

## **Chalice Circle Samplers**

*By Marilyn Eanet, Small Group Ministry Steering Team First Unitarian Church of Providence, Rhode Island*

At First Unitarian Church in Providence, RI, our Small Group Ministry program offers Chalice Circle Samplers to help members of the community, especially newcomers and newer members, become aware of the program and of the value of participating in a Chalice Circle. After morning service on a couple of Sundays each semester, we invite folks to bring their coffee and snack to the auditorium and learn more about Chalice Circles. As soon as 5 or 6 people enter the room, an experienced facilitator takes them to a circle of chairs and presents the session below. Although various topics for the sharing can be used, simply asking people to share what first brought them to First Unitarian seems to work best. Following the session, there is a time for questions, and registration materials are available. We have found that the attendees enjoy the experience and that many sign up on the spot.

### **Chalice Circle Sampler**

By Ruth Arellana, SGM Steering Team

#### **Opening Words:**

Whenever we meet and make friends, we tell our stories.

We tell our stories to remember who we are and what's important to us.

In telling our stories, we speak of families, friends, joys, sorrows, fears, deaths, loves.

With stories, we open up our lives to one another.

Our stories are important steppingstones on our religious journeys.

We tell our stories and touch our depths..

By our attentive listening, we make it possible for people to say things they have never said before.

Listening connects speaker and listener.

Both the speaker and the listener deepen the importance of the story.

-Barbara Hamilton-Holway, UU

**What is Small Group Ministry?** Small Group Ministry is an opportunity for us to seek connections as part of an intimate, accepting community in which we are lifted out of the everyday to reflect on and deepen our spiritual and ethical journey.

**What is Small Group Ministry not?** It is not a prayer group. It is not a therapy group. It is not a discussion group, per se.

**What is a Small Group Ministry group?** It is a group in which to grow spiritually and in relationship to others. It is an opportunity to share personal stories and feelings in a safe, supportive environment.

**Covenant:** Each group develops a covenant or set of "ground rules" for how to be together.

#### **Format: (Describe typical format)**

**Check-in:** In 1-2 sentences, please tell us something about yourself that you would like others to know. It may have to do with why you are here at First Unitarian and what you hope to gain from the experience. It may be about your personal well-being: physical, emotional, and/or spiritual. It may be about the glory of a beautiful fall day or about homecoming Sunday! It may be about your general interests. Just something to help us know you a bit.

**Closing:** What are your feelings about this experience? How are you feeling now?