

FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO
Listening Circle Planning Team

LISTENING CIRCLE FACILITATION GUIDE
FINAL v 3.2 - December 9, 2021

Overview/Rationale

- After the Monday, 11/22, Level 2 Facilitator Training, the information below was taken from Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh's "Listening Circle Materials Packet."
- It combines information spread throughout the packet & the 11/22 Facilitator Listening Circle into a chronological outline of the steps for facilitating a Listening Circle from start to finish.
- The intent is to reduce the need to flip back & forth among the many pages of the "Listening Circle Materials Packet" while facilitating.
- The last page of this guide is the "Guiding Deep Listening: Tips for Facilitators" page from the packet.

Facilitator Roles: Determine who will take on each role.

- Circle Leader & Timer:
 - Leads the circle activities.
 - Times each person's response to a question (3 minutes/per response/per person) using a timer (with chime, if possible).
 - Needed materials: Chalice/candles/matches, timer/cell phone, chime/bell
- Note Taker/Recorder:
 - Needed materials: Paper & pencil/pen or keyboard
 - Tasks:
 - > If in Zoom, posts each question in the chat one at a time.
 - > Takes anonymized, paraphrased notes during each response.
 - > After the silent space following each response, reflects/reads back the anonymized notes.
 - > Titles the notes with Listening Circle date & time & Recorder's name.
 - > Submits anonymized notes to be aggregated & analyzed.
 - Submitting Notes:
 - > If Taken Via Keyboard:
 - Name file "LC Notes" followed by LC date & time
 - Email file to both Dan Paul (dhpaul@outlook.com) & Jan Garbosky (jgarbosky@cox.net).
 - > If Handwritten: Jan will transcribe your notes—unless you'd like to do that & send file to Dan.
 - Contact Jan (jgarbosky@cox.net or 619-987-3346) to arrange for pick-up **OR**
 - Scan your notes & email them to Jan. "CamScanner" app is a free app you can use.
- NOTE: Facilitators will not respond to the questions as they've already shared & had their responses recorded. This will also allow facilitators to:
 - stay focused on their assigned tasks &
 - help ensure the circle ends on time or early.

Settling In & Icebreaker

- Thank participants for giving their time to this listening experience.
- **“Name Chant” Icebreaker:** Suggested choice from Possible Icebreakers because it takes less time & doesn’t put folks on the spot by asking them to remember & build on things said in others’ responses.
 - **Introduction:** People have a range of different styles in how they choose to present themselves to others & express themselves in a group
 - **Instructions:**
 - > Each person says their name in whatever tone of voice/manner they choose.
 - > The group repeats the name 3 times in the same tone of voice/manner.
 - > One of us [facilitators] will start.
 - > At the end of your turn, please call on another person.
 - **Closure:** Even in mirroring another, we come from our own individual perspectives. During our Circle we’ll experience different feelings about the happenings of the past 18 months or more.

Chalice Lighting

- **Reading:** Choose 1 from the possible opening/closing readings found in Listening Circle Materials packet. Below is one choice—the first option—by Pauline Oliveros. Feel free to choose another from the packet.

I pray for deep listening—
listening alone—
listening together—
listening to others—
listening to oneself—
listening to the earth—
listening to the universe—
listening to the abundance that is—
awakening to & feeling sound & silence as all there is—
helping to create an atmosphere of opening for all to be heard, with the understanding
that listening is healing.

Deep listening in all its variations is infinite.

Deep listening is love.

