paper.

Thank you!

You are a valued leader in Circle Ministry as it unfolds within our faith community!