



This month's circle tale was shared with us by Sharon Faulds of Ontario, Canada. Thank you, Sharon!

## **Circle Tale #33, August 2002 A Trade Union of Nurses**

Once upon a time there was a trade union of nurses. They had many rules about how disputes would be resolved when they could not agree with each other. One rule was to call upon the wisdom of a leader to make a decision when they could not agree.

In a small town there was a group of eight union nurses who had a dispute with two of the staff who work for the union. They called upon the leader for help. Thus in December the leader called a meeting with the two staff and the eight union nurses. They met in circle and all agreed to talk through the day to find a solution to their dispute. At the end of the day after much dialogue they had created a solution.

The leader went back and reported to the other leaders on the success of the day and how everyone's voice was heard and how they created their own solution. The leader felt confident that this way of meeting together was satisfying to everyone.

However some months passed and the leader was given notice that the two staff who participated in the circle had felt uncomfortable and harassed. They argued that circle was not appropriate for the workplace. They believe circle process was more appropriate in a church or family setting. They requested the grand leader to not allow the leader to use circle process with the staff. After much dialogue with the leader the grand leader decided this was not a battle she wanted to fight at this time. Thus directed the leader to not use circle process to meet with the staff.

This saddened the leader as in her heart she knew practicing circle to help people is a simple way of collaborating and connecting with each other.

The leader not yet ready to give up on circle took the opportunity to participate in a circle practicum with Circle leaders Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea. She had many questions about her experience and what she could have done differently to help people feel safe in the process. She learned many things from these great women and was re-energized by the experience. She learned that a second facilitator may have helped, that circle process can be adapted to meet different needs and learned the effects of people bringing their own agendas or fears. However the most important learning for the leader was to banish any doubt of the effectiveness of circle and go back to the world feeling confident in practicing circle.

Well another few months passed and the leader is sitting at a table in a hotel during three days of meetings with the union of nurses. A nurse approaches her, smiles and says I know you, you are the leader from the circle meeting we had in December. Then the leader recognized the nurse and asked how she was doing. She responded by saying that the eight nurses carry a special stone in their pocket now, wherever they go. The leader smiled and told the nurse she was honored to have been of assistance. The nurse turned and walked away in silence.

*If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.*

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