

About VOTF Healing Circles



Voice of the Faithful®, a Catholic lay organization founded in 2002, sponsors a Healing Circle initiative known as “Broken Vessels.”

Vision

The People of God will make healing opportunities available to rebuild the Church from the wounds of the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church.

Mission

To facilitate an experience of healing for those who suffer any effects of the sexual abuse scandal, specifically through Healing Circles that are *based on Biblical teachings and Restorative Justice principles and practices.*

More Information

For more information on Healing Circles—including how we run them, where they have been held so far, and who is on the leadership team and advisory committee—please visit votf.org and look for Healing Circles under the Programs menu.

For questions about scheduling or participating in Healing Circles, contact:

Voice of the Faithful
P.O. Box 423
Newton, MA 02464
Phone: 781-559-3360
Email: office@votf.org
Website: www.votf.org

Benefits of Healing Circles

Sharing one’s truth and listening to another’s truth connects participants’ stories of broken trust, suffering, and frustration into a shared journey toward healing.

“We each construct a sense of identity and safety to keep from feeling vulnerable. We place our symbols and critical events in narrative—stories—about who and what we are. These are our truths.”

Robert Schreiter, Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order

“Suffering ... is essentially an attack on our narratives ... To heal, we have to recover our stories ... that take into account the awful things that have happened.”

Howard Zehr, Doing Life: Reflections of Men and Women Serving Life Sentences

“The wound is the place where Light enters you.”

Rumi

“There is a crack, there is a crack in everything, that is how the light gets in.”

Leonard Cohen, Anthem

“Heal the wounds, heal the wounds ... And you have to start from the ground up.”

Pope Francis

Toward Healing the Wounds of the Catholic Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal



Why are Healing Circles needed?

- The Catholic clergy sexual abuse scandal has wounded many individuals, faith communities, and the Body of Christ
- Healing is a core Gospel value
- Healing is vital to spiritual, psychological, and physical recovery
- Healing opportunities have been largely missing in the life of the Church in the struggle to redress the wounds of the abuse scandal



What are Healing Circles?

Healing Circles are professionally facilitated conversations regarding the harm caused by the sexual abuse scandal and the opportunities for healing. They are a safe place:

- Where deep speaking and deep listening take place
- Where no interruptions, cross-talking, questions, or commentary on individual sharing are allowed
- Where stories of harm to individuals, faith communities, and the Body of Christ are told
- Where stories of healing that has begun or is beginning are told
- Where a deep sense of connection, trust, and release can be developed

What do Healing Circle participants say?

“I have participated in Healing Circles as a clergy abuse survivor and can attest to the depth of their communication and potential for personal breakthroughs.”

“I have come to realize I have experienced hurt on different levels as a result of the abuse crisis. The Circle gave me the ability to share another layer of harm, and I healed a bit more.”

“As a survivor of clergy abuse, I highly recommend that victims and those concerned with victims attend one of these sessions. The caring, love and expressions of support I received at this circle will remain with me forever.”

Who should attend?

Individuals who have a personal experience in the Catholic clergy sexual abuse scandal and are inclined toward healing themselves, faith communities, and the Body of Christ. Candidates for Healing Circles include:

- Victims/survivors and/or family members
- Those who have left the pews because of the scandal
- Those who remain in the pews but with a sense of embarrassment, confusion, anger, or betrayal
- Those who lost Church positions or employment for supporting survivors
- Clergy and other church leaders, workers, and volunteers who have tried to respond with integrity but experienced negativity or disrespect
- Therapists, counselors, lawyers, law enforcement, or court officials who have worked with survivors or abusers
- All others who experience ripple effects by association with victims/survivors, abusers, or hierarchical responses

Healing Circles are intended for those who are ready, willing, and able to share their personal experiences in a way that does not cause them or others further harm.