

Report on February and March 2015 Talking Circles

Talking Circles Exploration

Eleven (11) folks, including facilitators attended the Sunday 2/22/15 Talking Circles Exploration. The Wednesday 2/25/15 circle was cancelled due to snowstorm.

The circle attendees included Sunday Morning “regulars” and less frequent attendees, and people visiting the church. There was uncertainty to the starting time; however the circle adapted to people entering at different times. People seemed to enjoy it. Several attendees showed up the following week for the second circle activity not realizing that the circles weren’t every Sunday!

Tough Task Circles #1 Come to Terms with Our History (TT#1)

Twelve (12) members and friends attended Sunday 3/8/15 and nine (9) members attended Wednesday 3/11/15. Counting the facilitators only once, **19 individuals** participated in the two circles. Participants included “regulars, less frequent attendees, visitors, and a couple of people who had not been attending for a number of months for one reason or another. The circles proved to again be a safe environment where people could talk about their grief, growth, and hope.

| TT #1 Circle Participants | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Visitor | 2 |
| Friend | 1 |
| Member 5 to 10 years | 3 |
| Member 11 to 20 years | 4 |
| Member 21 to 40 years | 9 |

The questions and responses for the circles were:

1. *Please share a significant Peoples Church event and how it influenced you.*

(6 people) Developing bonds of friendships with like-minded others working through world or church issues/for important goals (congregation, board, choir, etc.) is life changing/life affirming. People have held us together. UU principles have guided

(2 people) Meeting people one can talk to about deep life subjects either individually or in covenant groups

(2 people) Walking in for the first time or after long absence and feeling at home greeted by others

(2 people) RE programs/supportive church community for raising children (e.g., Coming of Age, Child Dedication)

(2 people) Ebb and flow: sometimes more involved, sometimes need to take time off

(2 people) Social events (both in general and the 125th Year intergenerational celebration mentioned) enjoyed by the children, elders, and those in between gave sense of continuity and belonging

(1 person) Change in church location closer to home motivated to return to this church

(1 person) Woman minister was important role model when joined church

(1 person) Reflection on own active involvement inspires desire to pass baton to younger generation

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2. *What seems to be the most important lesson we need to address in order for the church to thrive?*
(Note: this question was asked twice in one circle and people gave more than one idea so number of responses is higher than number of participants.)

(12 people) Approach each other with love; build connections; celebrate strengths; work on communication; everyone has good ideas for the whole; increase our trust with each other; be thoughtful (count to 3 or 10 if needed) before speaking; put people first (even before church business); communicate don't be shy; being UU is not about the building; apply respect and our diversity principles to each other—we don't know the path that has brought each of us here; embrace conflict cheerfully; use our Covenant of Right Relations

(3 people) Let go of past mistakes; focus on today and where we are going; honor ourselves where we're at

(2 people) Reach out actively to newcomers; make each other feel welcome

(2 people) Take action as congregation in wider community; taking action together can teach us how to live

(2 people) Church is on-going, more than a minister, program or group of friends; church experience can enrich individuals and families

(1 person) Share load (church business) more fairly; build church infrastructure

(1 person) Celebrate the lives of members even when they are gone

(1 person) Being a member means making a personal commitment

(1 person) Tap for advice (even if you don't think you need it) the people who have been around or have served in the position you currently hold

(1 person) Use our UU principles with all member/staff interactions

3. *What makes you hopeful about our future?*

(5 people) (Church) still bobs up after dunkings; got here despite obstacles; church has been around nearly 150 years and will keep going; (we are) phoenix rising from ashes

(5 people) Midwesterners not running from conflict, talking openly and wanting to move on; appreciate other members energy and tenacity; seeing loving concern that we want to be together and grow; Board learning it's okay to say "no"—we are learning new tools to use and there may be more tools out there we can learn to use to help us; growing confidence as a church

(4 people) (Circle) process and getting to know others; seeing new faces; intimacy shared; we are building unity through (accepting) diversity; awakened

(3 people) Seeing people return

(2 people) Want to be here (church); sense of community and history

(1 person) UU denomination has resources we can use