



UCC Chalice Circles - January 2026

Theme: Survival is not a prison - it is a candle.

Translation: Freedom and hope.

Chalice Lighting:

"We light this chalice, here in the darkness of winter as we wait. This temporary space is one filled with prayers to be answered, love to be given and received, miracles to be witnessed. May this light guide us until the light of the sun returns again." *by JeKaren Olaoya*

Song to Listen and/or Sing:

"Look Up," *by Joy Oladokun*

https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=TreRGuvnVHI&si=o_md1Um6hO2-Qmcj

Check-in

Without crosstalk or interruption, please check in with the group, describing where you are in your life now, noticing what needs to be shared in order to be fully present in our circle.

Reading #1:

"In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again."

- *Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl*

Reading #2:

"Hope is that thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm."

- *from Emily Dickinson's "Hope is that Thing With Feathers"*

Reading #3:

“The kind of hope I often think about (especially in situations that are particularly hopeless, such as prison) I understand above all as a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don’t; it’s a dimension of the soul; it’s not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimation of the situation. Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.”

- by Vaclav Havel, Czech statesman, author, and dissident

Questions to Consider

- 1) Is there a relationship between hope and freedom?
- 2) Was there a time in your life when you felt that you had no hope?
- 3) What can you do when you feel hopeless?
- 4) Is hope necessary?

Sitting in Silence

We will sit in silence for 5 minutes. Take this time to center yourself and reflect on the readings, questions, and theme, considering what you would like to share with the group.

Sharing/Deep Listening

Please listen deeply to others & share from your own experience and thoughts on the readings, questions, or theme without crosstalk or interruption. Please ensure everyone gets an equal opportunity to participate.

Second Sharing/Crosstalk

As time allows, after listening to others, do you have additional thoughts to share?

Check-Out

How are you feeling now, as you leave our circle? What are you taking with you? How can we best support you in the weeks ahead?

Extinguishing the Chalice

“As long as this exists, this sunshine and this cloudless sky, and as long as I can enjoy it, how can I be sad?” – by Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl