

jubilee! Circle



The church for people who don't like church

by Ann Minton

It isn't every day that I get a call from a minister. So, when Rev. Candace Chellew-Hodge called, I listened. We met to talk about jubilee! Circle, a small "church plant" congregation of the United Church of Christ that meets on Sunday afternoons at a fitness center on Millwood Avenue in Columbia. She described her church as the place to go for people who don't like church, because jubilee! Circle is a progressive, inclusive community.

When I asked her what that means, she explained that at jubilee! Circle, each person's spiritual path is respected and valued. "Whether you come from a church background, a religious background other than Christianity, or no religious background at all, you are welcome here. We celebrate individual differences, rather than judge them."

Candace grew up Baptist in Buford, GA, and Greensboro, NC, and attended the Candler School of Theology at Emory after her undergraduate studies at Georgia State. She served as associate pastor at Garden of Grace before becoming the pastor of jubilee! Circle. The name and service format were influenced by her impressive experience at the jubilee! Community in Asheville, NC, which included contemporary, secular music in a circular setting.

Candace got a starry-eyed look on her face as she described being so moved by the "amazing use of music in the round" that she felt tears streaming down her cheeks.

After I asked her what she would most like to say to our readers, she pondered before she spoke, and then said: "I would like to convey that while part of the Church (in general) has been tainted by an emphasis on sin, we provide a place at jubilee! Circle where you can relax and play with the Holy, knowing that God delights in you. We all screw up Repentance means that you change your mind and do better next time. I believe that God is way more forgiving than many of His followers. We are basically whole, not broken, and we are living into our wholeness."

jubilee! Circle meets on Sunday afternoons at 5:30 pm at 2730 Millwood Ave. There is a theme for each Sunday of the month. The first Sunday is a potluck dinner and discussion; there's a celebration service on the second and fourth Sundays; and the third Sunday features an instructional video-based series called *Living the Questions*. When there is a fifth Sunday, a musical service called *jubilee! The musical* is held. . If you are looking for a place that is inclusive and more spiritual than religious, what do you have to lose?

For more info, visit jubileeCircleuCC.com or attend one of the Sunday afternoon gatherings. See ad, page 9.

Ten Principles of Creation Spirituality

- The universe is basically a blessing that is something we experience as good.
- We can and do relate to the universe as a whole since we are a microcosm of that macrocosm and that this relationship "intoxicates" us. (Aquinas)
- Everyone is a mystic, ie, born full of wonder and capable of recovering it at any age; of not taking the awe and wonder of existence for granted.
- Everyone is a prophet, ie, a "mystic in action" (Hocking) who is called to "interfere" (Heschel) with what interrupts authentic life.
- That humans have to dig and work at finding their deep, true spirit self; thus the role of practical application of spirituality with meditation and community confrontation, which can itself be a form yoga. If we do not undertake the practical application of spirituality, we live superficially out of fear or greed or addiction or someone else's expectations of us. That salvation is best understood as "preserving the good" (Aquinas).
- That the journey that marks that digging can be named as a four-fold journey:
 - Via Positiva: delight, awe, wonder, revelry
 - Via Negativa: darkness, silence, suffering, letting go
 - Via Creativa: birthing, creativity
 - Via Transformativa: compassion, justice healing, celebration
- Everyone is an artist in some way and art as meditation is a primary form of prayer for releasing our images and empowering the community and each of us. Art finds its fulfillment in ritual, the community's art.
- We are all sons and daughters of God; therefore, we have divine blood in our veins, the divine breath in our lungs; and the basic work of God is compassion.
- Divinity is as much mother as father, as much child as parent, as much Godhead (mystery) as God (history), as much beyond all beings as in all beings.
- That we experience that the divine is in all things and all things are in the divine (panentheism), and that this mystical intuition supplants theism (and its child, atheism) as an appropriate way to name our relation to the divine and experience the sacred.

This list is from *Confessions: The Making of a Post-Denominational Priest* by Matthew Fox.