

# For Welcome

## Group and Purpose

This circle process was created for existing, incoming, and prospective members of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative's Death Penalty Abolition - Restorative Justice Team, a national group of eight people. The circle process was created for the group's annual in-person gathering for the purpose of introducing and building connection among volunteers who primarily meet and work virtually.

## Approach and Preparation

The existing group had used circle process in the past and two prospective members experienced circle process at prior events. However, this process can also work well with groups who have not experienced a circle process previously. The group allotted 1.5 hours for the circle process itself. For this group, one member was not able to attend in-person due to mobility reasons, in order to include them the group utilized a [Meeting Owl](#), which allowed the virtual participant to see and hear everyone in the circle.

In preparation, participants were asked to bring a talking piece that represented what inspired them to work towards death penalty abolition/restorative justice or justice in general. The Circle Facilitator arranged the chairs in a circle, leaving a space to project the video of the remote participant. She laid a cloth in the center of the circle with a candle and her own talking piece present.

## Circle Outline

### Opening Ceremony

Welcome everyone then invite them to place their talking pieces in the center and read [Ecclesiastes Ch. 3](#) and play Pete Seeger's song "Turn! Turn! Turn!"

### Check-In

Invite participants to share their name, where they live and, to share a word or sentence about how they are arriving. Also invite participants to share any special accommodations that they may need to fully participate in the process?

### Values

Invite participants to share a value that they would like to bring into this space as we spend the

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weekend remembering, sharing, celebrating and visioning. *Note: If not part of a larger event, alternative question might be “What is a value that helps you be your best self?”*

### **Guidelines**

Facilitator offered a pre-created set of guidelines (from the Conversations in Communion Facilitator Guide) and then let the group make any additions. We will build consensus by first doing a round asking for any additions or comments, then followed with rounds asking if the group affirms/or needs further clarification until we get a full round of affirmations.

### **Round One:**

Tell us about the talking piece you brought and why you chose it.

**Facilitator Note:** *If holding this process with a group who is new to circle process, or limited advanced communication was possible, a possible alternative question might be “What is something that is important for us to know about you?”*

### **Round Two:**

What has been a highlight for you working with this team over the years? If you are new, what drew you to this group?

### **Round Three:**

What is one dream you have for the Death Penalty Abolition-Restorative Justice Team moving into the coming year/years?

### **Check Out:**

Share one word that describes how you are feeling as we leave the circle.

### **Closing Ceremony:**

Thank participants, let them know what is happening next on our agenda, invite them to keep their talking pieces in the circle until tomorrow or take them with them if they are more comfortable and re-read [Ecclesiastes Ch. 3](#).

## **Follow Up & Reflective Evaluation:**

The meeting owl did not work as planned, but because of the size of the group, we were able to set up a laptop on one of the chairs. Generally, “hybrid” circles do come with logistical challenges, but in this case, it provided for an accessible, inclusive process.

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This was my first experience leading a circle so I was nervous, but was reminded by the end that the beauty of the process is that it is an “equalizer” - no need to be nervous about perfection when you are embarking on a journey of vulnerability for all involved. Next time I will slow down and give more time for pause.

Participants said they were grateful for the space the circle created and they appreciated the scripture in this time of transition for the team. One participant adapted it for a different group he was part of.

### **About the Circle Facilitator:**

Erin Anderson-White Face is the Assistant Director of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative. She is a member of St. Isaac Jogues Catholic Church in Rapid City, SD.

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