

UUC Chalice Circles Order of Service

September Theme: Culture of Care

UU Value: Love

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting adapted from [Liz Weber](#)

It takes all sorts of caring to create a supportive community.

We think of the comfort we find in another person's presence.

We think of our material needs:

a meal that arrives on our doorstep,

a ride to an appointment,

other help in hard times.

We think of the symbolic reminders of this community:

prayer shawls, baby blankets, thinking-of-you cards.

We think of the network behind it all.

We think of all who have called a fellow congregant to check in on them,
who have listened with an open heart during Sunday School or coffee hour,
who have lent a helping hand to another member or friend in need.

For all of the ways that we care for one another, we give thanks and offer our blessing.

Check-in: Without crosstalk or interruption, briefly describe where you are in your life now, and notice what needs to be shared in order to be fully present in our circle.

Song "There Is More Love" (#95 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

Here is a [link to a 1975 version from Sesame Street](#)

There is more love somewhere.

There is more love somewhere.

I'm gonna keep on 'til I find it.

There is more love somewhere.

There is more hope somewhere.

There is more hope somewhere.

I'm gonna keep on 'til I find it.

There is more hope somewhere.

There is more peace somewhere.

There is more peace somewhere.

I'm gonna keep on 'til I find it.

There is more peace somewhere.

There is more joy somewhere.

There is more joy somewhere.

I'm gonna keep on 'til I find it.

There is more joy somewhere.

Reading by [Elizabeth Nguyen](#)

As Unitarian Universalists, we put interdependence at the center of our lives. Interdependence means sometimes we need to be loved on, and sometimes we love on others. It means that sometimes we are leaned on, and sometimes we lean on others. Some call it communal care. Or just being human. It's how we show up and let others show up to express this truth: we do not go it alone, and we do not let our people go it alone.

Like so many other spiritual practices, this one is a paradox too: the giving is also a gift to myself. In these acts of care, the brokenness of the world is remade on a scale I can get my heart (and my calendar) around. I can rail against the lack of free universal childcare—and give a fellow parent a free hour right now. I can fight for freedom for all from cages—and give someone getting out of jail a ride right now. I can mourn the lack of

accessible healthcare for all—and get a neighbor to their appointment today.

Communal care is a lot of work.

Many of us feel like we can barely meet our own needs, let alone help another out.

It takes connection and intention to build the relationships that allow others to let us know their needs and to be willing to share ours.

It takes infrastructure—even if it's just a shared Google doc, an email, or knowing one another's phone numbers.

It takes spiritual muscle to not default to trying to go it alone, and to risk saying yes when it feels unfamiliar to lend our guest room to a stranger, or overwhelming to watch someone else's kid.

We need a lot more love. And we have a lot more to give. We're here, leaning on and being leaned on, uprooting that invasive vine of independence, planting interdependence, letting communal care grow.

Alternate Reading: from *Defund Fear: Safety Without Policing, Prisons, and Punishment* by Zach Norris
There are two ways to think about safety. There is a fear-based way and a care-based way.

The fear-based model defines safety only in terms of being free from *crime* and *criminals*, which is limited, and limiting... what I call the "framework of fear" employs four key elements: systematic deprivation, extensive and expensive systematic suspicion, cruel punishment, and often permanent isolation from the rest of society.

The framework of fear has led to the traumatization of not just the individuals who have been targeted, dehumanized, and criminalized, but the traumatization of entire communities, unfathomable devastations that will be decades in the reckoning. Because trauma is as much a chief *cause* of violence, as the *result* of violence, our current fear-based system paradoxically generates more harm than it prevents, in never-ending cycles of trauma.

This moment presents the opportunity to take action toward a culture of caring and policies of caring.

A culture of care prevents many harms from happening in the first place, by investing in a social safety net (resources), by building our capacity to relate to one another across difference (relationships), and by increasing our sense of "skin in the game" with more vibrant engagement on every level... Care-based safety also means we address harms in ways that hold people accountable and bring about healing (accountability).

Safety is not tied to our capacity to watch our neighbors, but rather based on our capacity to truly look out for one another... We are safer when we act together than when we let ourselves be divided.

Poem: "Shoulders" by Naomi Shihab Nye

A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.

Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.

We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.

The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think of the poem "Shoulders"?
2. What is the difference between "help" and "care"? What do you think about Rev. Molly's assertion that in some ways, help is the opposite of care?
3. What does it mean to live in "a culture of care"?
4. What do you think prevents or works against it?
5. How can we foster this culture in our lives, our church, our community?

Sitting in Silence: We will sit in silence for 3-5 minutes. Take this time to reflect on the readings, questions, and theme. Center yourself and consider what you want to share with the group.

Sharing/Deep Listening: Please share your own experiences and thoughts about the topic and readings with no crosstalk or interruption. Please ensure everyone gets an equal opportunity to share.

Additional Thoughts/Crosstalk: As time allows, after listening to others, do you have additional thoughts to share?

Checkout: What are you taking with you as you leave the circle? How can we support you in the month ahead?

Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice by [Misha Sanders](#)

May we have the self-awareness to ask for what we need, the good boundaries to offer only what we can reasonably give, and the grace to allow each other space to balance it all with loving care.