Opening the Circle, Process Explanation, & Covenant

- **Opening the Circle:**
 - Our circle is a time of deep listening, holding one another in UU community.
 - The truths we'll hear lays the groundwork for our congregation's healing & growth in this year of transitional ministry & beyond.
 - To ensure confidentiality:
 - > Anonymized notes will be taken & compiled—no names, just feelings, with a summary shared & reported back.
 - > We ask that you keep confidential the names &/or details about what an individual in the group disclosed in this Listening Circle. But, we do hope you'll share with others the story of how the group affected you & what it was like to speak & listen from your heart.
 - > The Ministers & Lay Ministers are available to you as an additional confidential listening presence after the circle ends.
 - > Remember, we're healing as a congregation, one conversation at a time.
 - > An exception to confidentiality would be if anyone in the circle discloses that they're in crisis or self-harming. In that case, a minister will be notified.
 - We'll take a 5-minute break after the responses to the first question.
 - We facilitators have participated in our own Listening Circle &, in order to focus on our tasks, will not respond to the questions posed.
 - Our circles are a launching place for the work that follows—renewing our covenant and further engagement about the conflicts & challenges of the past 18 months (or longer), & the end of two ministries.
- **Process Explanation:**
 - Everyone will have the opportunity to respond to each question.
 - > You'll have 3 minutes to respond—you may, of course, take less time or pass.
 - > I'll be using a timer & will put up 2 fingers to let you know 2 minutes have passed & you have 1 more minute to finish your thought.
 - After each sharing, we'll sit in silence for 10 seconds.
 - Following the silence, [Note Taker/Recorder] will read back the notes taken.
 - After the read-back, you may make corrections/clarifications.
 - I'll ask if you [the respondent] are okay with us moving on to the next person.
 - Do you have any questions?
- **Group Agreements/Covenant:**
 - To be able to listen to the different truths represented here, we ask for your agreement with the following covenant.
 - This is an opportunity to do something rare & beautiful. To speak & listen with deep respect. In so doing, we **speak the truth in love:**
 - > **Speak: only on my own behalf.**
 - > **The Truth: from my own behalf.**
 - > **In Love: with honesty, respect, & a willingness to listen**

- **We will:**
 - > Answer from the heart.
 - > Listen to the concerns & ideas of others with no debate, discussion, questioning, challenging, interruptions, or “cross-talk” & not try to fix or solve during this session.
 - > Do our best to stay within time limits.
 - > Observe confidentiality.
- Can we agree? [PAUSE . . .] Let’s begin!

Sharing/Listening Circle Time

- **Question #1:** If in Zoom, Note Taker posts question into the chat. Leader sets timer for 3 minutes.
 - Read aloud Question 1:
For you, what has formed the foundation of your relationship with our congregation? Has that changed in the past 18 months or longer?
 - Wait a few seconds & ask if anyone would like to volunteer to respond.
 - For each speaker, when there’s 1-minute left, put up 2 fingers to indicate 2 minutes have passed.
 - After each person who wishes to has had a turn to speak or pass:
 - 1.) Ask for a few moments of silence.
 - 2.) Then, ask Note Taker/Recorder to read back the paraphrased notes taken.
 - 3.) Allow for corrections or clarifications.
 - 4.) Ask if it’s okay to move on to another person.
 - When all who wish to respond to the question have done so, move on to Question #2.

5 MINUTE BREAK!! Introduce break & set timer for 5 minutes.
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- **Question #2:** If in Zoom, recorder posts question into the chat. Leader sets timer for 3 minutes.
 - Read aloud Question 2:
If you’re struggling with anything in your relationship to our congregation right now, what does that struggle look like?
 - Wait a few seconds & ask if anyone would like to volunteer to respond.
 - For each speaker, when there’s 1-minute left, put up 2 fingers to indicate 2 minutes have passed.
 - After each person who wishes to has had a turn to speak or pass:
 - 1.) Ask for a few moments of silence.
 - 2.) Then, ask Note Taker/Recorder to read back the paraphrased notes taken.
 - 3.) Allow for corrections or clarifications.
 - 4.) Ask if it’s okay to move on to another person.
 - When all who wish to respond to the question have done so, move on to Question #3.

- **Question #3:** If in Zoom, recorder posts question into the chat. Leader sets timer for 3 minutes.
 - Read aloud Question 3:
What might motivate you to participate in & support our congregation even more wholeheartedly?
 - Wait a few seconds & ask if anyone would like to volunteer to respond.
 - For each speaker, when there's 1-minute left, put up 2 fingers to indicate 2 minutes have passed.
 - After each person who wishes to has had a turn to speak or pass:
 - 1.) Ask for a few moments of silence.
 - 2.) Then, ask Note Taker/Recorder to read back the paraphrased notes taken.
 - 3.) Allow for corrections or clarifications.
 - 4.) Ask if it's okay to move on to another person.
 - When all who wish to respond to the question, move on to Closing.

Closing & Extinguishing the Chalice
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- **Offer gratitude** for the:
 - Quality of sharing in the group,
 - Community created,
 - Whatever else you notice that's positive & genuine.
- Tell them they'll be asked to complete a short survey about their Listening Circle experience.
- Again offer thanks for their participation.
- Ask the group to encourage others to sign up for a Listening Circle—this month or in January.
- **Releasing the Circle: Closing Words & Extinguishing the Chalice:**
 - Choose 1 from the possible opening/closing readings in the Listening Circle Materials packet. Below is one choice. Feel free to choose another.
 - From *On the Cusp of Life* by Richard S. Gilbert:

Our faith is an affirmation of our human capacity
To respond to all that fate flings against us,
And yet proclaim to all that life is good.

