



The Gathered Community of Spiritual Directors  
***Holy Listening***  
Leaders: Caroline Dodds and Laura Vaughan

*Holy Listening is a ministry of loving presence. We listen to uncover and shine light on where God is at work in our own lives as well as the life of another. Holy Listening is being present to what is right in front of us; seeing life as it is and holding it with compassion and loving kindness. Holy Listening is trusting that each of us has the wisdom we need, and we do not need to try and fix or change ourselves or the other person.*

*Take a pause and join us for a time of "Holy Listening". We will explore this theme and practice ways that we can be Holy Listeners for ourselves and for others.*

9:30 am                      **Welcome and Introductions**

Our time together is sacred. This is a safe space. We are soul companions supporting one another's spiritual journeys. We are not here to fix or judge but to walk with, encourage and listen deeply to each other. Please remember, what is shared in our time together by others is confidential.

9:45 am                      **Session 1**

**Lighting of the Christ Candle:** As we light the Christ candle, we are once again reminded of the light that burns within each of us. Let our hearts be open to the love of God, the love of one another and the love of self - each of us a Beloved child of God. Amen

**Centering:** And now let us take a minute of silence to center ourselves as you take a couple of deep breaths following them in and down. Breathing in God's love for you, breathing out your love for God. Feel your feet on the ground. Feel your bottom in the chair. Putting your hand on your heart let us send our love and prayers for the safety of all who may be in harms way; for all who are suffering. Let us offer a piece of our heart to our world... As you are able slowly open your eyes... *If in a group: take a moment to see each person who is present in the Circle. Feel their energy. Their presence. Their beauty. As you look around the circle, share your gratitude for the gift of each person with us today.*

Material compiled for May 21, 2022 reCharge by Caroline Dodds [admin@thegatheredcommunity.org](mailto:admin@thegatheredcommunity.org) and Laura Vaughan [lauravaughan7@gmail.com](mailto:lauravaughan7@gmail.com) and offered for personal use only OR contact Caroline or Laura for permission to use with attribution.

## What is Holy Listening?

Engage with a Writing Prompt

“When I hear the words Holy Listening...” write for 3 minutes

*If in a group, take time for sharing.*

Then introduce this quote:

*Holy Listening is a ministry of loving presence. We listen to uncover and shine light on where God is at work in our own lives as well as the life of another. Holy Listening is being present to what is right in front of us; seeing life as it is and holding it with compassion and loving kindness. Holy Listening is trusting that each of us has the wisdom we need and we do not need to try and fix or change ourselves or the other person.*

Douglass Steere writes of the sacred nature of this practice: “To ‘listen’ another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.”

## SILENCE

**The Woodcarver** in Parker Palmer’s

*A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life Pg.95*

### **The Woodcarver** Chuang Tzu

Khing, the master carver, made a bell stand  
Of precious wood. When it was finished,  
All who saw it were astounded. They said it must be  
The work of spirits.  
The Prince of Lu said to the master carver:  
“What is your secret?”

Khing replied: “I am only a workman:  
I have no secret. There is only this:  
When I began to think about the work you commanded  
I guarded my spirit, did not expend it  
On trifles, that were not to the point.  
I fasted in order to set  
My heart at rest.

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“After three days fasting,  
I had forgotten gain and success.  
After five days  
I had forgotten criticism.  
After seven days  
I had forgotten my body  
With all its limbs.

“By this time all thought of your Highness  
And of the court had faded away.  
All that might distract me from the work  
Had vanished.  
I was collected in the single thought  
Of the bell stand.

“Then I went to the forest  
To see the trees in their own natural state.  
When the right tree appeared before my eyes,  
The bell stand also appeared in it, clearly, beyond doubt.  
All I had to do was to put forth my hand  
And begin.

“If I had not met this particular tree  
There would have been  
No bell stand at all.

“What happened?  
My own collected thought  
Encountered the hidden potential in the wood;  
From this live encounter came the work  
Which you ascribe to the spirits.”

