



Each month we share with you a story of how circle is being used effectively in a variety of settings. A question we are often asked is, "How do I introduce circle into my existing group?" There are as many responses to that question as there are circles. In this piece MaryBrooks Tyler of Tocopola, Mississippi beautifully demonstrates how well subtlety works in this process. Thank you, MaryBrooks for sharing this story.

## **Circle Tale #9, JUNE 2000 Unitarians Circle Up**

The Unitarian Universalist group in our small town in Mississippi had come together off the steam of good vision and intention, but had come to a point of interpersonal awkwardness and hurt feelings. We found ourselves in a crisis. In short, we had no leadership. We were stalled, afraid that the group would dissolve.

A conversation was called - a weekend retreat was created. The weekend began somewhat awkwardly. Although we wanted to attend to heart, no safety existed for this to happen, so all of us, including me, were cautious. Because I had been absent from the UU group for some time, I wanted to sit quietly rather than jump forward, even though I have from time to time shared some of my circle experiences with friends in that group. However, as the day went on, in places that seemed appropriate, I offered bits of the circle. What I offered first was language. I suggested we "create a sacred space" where we would all feel "safe" to speak from the heart. I watched as this language fell right into the need. Still, I did not want to aggressively offer the circle.

As we pushed ahead, a magical thing began to happen. A candle had been lit and placed way over to the side, "out of the way". Ruth stood to speak and walked over and held the candle, stepping out into the group just a bit. She spoke beautifully and wonderfully from the heart. She placed the candle back in it's "out of the way" spot. Then Mary walked over and picked up the candle and placed it in the middle of the circle saying, "I think I would feel better if this was right here in the center." The circle was trying to take form.

Hearts began to open, hungry to be heard, but ragged with little container to hold them. After two women tearfully spoke great fear and pain, the energy in the room again shifted into fear. The conversation returned to safe things like, "Who's going to get all this work done?" I went into spontaneous circle and asked for the safety I knew I needed simply by placing my open hands toward the woman next to me and then walking to the next person in circle and placing my open hands toward him and then on to each person around the circle. I believe they understood that I was acknowledging that they had been willing to step into sacred, heart space. After we closed, one fellow came up to me immediately, and said, "I really like the things you were saying, but I have to tell you I didn't understand a word of it . . . I just know it was good."

Our group has decided they want circle in our community, and have asked me to call a circle when we return this fall. I look forward to sharing what I have learned from PeerSpirit Circles. Instead of dissolving as a group, I believe we are heading in a direction of heart and intention that will strengthen us and fill us with the passion to created love and leadership in our community.

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

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at [www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com) and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*