**Sample Listening Circle Facilitator Script**

Preamble

Hello, (as you may know) my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , and I will be facilitating this Listening Circle.

I would like to start our time together with prayer. Let us pray:

Lord, God of Unity and Strength,

we approach this Listening Circle as a time of communion

with You and with each other.

May the Spirit of prayer not only begin our work together

but sustain it and conclude it well.

The problems we must discuss are many

and the solutions may not be readily apparent or simple,

* but may the outcome of this listening circle reveal

that at all times

we were reverent toward one another,

and respectful of each other’s ideas and positions.

May we, Lord, in this time together

listen deeply to each other

united in heart and in purpose.

Although ideas and visions may be different,

may our love for You and for each other unite us.

We pause now, in silence,

so that each of us may invite You

to be Companion and Consultor

at this Listening Circle:

**Silent Prayer**

May we begin in Your Holy Name:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen †

**Check-in**

As we continue our time together, we’ll do a check-in.

Our check-in questions are: What is your name? What do you need to let go of to be as present as possible and listen well?

We will use a talking piece. Only the person with the talking piece speaks. Everyone else listens.

Who would like to begin? (*Pass the talking piece to the person starting the check-in. Ask that person what direction they will go in, i.e., to their right or to their left.)*

**The Purpose of the Circle**

The purpose of this circle is to provide an opportunity for you to express your thoughts and feelings about the impact of COVID on our church community.

This is a time of sharing with the purpose of listening, storytelling, and connecting. It is not a discussion, nor is it a debate.

Some of what we are doing may seem quite formal and it is. The reason for this is to ensure everyone is free to respond to the questions without being interrupted or asked to explain themselves. Each of you is being invited to speak and to respectfully listen.

I will be facilitating this process but not participating.

This session may be difficult for some and you may have an unexpected strong reaction.

Please remember this is not a therapy session. I encourage you to utilize your supports outside of this circle if necessary.

Before we begin, I would like to clarify the guidelines for this conversation.

First, we are here to listen to each other not to judge each other. No personal attacks will be tolerated.

Second, what is said in the conversation stays here. Strict confidentiality is important. You can decide at the end of the conversation what you want to share with others.

Third, we will use a talking piece to ensure only one person speaks at a time No interruptions or immediate responses will be permitted. If you do not wish to respond to a question, you may pass.

Fourth, we will be gathering information at the end of our conversation to pass on to Council. At that time, I will be taking notes. Until that time, we will listen to each other without anyone taking notes.

Does anyone need clarification about the group norms? is there anything the group would like to add? (*Add additional norms, if necessary.)*

**Circle Questions**

I will ask you the same questions provided in the invitation.

Round 1 is made up of four questions. I will ask each of you the four questions as a group of questions before going on to the next person. Who would like to begin?

**Round 1**: What has been a significant COVID story for you?

 How have you and others been affected by COVID?

What’s been the hardest thing for you about the pandemic?

What’s been the hardest thing for us as a community?

**Round 2**: I will ask each of you the two questions before we go on the next person.

Who would like to begin?

1. What needs to happen to move forward as we move out of the pandemic?
2. What are you willing to do to help move forward?

**Round 3**: What would you like to share with others?

Given what you have heard what would you like to share with Council? What themes have emerged? What pieces of wisdom? I will record each point.

*(Go around the circle a few times until all suggestions have been made. Be sure to record each point accurately.)*

**Round 4**: Thank you for your participation in this listening circle. I appreciate your willingness to share and the time you gave to the process. I’d like to go around the circle one more time.

Check-out: What has been helpful for you about this conversation?

End with a prayer.