**Step-by-Step Circle Process Instructions**

1. Start with people seated in a circle  
   a. Set a tone of respect and hope that honors and supports every participant, make sure all voices are heard, and encourage the sharing of stories.  
   b. You recognize that, as the Quakers say, each of us contains a part of the “light of God.” The circle process offers a revelation of each person’s portion of that light.  
   c. The facilitator shows impartiality toward the opinions expressed. This role is NOT TO FIX OR SOLVE the issues or problems being discussed in the circle or control the conversation; the purpose of the conversation is to increase understanding and insight.

2. Light a candle in the center of the circle to welcome the presence of Christ.

3. Welcome everyone

4. Start with the covenant  
   a. Explain that the covenant is a mutual agreement as to how everyone will be treated in the conversation  
   b. Read the covenant  
   c. See if any additions or subtractions  
   d. Confirm agreement: Do you all agree that this will be our covenant?  
   e. Note: A note about handling breaches of the covenant: rare to have to do anything—the covenant is self-regulating. Minor lapses can generally be ignored (self-regulating); if needed, gentle reminders of the covenant.

5. Explain about the talking piece and its use.  
   a. The talking piece enables everyone to have voice, including the quiet ones, and enables the talkers to listen.  
   b. When a person holds the talking piece, he or she speaks and everyone else listens.  
   c. The talking piece passes to the left around the circle.  
   d. A participant can pass the piece without responding (with the facilitator checking back after it has gone around to see if the person now wants to speak.) You might pass because you are too emotional at the moment or maybe you have nothing to add, so you pass out of respect for hearing other voices.

6. Introduce the first question for introductions and passing of the bread.  
   a. An example: Ask each one to say their name and one thing they love about their church.  
   b. You will model how to do this first—being brief.  
   c. Take a piece of bread and pass the bread to the person to your left, saying “I share with you the feast of love,” and invite them to introduce themselves and share, then pass the bread to the person on their left. (The talking piece will be the bread for this first question.)  
   d. Invite everyone to eat and drink whenever they want during the conversation, putting the bread in the middle of the circle.
7. Work through the questions you have crafted, passing the talking piece to the left. It is better to give unrushed time to each question and honor the quality of the conversation than trying to get all the questions answered.

8. When the talking piece returns to you, if it is appropriate, affirm the quality of the sharing and, if the circle is being used to make a decision, summarize what you have heard. Offer to pass the talking piece again if folks wish to say more, or those who have passed wish to speak.

9. Conclude with an open eyes prayer that offers up the Conversation to God, with each person offering a learning from the conversation, ending each with “Hear our Prayers, O Lord.”

Note: if you have a very large group, or a short period of time, you may want to limit each person to 3 minutes. In this case, assign a timekeeper who will note “thirty seconds” at the 2 ½ minute mark. At the 3-minute mark you will say, “Thanks for your contribution. Let’s hear from the next person.”

Note: If you do not wish to open with the passing of bread, it is helpful to do some kind of practice circle with the talking piece before launching into the main topic. This can be sharing one’s name and favorite thing about church, or one’s favorite dessert, etc.