



A professional facilitator speaks with each potential participant in advance of the scheduled Circle to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the process; they have realistic expectations; and they are ready, willing, and able to participate without further harm to themselves or others in the circle.

The heart of the circle is a facilitated conversation among those harmed by clergy sexual abuse and/or by the behavior of the hierarchy in response to it. The facilitator invites participants to share their own stories of suffering, broken trust, or the like, as well as the ripple effects on their lives and in their faith communities. The conversation moves from experiences of harm to personal journeys toward recovery and healing.

Participants include a professional Circle facilitator and, to the degree possible, individuals from the following groups:

- Victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse
- Family members or friends of those sexually abused
- Current or past members of faith communities who are deeply troubled by the revelations of clergy abuse and hierarchical malfeasance
- Officials from dioceses or religious congregations where abuse occurred
- Clergy or Church ministry workers who have been injured due to their stance regarding abuse and malfeasance, or who reach out to support those sexually abused
- Clergy who have sexually abused children or adults, PROVIDED they have had a genuine change of heart and repented for their actions
- A therapist or counselor who is trained in responding to triggers from past traumas

The circle process is based on Restorative Justice principles and practices that include:

- A talking piece to ensure that participants enjoy equal value and opportunity in the conversation, and speak in sequence without interruption or commentary on what they say
- A safe and respectful space in which participants can express honest and candid truth as each understands it
- A level of confidentiality regarding what is said in the circle

The circle process typically lasts for 6-8 hours depending upon the number of participants.

The circle provides an opportunity for those who have been deeply affected by their experience to:

- Speak in a safe space about their suffering and their needs
- Listen to and hold the suffering and needs of others with similar or different experiences
- Identify and find support for ways in which healing can begin or continue

Conversely, the circle is not appropriate for those who:

- Have not been harmed in some clear way by the reality of abuse and malfeasance
- Do not take responsibility for any harm they have caused
- Insist on expectations that are counter to Restorative Justice principles and practices