

Circle Ministry Session Plan

Doing It Differently

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 (1 minute)

Opening words (1 minute)

Renewal, resolve, resolution, reflection, response, repetition, resurrection

—all are the stuff of second chances, third chances, and more.

As we find ourselves on another journey around the sun,

let us kindle our chalice that its light might show us the way.

Let us kindle our chalice that its flame might warm our hearts

as we open our hearts to one another.

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

Discussion (60 minutes)

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

First response

Cross-conversation

Topic: Doing It Differently

In this season of reflection and resolve, consider the verse of the late Robert Frost, that New England poet whose words ring across countless new years in “The Road Not Taken.”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the road less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Who's to say that Frost's traveler took the road that made a difference that rang positive in her life, his life? The choice of the "road less traveled" has made "all the difference," but it's a difference that could ring true or false, a difference that finds our traveler thankful or regretful. We don't know. Interpretation is our choice, just as it is our choice when we face our own divergent paths.

Each of us being one traveler, unable to take all roads, we again and again face choices of direction. Forwards and backwards we face them. What will I do? What have I done? Then come those questions: How might I have chosen differently? How might I choose differently, do it differently now, whatever the road is, whatever the "it" is?

Take a few moments of silence and ponder your responses to these questions:

1. Think of a time in your life when you faced your own divergent roads. You made your choice. You set off down one path and forsook the other. Describe the path you took and what difference it has made.
2. On the threshold of this New Year, what path do you hope to walk? How will your path diverge from the one you've been on, or how will it simply extend the one you've been on because it feels right for you? Offer an example.

(Read through both 1 and 2 and choose for discussion the questions that best fit your group.)

[See Circle Ministry Session Sequence for clarification of this next segment.]

First response

Cross-conversation

Concluding statements

What concluding thoughts would you like to share?

Feedback (15 minutes)

Thank the group. Ask what they liked in this session and what variations they would hope for.

Explain that for the next session, we'll consider the topic, "What is sacred?"

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

Closing (1 minute)

We speak of the Spirit of Life; we are each spirits of life, offspring of the miracle that is life itself. We are gifted with memory; we are gifted with anticipation; we are gifted with the capacity to pay attention that holds reflection, anticipation, and presence. Let us be present in this circle of care that moves from the inside out, as we move together in a more mindful and graceful arc around the sun.