

Circle Process for Conflict Resolution and Discernment Covina Community Church

Step 1: Identify the stakeholders who need to be involved.

Step 2: Select an appropriate facilitator based on the issue at hand.

- If it is a discernment issue, this might be anyone within the congregation.
- If it is a complicated discernment issue, outside expertise might be needed.
- If it is a conflict resolution, a neutral facilitator must be selected.
- If it is a congregation wide conflict, an outside facilitator may be best.

Step 3: Set aside time for the process so it is not rushed and is made a priority

Step 4: Make sure all stakeholders are informed of times, dates, and next steps.

Step 5: Everyone does their own work in advance.

- Facilitators should do any appropriate research and review best practices.
- Those directly impacted by conflict should reflect on their role and prepare to listen.
- Those sharing information should do their research and be prepared to communicate.
- Those listening and reflecting should do any appropriate research assigned.

Step 6: Gather as a Circle of Discernment

1. Open with Prayer
2. Set ground rules for sharing and responding in the process.
 - No interrupting
 - No direct questions in response.
 - Everyone is given an opportunity to speak.
3. Take time for introductions or “check-in” as needed.
4. Restate the topic and boundaries of the conversation.
5. Invite a time of sharing.
6. Invite responses to what was heard.
7. Pause as needed for silent prayer or meditation.
8. Repeat the process of sharing and responding to what was heard.
9. Celebrate discoveries, expressed empathy and compassion, and change as you go.
10. Name hurts, and struggles revealed as you go, affirming these truths as shared.
11. Ask for confirmation on areas of agreement or convergence as they arise.
12. Maintain the rules for sharing and responding at all times.
13. If appropriate, pause for one-on-one conversation between facilitator and participants.
 - Explain why pause can be helpful (better understanding, process side issues, etc.)
 - Facilitator should affirm the safety of the process to the participant.

-Provide time for the participant(s) to share insights from this with the group.

14. Continue process without judgment, encouraging restorative justice practices from all

-Relationship

-Respect

-Responsibility

-Repair

-Reintegration

(making space after harm / moving forward with new understanding)

Step 7: Affirm those who have participated and thank them for their risks and compassion.

Step 8: Report back to the Church Council or Congregation as appropriate.