

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Circle Ministry 2008-2009

Day Dreams

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)

Presence is our gift to one another as we gather again
in this circle of caring.

Through listening,
we are present to each other.

Through looking into one another's eyes,
we are present to each other.

Through tending to what is said and what is not said,
we are present to each other.

Through letting go of assumptions about who we are,
we are present to each other.

Through respectfully limiting the time we speak,
knowing that each of us needs to be heard,
we are present to each other.

Through being here and now with full heart and mind,
we are present to each other.

Presence is our gift to one another as we gather again
in this circle of caring.

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

Discussion of congregational and community service plans (10-20 minutes)

Topical Discussion (60 minutes)

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

First response

Cross-conversation

Topic: Day Dreams

Day dreams. How often has your mind wandered to another time, another space, remembered or imagined? As a child in a classroom or yes, in church, how easily did your thoughts drift out the window onto a playing field, onto a beach, or into a park where you were flying high on reckless swings?

Now you're an adult, a for-real "grown up." Do your thoughts still drift? Does your mind still play? Do your days still hold dreams wishful and fanciful? Amid a meeting at work or yes, amid a Sunday morning church service, how readily does your mind lure you into the woods for a longed-for walk, into the ocean for a longed-for swim, onto a golf course or a fishing boat or a ski slope, or into the gentle folds of a hammock? Day dreams allow us to be where we aren't, as in the case of Stephen Shick, Unitarian Universalist minister and February gardener, who writes:

"I love winter, but by February I am sorely tempted to forsake it altogether. What a fickle lover I am when I go into the basement to plant tomato seeds. I am easily distracted from

the task at hand by thoughts of the warm breeze that will blow on that May day when I set the young plants in the ground. While sowing the Rutgers tomato seeds a fraction of an inch under the soil, my mind rushes forward and sees healthy tomatoes ripening on the vine. Then I journey back in time to when I first learned that this strain of seed produced my father's favorite tomatoes. I may even walk into the adjacent room, where a picture of my father's father hangs on the wall. He is kneeling next to a bumper crop of tomatoes. In the midst of all this I will find it hard to focus on how good it is to plant tomatoes in my basement in wintertime."

(from Stephen Shick, "Winter Tomatoes,"
in *Consider the Lilies: Meditations*, Skinner House Books, Boston, 2004)

Distraction "from the task at hand," thoughts of another time and place, elasticity of time and place, all are the stuff of what we recognize as day dreaming. How do you fare as a day dreamer?

[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.]
1. Where do your day dreams take you? If you have recurring day dreams, share an example. If your day dreams have themes, what are they?
 2. If you have taken time to reflect on your day dreams, what have you learned about yourself?

What concluding thoughts would you like to share?

Feedback (10 minutes)

Thank the group. Ask what they liked in this session and what changes they would hope for. Explain that for the next session, we'll consider the topic, "Resilience."

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

Closing (1 minute)

Go assured that you can still dream.
Go assured that you can still let go.
Go assured that you can always come back
from wherever your mind and heart carry you,
Go in peace. Return in peace.

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!