

Sacred Circle Topics

These are topics that some circles have found to be meaningful, as reported in the survey we conducted in 2022:

The Daily Examen
Writings of Rumi
Finding stillness
Grace, what is it?
Meditation/mindfulness practices
Listening without trying to change
Where we most experience the Holy
Star words
Spiritual grounding
Belonging
How we see God
Practices and rituals that sustain us
Mother Teresa
Thin spaces
The place (if any) of prayer in your life
Being invisible
Nature
How to provide a space for reflection/self care in our super busy lives
Routines
Maintaining hope through difficult times
Making it through COVID
Reflecting on the "season" of winter
Our responses to Krista Tippett podcasts
Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb"
Our experiences with Communion
What is a gift someone has given you, and what is one you have given another?
At Christmas: What spiritual gift would you give someone?
What can you leave behind?
Change
The challenges of aging
Grief/loss
Grief as it relates to the loss of a parent
Discussions about our families, backgrounds, roots
How past experiences have shaped our lives
Traditions
Early childhood memories
College experiences
Motherhood
Women who had major influences on our lives (other than our mothers)
Inspiring women in our own lives and in the world
Impact of: friend, teacher, music, poem, RS sermons on your life
Influential ancestors

Favorite song/children's book/poem/hymn/Bible verse
Sharing family recipes
Memorable travels
Child rearing
The changes required as children grow
How to manage big topics with kids
An object that is deeply meaningful to us that we would like our children to appreciate
Managing a career and a family
Career decisions
Family relationships/conflicts
Myers-Briggs types and how they affect relationships
Talking about racism
The "me too movement" and our own personal stories in that context
Feminism/women's empowerment
Clarifying mutual expectations of the group
Joint readings
Doing art projects together
Book discussions
Meals out
Sharing movies (out and in a home)

Here are some additional ideas from an earlier survey:

Affirming one another. Members take turns sitting in the middle of the circle while the others write Post-It notes with three positive things about that person and then share them. (Everyone glowed by the end of that meeting, noted one circle member.)

Annunciations. Share about an announcement/message that came to you, especially ones from unlikely people – children, long-lost relatives, even strangers. Or from the natural world – animals, mountaintops, the skies at night. We shared one such annunciation and whether we accepted the message as something we needed to act on or respond to in some way, or whether we rejected it as not relevant.

Change. Fall is a season of change. What are you taking with you into the winter and what are you leaving behind? Each circle member is given two pieces of paper – one, disappearing/dissolving paper; the other, thick cardstock. First, you are asked to write what you are leaving behind on the dissolving paper and place it in a bowl of water. Then you are asked to write what you want to keep on the cardstock.

Favorite things. Share your favorite book of the past year. Other possibilities: share your favorite children's book (either one that was read to you as a child or that you've read to children as an adult) or poem or hymn or movie.

Food. How would you characterize your relationship with food? How was food treated in your family when you were growing up? What are your comfort foods? Each person brought a favorite recipe to share.

Getting to know you. Members shared pictures and stories of themselves as little girls. An especially good topic for circles getting started as a way to begin to get to know one another.

Holidays. Christmas/Easter memories and traditions.

Home. Where do you call home? Is it a particular place? Or perhaps is it a feeling generated by people and not a specific location? How do you create "home" for others?

Invisibility. Are there conditions or situations in which you feel/have felt invisible? Are there any common themes for you? What are some ways you've used to make yourself visible to others? Was it a risky process? How did you navigate the risks? Have you found it helpful to be invisible sometimes?

Listeners. Who are the listeners in your life? What makes them good sounding boards for you? What does a good listener look like for you? Do you feel that God is listening in your life? How do you listen for God's still speaking voice?

Mending. Members shared memories of mending socks and clothes, how this was practiced in their family and how this changed over time. This led to a discussion of mending relationships, helping others mend (from illness or sorrow) and what helps mend us.

#MeToo. In light of the #MeToo movement, some circles discussed sexual harassment and abuse of women in the workplace and beyond with time for members to share their own stories.

Mothers. What was your relationship with your mother like when you were a child? As an adult? What do you most value about your mother? In what ways did she mother you or fail to?

Nature. In what ways do you connect with Spirit through nature? (Members brought something from nature that spoke to them: a natural item, a poem or favorite quote about nature).

Playtime. What was the most heavenly play for you as a child (say 4 to 10 years old)? When you had time to yourself, what did you do, either with other children or alone? What really gave you pleasure then, when there was still a feeling of timelessness? What does it say about who you are today?

Prayer. What is your prayer tradition? How does prayer fit into your life? What comforts or joys does it bring? Where and under what circumstances do you find yourself in an attitude of prayer as you define it?

Religion of origin. What did you learn about religion/faith from your family and childhood church experiences that has stayed with you? What do you believe now that didn't come from those early experiences, and what contributed to these new beliefs?

Role models. Who were your role models growing up – and for whom have you been a role model?

Song. Share a song that holds particular meaning for you from your 20s (some members brought a CD and played their song, others copied the music to hand out so we could sing along.)

Taboos. What topics were off limits in the family you grew up with, things that were avoided even in family conversation? How did that influence what you think or feel about that topic?

Teacups. Everyone brought old family teacups and shared family stories from them.

Our Hands. We did a guided meditation on our hands: how they identify us, how they give care and love, do work, and so on. Imagining everything that we actually do with our own hands was impressive.

Water. The session focused on the many uses of water in our daily life, spiritual and practical. We all immersed our hands in a beautiful large bowl of water, unifying and spiritual.

Here are some resources to explore for thoughtful topics:

- *Sacred Circles* by Robin Deen Carnes and Sally Craig (some of the above topics were adapted from their book)
- UCC.org's Daily Devotional, which you can sign up to have emailed to you. Each Monday's daily scripture devotional includes a few questions for small group discussion.
- Stories from NPR's "This I Believe," which are archived on their website, npr.org.
- Meditations from lumunos.org (formerly Faith At Work), which can be found at lumunos.org under the menu heading: lumunos blog
- spiritualityandpractice.com is a multifaith and interspiritual website founded by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat that is chock-full of resources on spirituality. Under the Practices header, you can explore spiritual practices from Attention to Zeal.
- "Burnt Norton," the first poem of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (particularly themes related to growing old and memories)
- Books by Rachel Naomi Remen: *My Grandfather's Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging*; and *Kitchen Table Wisdom*.
- Books by Marjory Bankson including *Braided Streams*, *Seasons of Friendship*, *The Call to the Soul*, *The Soulwork of Clay*, and *Creative Aging*.