



This month's circle tale was written by Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea of PeerSpirit.

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The Circle of Three and the World

The PeerSpirit office resides in a place of peace and beauty, surrounded by a community in conversation with itself about the issues of the island and the world. These days we are painfully aware of this level of privilege: that we live in a warm house with food in the cupboard, a working infrastructure that makes lights turn on and water run from the faucets, and enough money in the bank to take care of our daily needs. Though our days are filled with the busyness of our work, the world situation never leaves our minds for long.

On a recent morning our accountant arrived to collect information for our 2002 tax filing. As is our custom when visitors arrive at the PeerSpirit office, we began by lighting a candle and drawing angel cards. Our accountant began her check-in first. Her card offered the word "Gratitude."

Bursting into tears, she talked about her conversation with her twenty-two-year-old-son six days earlier. "The Marine Corps allowed him one call home before he disappeared into the blackout of his assignment in Iraq," explained Stephanie. "We spent the first part of the conversation writing his will and getting his affairs in order. We spent the second half of the conversation saying every loving thing we could think of to one another in case this was the last conversation we ever have. For this I have great gratitude."

Ann then checked in. Her angel card was "Strength." "I am looking for many new ways to be strong. I believe we must come to a new definition of the word strength that has nothing to do with munitions, missiles, nuclear warheads or troops. This new definition would focus on finding the strength to settle our differences and build a peaceful world."

Christina's card was "Openness." "I want to be in open conversation," she said. "I get afraid when people stop speaking their minds. I don't want an atmosphere of fear to isolate us from each other. I want to know what the neighbors and the folks in the grocery line think about what's happening. I want to know people's stories-- especially the stories of people faraway, for they have much to teach us. This card challenges me to start the conversation every way I can, to listen respectfully and speak honestly."

In this circle of three, we listened to each other without interruption, and then opened the conversation to ideas and commitments about what we might do. Each of us made a commitment that was related to our word of the day: Stephanie is making a prayer card with her son's face and name on one side, and a blank space on the other side for "another mother's son or daughter." "That I can do... urge people to keep praying for all the young people who are caught in this battle."

Ann is writing and emailing elected officials. "The White House is being bombarded with messages, and that's good. It's also important to communicate with our Congressional representatives and remind them to watch over environmental protections, civil liberties, social justice." Christina is making a T-shirt that says: "Democracy is dialogue—Let's talk." She's wearing this shirt as she resumes professional traveling. "An airport has got to be one of the safest places in America... seems like a great opportunity to sit down, circle up, get to know each other, and learn to listen, even if we disagree."

PeerSpirit defines its work as "building communities of reflection, adventure and purpose." This crisis begs us to profoundly re-evaluate our sense of community. This crisis makes real the interconnection between all peoples of the world, and between people and the web of life. We believe passionately that this is crucial moment for each of us to deepen our conversations with everyone around us—neighbors, family members, colleagues, friends, government officials— and re-create communities of open heart, open mind, and mutual support.



On the home page of the PeerSpirit website (www.peerspirit.com), on the lower left, is place to click for "Basic Circle Guidelines." This is a 2-page downloadable ready-to-print file developed to be culturally neutral and easily applied anywhere in the world where the circle is called. Inside the circle we can think things through, expose our hearts, figure out how to hold our diversity, and then ACT for the common good.

No matter where we are on the political spectrum or the face of the globe, we are involved in a crisis that will not go away. The courage to act on our deepest values and truest convictions is being called forth in every one of us. The rest of our lives will be shaped by what we do now. Let us use this moment to open a dialogue, the likes of which we have never before experienced, to reach across every artificial barrier and discover each other.

Blessings on all who read this. Your angel card for the day is "Hope."

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*