



CHALICE CIRCLE MINI-HISTORY

Presented 3/29/2015 by Rev. Fran Dew

150 years of history, 150 years of change. As this sesquicentennial year unfolds we've learned of archival discoveries and heard of the passions and actions of the more recent past. This morning I'm here to remind us that history is always in the making - - - we revere the past but, like the Sankofa Bird we are always looking to the future. In that light, this morning I bring you the history of a recent addition to congregational life: Chalice Circles.

In my working life I served several congregations as their Interim Minister. In that work I found two commonalities in congregations, small medium and large: the desire for what twentieth century theologian James Luther Adams labeled Ultimacy and Intimacy and the fear that if or when a congregation grows larger it will become more difficult to find either the intimate, meaningful personal relationships or the ultimate, a way to orient our lives toward ends that transcend us. When I arrived to join you as Ass't Interim Minister I regularly heard both the desire and the fear voiced, by members as a longing for a past time and by newcomers as they came in from the desert of their spiritual wanderings to look for their place in this community. Responding to these need was a feature of the 2004 GA. UUAA members who traveled to Long Beach saw Small Group Ministry as a way to meet these needs at UUAA.

They returned with a desire to establish a SGM (small group ministry) program, to create groups that could explore and discover spirituality in ways that not possible in the large setting of Sunday services; groups where members could come to know one another in deep and meaningful ways.

From their energy and effort grew Wisdom Seekers, a form of Covenant Group that continues for some members today. But without the structure and support required for growing SGM that effort stalled with the original founders. . When I arrived as your Interim Assistant minister in the fall of 2006 there was interest in growing a SGM program to maturity.

A group of talented and committed individuals met monthly to design the Chalice Circle program, preparing for a launch in fall 2007. We have Joseph Fenty, Sally Hattig, Dixie Hibner, Ken Clein, George LaVoie, Shannon O'Day, and Terri Wilkerson to thank for today's Small Group Ministry program. From these beginnings Chalice Circles took root and continue to grow as an addition of significance in the fabric of congregational life at UUA.

The goal of the program continues to be *engaging the hearts and minds of participants by creating a safe community for individual to explore their beliefs and attitudes and share their personal experience without fear of judgment.*

Strong leadership of a steering committee, support for the well-trained facilitators, a curriculum committee preparing material for relevant and meaningful group meetings: this is a growing part of congregational life. The structure does not work for everyone but for those seeking ultimacy and intimacy Chalice Circles fill a need.

If you have ever participated in the Chalice Circle program, please rise.
If you are curious about this History now in the making talk to one of these people.
There is a way to test the Chalice Circle waters-- On selected Sunday afternoons throughout the year 'One Time Chalice Circles' are offered. Try it - it could change your life.