Our faith is in the meaning of the past
And the openness of the future
As they meet in the eternal present.

Our faith is in that great mystery of things
In which we live & Move & have our being,
May we be faithful to the best that is in us,
Knowing how hard that is to do.
And knowing there is no other way.

- **End Meeting**

JOB AID: LISTENING CIRCLE NOTE TAKING/RECORDING

- Notes will be entered into a computer program for qualitative data analysis.
- **For consistency, use the following format as you take notes (handwritten or typed):**
 - **Heading:** LC Notes – [Date] – [Time] - [Platform: Zoom or In-Person] – [Your name]
 - **For each question:**
 - > **Use “Q” to identify the Question** (i.e., Q #1, Q #2, Q #3):
 - **It’s not necessary to write the actual question on the notes/file.**
 - **Note Taker for zoom circles:** DO enter the entire question in the chat box prior to the first response for that question.
 - > **Use numbers NOT names to identify each speaker:**
Q #1:
 - 1 [first speaker’s response] dljtljaoinrelknaofdipaoenasdf jlsdjfdsnpoeinelngjdf
 - 2 [second speaker’s response] ;lsdfnsdnarel;nf
 - 3 [& so on . . . until last person has had a chance to respond]
 - > **If someone passes:** Write “Pass” after their number.
 - > **For Questions #2 & #3:** Speaker numbers do not need to match that speaker’s number from the previous question(s).
 - Call on speakers when each is ready to speak.
 - Speaking in order is not necessary.
- Capture ideas & phrases. It’s not necessary to write complete sentences.
- Don’t worry if you don’t capture everything. After you reflect back what the speaker said, they’ll have a chance to clarify or add anything you may have missed noting.
- **Submitting Notes (ASAP after the Listening Circle):**
 - **Handwritten Notes:**
 - > Jan will transcribe your notes into a Word document. If you’d like to transcribe your own notes, please let Jan know.
 - > Contact Jan (jgarbosky@cox.net or 619-987-3346) to arrange for pick-up
OR
 - > Scan or take a photo of your notes & email them to Jan.
 - “CamScanner” is a free app you can use.
 - Be sure you can see all your notes on the photo or scanned document
 - **Word Processed Notes:**
 - > **Name file:** LC Notes – [Date] – [Time] - [Platform: Zoom or In-Person] – [Your name]
 - > **Email file to both:**
 - Dan Paul (dhpaul@outlook.com) &
 - Jan Garbosky (jgarbosky@cox.net).

**Additional Resource from Listening Circle Materials Packet:
GUIDING DEEP LISTENING: TIPS FOR FACILITATORS (Adapted)**

- The goal is simply to have people express themselves & be listened to in an environment of acceptance.
- Our job is to listen, clarify/confirm, record, & reflect.
- The facilitator brings the group to consensus about guidelines before beginning.
- Be sure to include the Group Agreements/Covenant.
- Gently remind people when/if they stray.
- Gently stop them at the end of their time.
- Speakers take turns. Speakers can volunteer to speak or you can go around the circle. In-person, a “talking object” can be used & passed to the next speaker as a way to identify the only one who may speak.
- Allow 10 seconds of silence after each speaker has finished to honor what’s been shared. This will also give the recorder time to complete notes.
- At the end of the silence after each person’s remarks, Recorder looks over notes & read it back to the group. [“What I heard you say was . . .”] Paraphrasing is an important skill in deep listening. By feeding back another’s comments, you can clarify your understanding. Restate what you heard in your own word, in diplomatic language, with no input of your own.
- Be careful not to discount what someone is saying through your own words or body language. You can affirm & validate what was said without agreeing, judging, solving, challenging, or defending.\
- If people wander into discussion, solutions, rebuttal, or challenges, gently remind them of the group agreements/covenant & return to listening mode. [**Consider saying: “I know how hard it is not to jump in & try to fix things, but today our task is just to listen.”**]
- A person may pass without speaking, but if she/he hasn’t spoken during a round, encourage them on the next round. [**Say: “Let’s start this round with someone who has not spoken yet.”**]