*If in a group, do a Communal reading (Read Twice)*

### **Lectio Divina followed by Silence 5 minutes**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: What grabbed your attention?

What line or words stood out for you and why?

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: How do they intersect your current life situation now?

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*If in a group, take time for sharing reflections*

10:30am      Break 15 minutes

10:45 am      **Session 2**

**Listening with Imagination: Guided Meditation**

*Whether in a group or on your own, read slowly and allow ample time between prompts for the story to unfold for you.*

Imagine yourself in the story. Pray with the story and capture it in your journal.

To begin, let's get present in our bodies. Get into a comfortable seated position. Feel your feet resting on the ground beneath them. Feel your body being held by the chair or whatever you are sitting on. Relax your hands comfortably in your lap.

<pause>

Now, focus on your breath: the gentle inhale, a smooth exhale. Gentle inhale, smooth exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Notice the rhythm of your breathing. Your chest rising and falling with each cycle of breath. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Stay with your breath. Inhale. Exhale.

*Imagine a landscape*

*Imagine the landscape of your life*

<pause>

*What do you see:      Is it lush and green?*

*Do parts of it need watering?*

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*Is it beautifully manicured?*

*Do parts of it look wild and unkept?*

*<pause>*

*As you allow your mind to just gaze at that landscape, what catches your attention?*

*<pause>*

*What sounds do you hear?*

*What fragrances do you smell?*

*<pause>*

*What season of the year are you in at this moment in your landscape?*

*What time of day is it as you behold the landscape?*

*<pause>*

*In the little corner of your landscape that you occupy, what is the weather like right now?*

*Is the sun shining?*

*Are there clouds overhead?*

*Is there wind or storms?*

*What is the temperature that you sense on your skin?*

*<pause>*

*What do you notice growing in the landscape?*

*What is absent or withering away?*

*What is present but hidden?*

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<pause>

*Now, become aware of Jesus standing next to you taking in the vista of your landscape.*

*What does Jesus do?*

*What words does Jesus speak?*

<pause>

*What task is Jesus inviting you into, to tend this landscape?*

<pause>

*What specific places of your landscape do you need God to nourish?*

<pause>

*Just allow your mind to sweep over the landscape one more time*

*And give thanks to God for all that you see and experience there*

<pause>

*And now we become aware again of our body*

*Being held in the chair,*

*Our feet resting on the ground*

*Our gentle breathing in this space*

<pause>

*I offer this prayer from Ignatius of Loyola as our meditation transitions:*

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**Take, Lord,**

**and receive  
all my liberty,  
my memory,  
my understanding,  
my whole will,  
all that I have  
and all that I possess.**

**You gave it all to me, Lord;**

**I give it all back to you.**

**Do with it as you will,  
according to your good pleasure.**

**Give me your love and your grace;**

**for with this I have all that I need.**

**Amen.**

*<pause>*

*Now move into a time to continue to pray with our story or write in your journal about your experience for about 10 minutes.*

*Then, if in a group of more than 4 people, share in groups of 3 or 4 and come back to share insights with all.*

11:45am      Lunch Break

12:15pm      **Session 3**

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## Listening Deeply to Others

Read “When Someone Listens Deeply to You” by John Fox. Read it through 2x and consider what came up for you as you read, a word or a phrase. Remember a time when you felt someone deeply listened to you. Ponder and continue listening deeply to yourself about that felt for you.

### When Someone Deeply Listens to You

When someone deeply listens to you  
it is like holding out a dented cup  
you’ve had since childhood  
and watching it fill up with  
cold, fresh water.

When it balances on top of the brim,  
you are understood.

When it overflows and touches your skin,  
You are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you,  
the room where you stay  
starts a new life  
and the place where you wrote  
your first poem  
begins to glow in your mind’s eye.

It is as if gold has been discovered!

When someone deeply listens to you,  
your bare feet are on the earth  
and a beloved land that seemed distant  
is now at home within you.

