

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Circle Ministry 2009-2010

*How We're Called*

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)**

We gather again,  
heeding a call to be  
    where we are,  
    who we are,  
    how we are—  
nothing more, nothing less.

We gather again,  
    listening, watching,  
    speaking, reflecting:  
Where are we?  
Who am I? Who are you?  
How am I? How are you?

We gather again,  
    responding.

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

**Service ventures (10 minutes)**

If you haven't already done so, move toward your group's focus for a service venture benefitting this congregation and a service venture benefitting our larger community.

**Topical Discussion (60 minutes)**

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

First response  
Cross-conversation

**Topic: How We're Called**

Consider the notion of call, pure and simple. By the very reality that each of us is here in this world, we are called. By the amazing grace that each of us has been born, we are called into this world. We come with a polyglot of genetically wrought features, quirks, and inclinations and a not completely blank slate that rapidly fills. Some of us learn quickly what pleases our parents and what doesn't, how we rise or fall in a culture friendly or hostile to who we are and what we look like, and what we must do to "succeed" in the circumstances of our living. Choice is relative. Yet we are each entrusted at some point to the grace of a larger world, and we each must discern that still small voice that speaks our name from our inner depths and bids us to do and be who we have always been.

Dr. Rosemary Chinnici is also Sister Chinnici, a member of the Sisters of Loretto, a Roman Catholic Religious order. She is also a trauma specialist and a professor of pastoral care. Rosemary addressed the notion of call in her ordination sermon for one of her former students at

Starr King School of Theology: “Every call lies at the intersection of the past we have inherited and the future we are creating.”

Call is at the heart of who we have been and prophetic of who we are becoming. *Vocare* is Latin for the verb, “to call.” From it derives the term vocation. Vocation, writes Quaker author and teacher Parker Palmer, is a melding of self and service, a fusion of inner depths with outer needs. At its deepest level, vocation is an epiphany that goes something like: “This is something I can’t not do, for reasons I’m unable to explain to anyone else and don’t fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling.” Some of us know this well, to be drawn onto a path because of reasons that don’t make complete sense, yet knowing that there is at last no other way if we are to honor who we are, if we are to become who we are. “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it,” explains Palmer, “I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

[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. What was your first inkling of who you were called to be? What was the source of this earliest sense of call, of who you might be in this world?
  2. Share an experience of how your understanding of why you are in this life has changed since this earliest inkling. Perhaps you have had many such experiences. What is an experience that particularly stands out for you?

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, “Gossip.”

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

### **Closing (1 minute)**

Go blessed with the knowledge that you are you,  
that you may be living a call you could never have predicted,  
that you may be living a call long understood.  
Go knowing that we are grateful and glad that you are who you are.

## 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!**