

Welcome to the Numinous Circle!

numen: an indwelling, guiding force or spirit

numinous: having a deeply spiritual or mystical effect

A worship circle for 20-30-40 Somethings

WHO WE ARE

The Numinous Circle is an age-oriented worship circle born in 1992 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley (UUCB). We are members and friends of UUCB in our 20's, 30's and 40's who gather to share our lives and build community in an intentionally created sacred space. We meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday at UUCB from 7:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.

We warmly welcome newcomers, believing that new members keep the circle alive and vibrant. We aim to be fully inclusive. We are straight, queer, partnered, single, parents/non-parents, multi-cultural, and theologically diverse. We welcome a diversity of values, beliefs, and life experiences, asking only that words are spoken respectfully from one's own experience. We strive to avoid insults, put-downs, sarcasm, and jokes that might be hurtful or offensive.

Creating and maintaining our sacred space requires an ongoing effort and we've found it helpful to describe our core values and customs for newcomers. In the spirit of acquainting you with who we are and what we do, we offer the following description.

WHAT WE DO

Beginning

We begin our evening together with an opening reading and chalice lighting. Then we read the following words to remind us of our covenant with each other:

During check-in we create a safe and sacred space in which we speak from the heart. We share deeply of our spiritual and personal life journeys, confident that others in the group will listen supportively, with compassionate attention and silence, and trusting that our stories will be kept safe within the circle. We ask that during your check-in you be mindful of the time you take, but that you take the time you need. We begin check-in with a shared moment of silence and then ask whomever feels moved to speak first to begin.

Following this reading, we ring a bell and then sit together in silence until someone feels moved to begin speaking (typically after five minutes or so). The

silence provides a time for centering and reflection and helps us shift from the busyness of our days into a more contemplative space.

Check-in

Check-in begins after the silence when someone is moved to speak. We've grown to see check-in as a form of worship. It is a time in which we speak from the heart, sharing deeply of our personal and spiritual journeys. Those who are not speaking practice attentive listening, focusing their attention on the speaker, in silence, with no interruptions, questions, or comments.

Check-in proceeds around the circle clockwise from the first speaker, with each person taking a turn (or choosing to pass). If you choose to pass, we will offer you a second opportunity at the end of the circle. You are also welcome to simply listen. Our opening words "We ask that you take the time you need, but be mindful of the time you take" are our way of asking each individual to be conscious of time-sharing. Those present on any given evening are sharing roughly 110 minutes of time. We do not time check-ins, believing that all check-ins do not need to be the same length, that there are times when longer or shorter check-ins are appropriate. We ask that you be mindful of the number of people, the time of the evening, and what you feel moved to share.

Our custom is for each person to begin checking in by sharing his or her first name and for the group to say "welcome" to any newcomers at the end of their first check-in. We ask that you indicate when your check-in is complete (this may be done by a simple nod of the head or the words, "I'm done" – whatever feels right to you). Sometimes a speaker will pause during his or her check-in and we do not want to accidentally mistake a pause for an ending.

Check-in is a time to speak about yourself – your own spiritual and personal journey. You may speak about other people or things, but the focus should be on how they affect you and your journey. During check-in, people talk about a wide variety of topics – family, work, relationships, fears, doubts, goals, challenges, triumphs, questions. We welcome tears and laughter, joys and sorrows.

Because check-ins may include tender or private topics, issues of safety are taken very seriously. As we say in our opening words, "our stories will be kept safe within the circle." We trust each other not to share our stories beyond the circle, particularly with persons who are not part of Numinous. (Confidentiality is discussed in more detail at the end of this pamphlet.)

One question that often arises is whether or how to respond to an individual's check-in after our closing circle. Sometimes it is hard to share a painful topic and then have no one acknowledge it at the end of the circle. Other times we want to share painful topics without worrying that we will be quizzed or advised about them later. This calls for sensitivity on both sides. If you are

