

UCC Chalice Circles – January 26, 2026

Our Ambiguous Relationship with Christianity

Chalice Lighting

Divine spark from sacred dark, symbol of our holy intent, illuminate this hour.

Song: “May I Be Empty” by Batya Levine [LINK](#)

May I be empty
And open to receive the light
My I be empty and open to receive
May I be full
And open to receive the light
May I be full and open to receive

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.

Introduction

The American culture comes with a background noise of Christianity. One is assumed to be Christian, unless proven otherwise. We have Christmas and Easter as holidays, not Rosh Hashanah or Solstice. Christianity is embedded in our culture. Most people who aren't Christian see this overlay; many people who are Christian, don't see it.

Those who are not Christian may feel left out in America, may feel like outsiders, may feel ignored. When the New York Times crossword puzzle clue is "Oft-quoted advice in Mathew 7:7," they know the puzzle isn't written for them. There is an assumption that if one is ignorant of Bible quotes, one is not really part of this culture.

Unitarian Universalism urges us to do more than respect one another's beliefs. Yet within Unitarian Universalist churches, the minority with UU Christian beliefs may feel like outsiders. Ironically, a place that allows those with minority convictions to feel acknowledged and respected can alienate people with more mainstream Christian ideals. Our pews are also filled with ex-Catholics and ex-Baptists, often carrying trauma from these experiences.

Our purpose today is to understand and parse these ambiguities and contradictions. How is your relationship with Christianity healthy, and how is it simultaneously broken? Let us process our cultural experiences around Christianity in America.

Reading 1

“I realize everybody in here is not Christian. I'm a Theist. I really believe there is an ultimate reality which I can be connected to. I'm a Theist. Not because of the Western European ideas of God. I don't have a God of being, I have a God of becoming. I have an idea about God, because I survived the Middle Passage. I survived segregation. I survived Jim Crow law. I know it doesn't make much difference to some folk, but I believe in an ultimate reality that reminded me that weeping may endure for a night but joy will come. It takes courage.”

--Dr. C. W. Dawson, Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, June 14, 2015

Reading 2

“We are all atheists about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further.”

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

“So it is best to keep an open mind and be agnostic. At first sight that seems an unassailable position, at least in the weak sense of Pascal's wager. But on second thought, it seems a cop-out, because the same could be said of Father Christmas and tooth fairies. There may be fairies at the bottom of the garden. There is no evidence for it, but you can't prove that there aren't any, so shouldn't we be agnostic with respect to fairies?”
--Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (and other writings)

Questions to Consider

1. When you hear a prayer that has Jesus in it, how do you feel? How do you feel about a nonsecular prayer referring to a higher power, such as “The Light” or “Divine Spark”?
2. Do you feel the same if a Christian, or someone of another faith (say Buddhism), talks about their religious convictions?
3. Are there any aspects of Christianity that disturb you on any level? Aspects that make you feel positive?
4. How do you feel when someone quotes from the Bible in a nonreligious context, such as at a faculty meeting at a state school?
5. How do you feel about aspects of Christianity that have made it into daily life, including language such as "preaching to the choir," etc.?

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 we extinguish this Chalice, let us re-examine our relationship with ideas and beliefs that we might not share, tempering our reactions with compassion and understanding.