

THE PRACTICE OF SACRED CIRCLE

Explorations and initial sketch for network development and growth

Filegroup 102085, January 27, 2015, v.1



Sacred circle is a universal concept based on simple principles that are easy to understand and easy to follow. In this framework, we want to have “as few rules as possible” and insofar as possible, be entirely guided in wordless ways by the experience of the spirit. This may take some practice, and it is helpful to have some simple clear guidelines. But guidelines are written in words, and words can be misleading or create misunderstanding. So we strive for resonance and empathy and sensitive understanding.

VISION

We are guided by a deeply intuitive and simple vision of circle or sacred council, in a form that is consistent with ancient indigenous wisdom. The entire circle is intended as “sacred space”, which comes into a common focus in the center of the circle, where we may place a simple altar or focus or sacred fire.

We are supposing that we are contacting “the energy of universal spirit”, in a form that is generally consistent with the spirit of most or all major world religions, as well as most spiritual and mystical traditions that are based in love, truth, peace, and wholeness.

A sacred circle may be convened for any number of different reasons or purposes, which may include deliberation or consideration regarding specific issues or concerns or agenda items, or simply the experience of sacred communion with other members of the circle.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Concepts and principles expressed here are intended to be “interpreted in resonance”, in ways that do not invoke conflict over the meaning of words. So, people are invited to understand these concepts in sympathetic and empathic ways, following their own instincts, and making co-creative suggestions or requests whenever it seems appropriate or natural or graceful to do so.

- 1) Our circle is sacred space.
- 2) Please approach and enter the circle in respect, humility and gentleness.
- 3) We request that new members begin by listening and building awareness. We are seeking “resonance” within the group – an energetic affinity and spiritual attunement among participants that can take some time to develop.
- 4) Please be aware that the circle creates a context of wholeness in all things; please maintain that awareness.
- 5) We request that all members of the circle be treated with respect and courtesy.
- 6) In your experience and participation, please intend co-creation; be receptive and open; respect the unknown and the new; “connect the good”, see the good in others and help invoke it.
- 7) Strive for sacred listening.
- 8) Maintain peace.

CIRCLE STRUCTURE

- 1) The circle has a center.
- 2) People in the circle connect to one another through the center.
- 3) The center has various meanings – a, b, c, d... (list these as possible).

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Create a space that is genuinely safe, peaceful, informed, balanced, comprehensively articulate, following true co-creative principles, and conducted within an implicit (or explicit) awareness of wholeness or the unity of life/being (wording to be adjusted or adapted to specific locales).
- 2) Define and refine the circle process with on-going grace and accurate articulation; consider classical ideas from anywhere/everywhere – consider advanced new ideas stemming from innovative and profound metaphysics, or from opportunities made possible by the internet.
- 3) Maintain the high spiritual standards of the circle experience; insofar as possible and appropriate, circle members maintain the awareness and honor of the circle even when not present in the circle.
- 4) Grow the circle through a process of invitational expanding outreach in any direction felt to be relevant by circle members.
- 5) Consider special-purpose circle groups concerned with specific issues or concerns – all of which run under something like a “federation of the circle” as approximately defined through guidelines.
- 6) Consider the development of alliances or intergroup connections that could operate under something like the same or similar guidelines.
- 7) Explore outreach to related groups that might operate under slightly different protocols, or in terms of a more “parochial” language (such as a particular religious group we admire).
- 8) As appropriate, operate simultaneously or synchronously between internet and face-to-face.

PROCESS

- 1) There are many ways that a sacred circle can be conducted. We may not need specific rules and procedures (“who holds the talking stick, who gets to speak and for how long, how specific decisions shall be made”, etc.), but some general principles are probably important, and each group should be free to adopt their own principles within this broad context.
- 2) In the context of possible growth or expansion, let’s make the core circle (“mother circle”) as simple and basic as possible, and then encourage anything that might grow from it to be consistent with the core principles, but not limited to the core principles (in this way, local or topic-specific circles can create their own specific guidelines, yet still remain consistent with the underlying integrity of the seed process).
- 3) Every person is recognized, every person gets to speak, every perspective is valuable, we will (“somehow”) find the time.
- 4) Explore the meaning of co-creation and become clearer on its practice.
- 5) “Bring out the best in one another” – recognize the good in one another – “find the good and praise it” – “interconnect the good wherever it is found”.

PRINCIPLES OF CO-CREATIVITY

- 1) Respectful and receptive listening stimulates original creative thinking.
- 2) Hold the tension of disagreement without breaking trust and relationships; do not demonize, do not engage in “ad hominem” criticism. Be sharp, defend your point of view, but do so constructively; do not accuse; bring out the best in one another.
- 3) In a truly co-creative context under conditions of high tension or disagreement, new solutions can emerge that have never been previously conceived or considered.
- 4) The collective creative power of the group emerges at the center and is held in the center
- 5) Let all judgment be guided by the convening and containing wholeness of all things, with respect to all things.

SOURCES OF INSTRUCTION

- 1) Indigenous spiritual traditions of circle and council, wise and experienced elders.
- 2) Experienced spiritual groups and teachers – include groups like the Ojai Foundation.
- 3) Democracy theorists, such as Parker Palmer.
- 4) Quaker Meeting guidelines.
- 5) NCDD guidelines, Living Room Conversations, etc.
- 6) Successful or influential circle processes in the world.
- 7) Women’s circle groups and movement; teachers such as Jean Shinoda Bolen (“Millionth Circle”) or Ann Smith (“Circle Connections”) or “Gather the Women”.
- 8) Existing guidebooks, such as “Calling the Circle” by Christina Baldwin or “The CoCreator’s Handbook” by Carolyn Anderson.

FURTHER LINKS

There are some additional articles online, offering more detail, which can be accessed here:

<http://networknation.net/circles/circles.cfm>