

## What are Open Circles?

Open Circles are small-group forums which allow participants to connect, share, and explore life journeys. As a religious community, we aspire to open our hearts and minds. Open Circles provide a unique opportunity to engage in the spiritual practice of transforming ourselves and the world. The purpose of these groups is to enrich our lives with greater depth of meaning and purpose. Open Circle practices deepen our Unitarian Universalist faith.

We meet in groups of six to ten participants twice each month for about two hours each time. By setting aside daily distractions to reflect on our lives and beliefs, we share our wisdom and make thoughtful and meaningful connections with one another. We leave each meeting with a deeper understanding of ourselves and each other.

*"What a miracle to just hear people's stories! No judgment. No debate. No brainstorming. I just get to know you, then you get to know me."*

Lori Fox

## Why should I participate?

Open Circles will give you the opportunity to:

- Discover what you really value, and to express those values in your actions.
- Participate in a supportive, nurturing group setting that facilitates spiritual growth, mutual caring, and engagement in personal and communal goals.
- Grow spiritually through authentic speaking, deep listening, and intentional action.
- Develop friendships with people you might otherwise never get to know.

*"... an intimate and safe place to challenge yourself. I recommend this program to anyone willing to take the risk of looking further inward."*

Charles DuMond

## Interested? Need more information?

If you are interested in participating in Open Circles or wish to learn more about this program, please contact:

Sheila Sandow, Open Circles Program Coordinator

[sheilasandow@yahoo.com](mailto:sheilasandow@yahoo.com) – (650) 341-5621

*"Over time a deep sense of trust, sharing and caring developed. And taking on a service project as a group was bonding."*

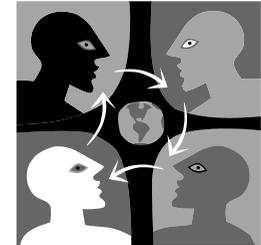
Connie Spearing

UUSM, 300 E. Santa Inez Ave., San Mateo, CA 94401 – (650) 342-5946

[www.uusanmateo.org](http://www.uusanmateo.org)

(08/2017)

# Open Circles at UUSM



*He drew a circle to keep me out,  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had wit to win,  
We cast a circle that drew him in.*

Edwin Markham



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALISTS of  
SAN MATEO

## Who can participate?

Open Circles are open to adults of all ages and with any length of affiliation with UUSM. We especially welcome people who are new to our community and considering UUSM as their spiritual home. Those who join a Circle mid-series will be welcomed and easily integrated into the program.

## When and where do we meet?

Open Circle sessions take place at UUSM, and are scheduled to coordinate with other congregational activities. Continuity is vital and regular attendance is important; although commitment to a specific day is typical, the sessions are “open,” in the spirit of radical hospitality. All groups follow a shared curriculum; participants who are unable to attend their regular session are welcome to attend another of that week’s concurrent sessions. Please see the insert for the current Open Circles schedule.

*“Open Circles blew my mind and enriched my life. I learned so much about myself and others. The format is a wonderful way to get to know others on a very deep level.”*

Paula McCaa

## Who leads this program?

Open Circles are led by skilled facilitators from our community, trained by Rev. Ben Meyers, UUSM minister. Sheila Sandow is the Open Circles Program Coordinator.

*“One of the most radical things we can do for the health and wholeness of ourselves and the healing of our world is to create real connections of caring, trust, and vulnerability. Open Circles invite you to greater spiritual growth.”*

Rev. Ben Meyers

## What is the format?

To encourage depth and help us reach our personal and community goals, a variety of approaches are used during Open Circles, such as embodied practices and guided meditation, personal sharing, journaling, meditation and prayer, readings, singing, and ritual. No special skills are needed to participate!

Each gathering is structured to help us set aside daily distractions and make connections with one another. A simple format includes:

- Opening words, lighting the chalice, singing
- Check-in & introduction of the session's theme
- Moments of silence, partnered and group sharing
- Personal journaling and goal setting

## What makes this work transformative?

To help build a community of open hearts and open minds, the work of Open Circles is anchored in the following questions:

- What do you need to let go of? What behaviors, practices/attitudes, etc. no longer serve your health and wholeness?
- What or whom do you need to forgive? With whom or what do you need reconciliation or healing?
- What do you want/need to move towards? What are you being called to do, or be?
- How do you affirm what is best in you? What are your strengths to accomplish your goal/s? Who are your partners in this?

*“When I first went to Open Circles, I knew only people’s faces. After a little while, you are connected, and people’s opinions and thoughts matter more to you. I am a better person for having participated in this program.”*

Jose Mendez