*If in a group of more than 4 people, share your ponderings in groups of 3 or 4 using the process below and then come back to share insights with all. This is a time of deep listening and not conversation. Listen, just listen.*

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- One of you will speak for two minutes. You may talk about whatever arises for you in response to the poem or the question, How did it feel when someone has deeply listened to you?
- Then we ask that you take a minute of silence to hold what has been shared without commenting on what has been shared. Just hold what is being shared in your heart.
- Then the next person will speak for two minutes.
- Again, take a minute of silence afterwards to hold what has been shared.
- Continue until everyone has had an opportunity to speak without commenting on what has been shared.
- You will need to monitor yourselves so that everyone has an opportunity to speak.

When you are the listener - listen deeply. Make eye contact. Give your full attention. Don't think about what you are going to say when it is your turn. Be a calm, listening, presence.

When you are the speaker - listen to your own heart and let your thoughts flow. Don't try to sensor or create a neat packaged story. Trust your deeper self.

If you are in a group come back and enter a time of sharing

How did it feel to be the one listened to?

How did it feel to listen and not speak?

1:00            Break

1:15            **Session 4**

### **Practicing Holy Listening**

We are going to practice Holy Listening from a reading of "Now I Become Myself" by May Sarton.

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## NOW I BECOME MYSELF

Now I become myself. It's taken  
Time, many years and places;

I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces,  
Run madly, as if Time were there,  
Terribly old, crying a warning,  
"Hurry, you will be dead before—"  
(What? Before you reach the morning?  
Or the end of the poem is clear?  
Or love safe in the walled city?)

Now to stand still, to be here,  
Feel my own weight and density!

The black shadow on the paper  
Is my hand; the shadow of a word  
As thought shapes the shaper  
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.

All fuses now, falls into place  
From wish to action, word to silence,  
My work, my love, my time, my face  
Gathered into one intense  
Gesture of growing like a plant.

As slowly as the ripening fruit  
Fertile, detached, and always spent,  
Falls but does not exhaust the root,  
So all the poem is, can give,  
Grows in me to become the song,  
Made so and rooted by love.

Now there is time and Time is young.

O, in this single hour I live  
All of myself and do not move.  
I, the pursued, who madly ran,  
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!

*What arises for you as you ponder this poem? In your life, what season are you currently in?*

*If in a group of more than 3 people, share your ponderings in groups of 3 or 4 using the process below and then come back to share insights with all. This time, focus on listening and asking questions. Take your time, ask questions, or make comments that invite the speaker to go deeper. Refer to the handout on Holy Listening Reminders if needed.*

Here is how you will share:

- One of you will speak for four minutes. You may talk about whatever arises for you in response to what came up for you in the reading of the poem and/or the question: In your life, what season are you currently in?
- Then we ask that you take a minute of silence to hold what has been shared
- Then take three minutes for questions from the listeners
- Continue until everyone has had an opportunity to speak.
- You will need to monitor and adjust the time for yourselves.

When you come back together in your group: What were some of the questions that were asked? Was there one that opened you up to go deeper or caused you to think about something in a new way?

*If in a group of more than 3 people, share your ponderings with one another in pairs using the process below, and then come back to share insights with all. Monitor your time so each of you have time to share well.*

What invitation do you hear from what you have experienced today with Holy Listening?

When you come back together in your group: What was that like for you?

In your group OR on you own, ponder this question: What are you taking with you from this time apart, whether you have done this on your own or with others?

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## Closing Blessing: from Jan Richardson

This is the blessing  
we cannot speak  
by ourselves.

This is the blessing  
we cannot summon  
by our own devices,  
cannot shape  
to our own purposes,  
cannot bend  
to our own will.

This is the blessing  
that comes  
when we leave behind  
our aloneness,  
when we gather  
together,  
when we turn  
toward one another.

This is the blessing  
that blazes among us  
when we speak  
the words  
strange to our ears,

when we finally listen  
into the chaos,

when we breathe, together  
at last.

**To listen is to lean in, softly, with a willingness to be changed by what we hear. ~ Mark Nepo**

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