

UUCC Chalice Circles - October 2026

Place: moving under a rustling canopy of leaves @ MKT trail (MLK trailhead)

Themes: exploration, discovery, curiosity

Chalice Lighting: “What if everything always went according to plan? At first, we might accomplish more of what we think we need to accomplish. And it may seem less stressful, at first, being able to anticipate what happens next. But after a certain amount of time (and that amount would vary person to person) the once-comfortable predictability would become less comfortable and... well, boring.

If we always know what happens next, we lose the joy of surprise, serendipitous experiences, and the excitement that comes from anticipating the unknown. Friends, let us gather with open, curious hearts, ready to explore the unpredictable, learn from its wisdom, and embrace its beauty.” (Krista Flanagan)

Song (optional): [“Look Up,” by Joy Oladokun](#)

Lyrics: Sometimes your life feels like a broken rollercoaster, A thousand useless moving parts

Sometimes you spend your nights, Too scared of getting closer, Hiding out in the back seat of your car

[Pre-Chorus]

You tell yourself it's raining, The clouds are in your head

You tell yourself it's better, To jump before you fall again

Before you lose it all again

[Chorus]

Look up--Do you see the sunlight?

Look up--There's flowers in your hair

Hold on, 'Cause somebody loves you

You know trouble's always gonna be there--Don't let it bring you to your knees

Look up

Mondays aren't always bright, Some days, you lose the fight

But life can be beautiful if you let it be

Tomorrow keeps taunting you, With all kinds of mystery

It's a blank page for your poetry, If you let it be

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: “Whether we realize it or not, it is our woundedness, or how we cope with it, that dictates much of our behavior, shapes our social habits, and informs our ways of thinking about the world.” (Gabor Maté, *in The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture*). When I’m working in the community, I often see adults who are struggling: with housing, with familial relationships, with money, and with just being. Everyone wants to tell their story. I listen as much as I can. Whether it’s disheveled people with holes in their pants, people dressed to the nines, all classes of people have suffered—and are still suffering—from a lack of love. As I listen to their stories, I think, Who loved you and what happened to you? Who is loving you now? There’s little difference between me and the people I try to serve: I, too, need to be seen; to tell my story; to be listened to in confidence: the kind of confidence where two human beings connect in passing, and understanding happens. Sometimes it’s a head nod of acknowledgement to the dark-skinned Black man with thick glasses, or the smile to the older white woman with the walker. These gestures acknowledge our imperfection, and the fact that loving oneself is hard in the face of relationship ruptures and fragmentations—because we’re more busy protecting ourselves first than connecting. Chronic neglect, abuse, domestic violence, bullying, and very rigid definitions of being in the world have fed our distrust, encouraging us to expect scarcity, cruelty, and loneliness.

Building community in the public requires a heart-centered approach with a mind that is as still as water, so it can reflect the needs of another and appeal towards sustainable possibilities. It includes protecting myself and the people with whom I’m engaged even as it requires vulnerability. It also includes a calm, centered conviction that I am also

someone who is of Love, worthy of Love, and loving. This kind of self-compassion is a power that can be cultivated.

The public is full of people—yet that does not automatically make a community. Relationships of trust, and the ability to rest and be in full safety are also necessary. Building relationships requires the risk of being open and curious. Sometimes it requires affirming another person for who they say they are—and not who you want them to be. It requires time, presence, and calm.” (Melissa Jeter, “How Were You Loved?”)

Reading #2: “A pair of wings, a different respiratory system, which enabled us to travel through space, would in no way help us, for if we visited Mars or Venus while keeping the same senses, they would clothe everything we could see in the same aspect as the things of the Earth. The only true voyage, the only bath in the Fountain of Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is...” (Marcel Proust, “In Search of Lost Time,” V, “The Captive and the Fugitive”)

Questions to Consider:

1. Have you been to the MLK Trailhead, or to another part of the MKT Trail? What do you discover in your mind when you think of it?
2. Do you ever suddenly see places you’ve been, or people you’ve known in a new way? Is this more likely to happen for you with places or people, and why do you think that’s the case?
3. Can you remember a time when you went into a situation curious, and it lead to you gaining a whole new perspective on a book, song, painting, or other piece of art? What did you discover?
4. What are ways in which you like to explore and/or discover in your day to day life?

Sitting in Silence: We will sit in silence for 3 to 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 and share of 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 support you in the weeks ahead?

Extinguishing the Chalice: "May you be filled with the blessings of this covenanted community. May you carry them with you as you depart from here. May you discover the places in the world where these blessings are needed. May you have the courage to share them. May there be an open place within you to receive the blessings of the people whom you will meet along the way." (Eric Williams)