CAJM LISTENING CIRCLE

FACILITATOR FIELD GUIDE

YOUR THREE RESPONSIBILITIES

Protect the purpose. Protect the people. Protect the process. Your success is not measured by how much you spoke; it is measured by how well others were heard.

Before People Arrive

ROOM AND MATERIALS

- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle
- ☐ Participant Guides and interest cards ready
- ☐ Pens, name tags, and report form ready
- ☐ Phones silenced and distractions reduced

TEAM AND SAFETY

- ☐ Host, facilitator, and note-taker confirmed
- ☐ Selected questions reviewed
- ☐ Follow-up assignments agreed upon
- ☐ Safeguarding and CAJM contacts confirmed

HOSPITALITY

Greet people by name, introduce those who do not know one another, and create conversation before the formal opening. The Listening Circle begins at the door.

Opening Script

SAMPLE LANGUAGE

Welcome, and thank you for being here. CAJM's mission is to build people power for local community justice. Tonight is not a debate, and we are not expected to solve every problem. Our purpose is to hear one another's experiences, notice the values and concerns we share, and explain how these stories will help shape CAJM's work. You may pass on any question. Themes may be shared without identifying you, and your story will not be used publicly without your permission.

Community Agreements

Speak from experience

Share what you have seen, lived, or carried personally.

Listen to understand

Our goal is understanding, not convincing.

Share the time

Make room so every voice has an opportunity.

Respect privacy

Do not repeat an identifiable story without permission.

Passing is allowed

Anyone may choose not to answer a question.

Stay with the purpose

We are hearing experiences, not debating solutions tonight.

Questions That Invite Stories

- What is something you value about this community?
- Tell us about a time when you or someone close to you faced a community problem that felt unfair, unsafe, or unnecessarily difficult.
- How did that experience affect you or someone you care about?
- What mattered most to you in that experience?
- Who else may be experiencing something similar?
- What public system, institution, or condition was connected to the experience?

LISTEN LIKE AN ORGANIZER

☐ The experience
☐ The emotion and value
☐ The recurring pattern
☐ The system or institution
☐ The emerging leader

Ask yourself: What am I hearing more than once, and who may be ready for a next step?

COMMON MOMENTS

Someone speaks too long: "I want to pause you there so we can make room for every voice."
Debate begins: "Let's return to what people have personally experienced."
People rush to solutions: "Let's record that idea for research and stay with the problem tonight."
No one answers: Wait. Count quietly to five, then rephrase the question.
Someone becomes emotional: Thank them, allow a pause, and do not press for more detail.
Safety may be at risk: Pause, protect privacy, and contact the designated safeguarding or CAJM staff person. Do not carry it alone.

Closing Script

SAMPLE LANGUAGE
Thank you for trusting this circle with your experiences. We heard concerns, but we also heard values, wisdom, and a desire for change. CAJM will combine themes from Listening Circles across our congregations, synthesize recurring concerns, and work with Team Leaders to prepare shared problem areas for the Community Problems Assembly. The Assembly determines which problems move into research.

CAJM is not only listening for issues. We are listening for people. We do not want to take your story and say, "Thank you, we'll take it from here." If you are ready to take the next step, I would like to invite you to become a CAJM Network Member. Network Members stay involved throughout CAJM's annual organizing cycle. They participate in the Community Problems Assembly, Rally, Nehemiah Action, and Celebration, and work to bring at least three people with them to the Nehemiah Action.

If you are ready to say yes, mark that on the Participant Interest Card. If you are interested but want to learn more first, mark that option instead. We will follow up with you personally within one week.

NETWORK MEMBER INVITATION: QUICK GUIDE

LISTEN → CONNECT → EXPLAIN → INVITE → INTEREST CARD → FOLLOW UP

THE 4-3-2-1 COMMITMENT

4 = Participate in the Community Problems Assembly, Rally, Nehemiah Action, and Justice Ministry Celebration.
3 = Invite and work to bring at least three people with you to the Nehemiah Action.
2 = Invest at least $200 in CAJM.
1 = Help build one beloved community where organized people act together for justice.

Be clear about the commitment before asking for a yes. Do not pressure. A “yes” means the person is expressing a desire to become a CAJM Network Member and embrace the 4-3-2-1 commitment. “Tell me more” means they want a personal conversation before deciding. Attendance at a Listening Circle alone does not make someone a Network Member. Personal follow-up within one week confirms the commitment and connects the person to their Team Leader and next step.

If asked, “What am I committing to?” say: “We use 4-3-2-1 to keep it simple: 4 big meetings, bring 3 people to the Nehemiah Action, invest at least $200 in CAJM, and help us build 1 beloved community. Four keeps us organized. Three grows our people power. Two builds our financial independence. One reminds us why we do all of it. Your Team Leader will help keep you connected and organized throughout the year.”

Why 4-3-2-1 Matters

4 keeps us organized. 3 grows our people power. 2 builds our financial independence. 1 reminds us why we do all of it: to build one beloved community. Explain the commitments clearly, but never let the invitation overpower the Listening Circle.

When Someone Responds

YES means the person is expressing a desire to become a Network Member. Follow up personally within one week to confirm the commitment and connect the person to their Team Leader and next step. TELL ME MORE is an opening for relationship, questions, and personal follow-up without pressure.

Remember: The invitation happens in the room. The follow-up strengthens the commitment.

After the Circle

☐ Debrief with the host and note-taker ☐ Record the top themes, values, systems, and leaders ☐ Complete and submit the report within 48 hours	☐ Thank every participant within one week ☐ Personally follow up with every “yes” and “tell me more” Network Member response ☐ Confirm the 4-3-2-1 commitment and organize the next step ☐ Arrange one-to-one follow-up with potential leaders ☐ Get separate permission before using any story publicly

CARRY THIS WITH YOU

People before problems. Listen first. Invite clearly. Follow up personally. Stories become relationships. Relationships develop leaders. Leaders build organized people power. The Listening Circle is complete when the follow-up is complete.