

Deep Listening--UUFVB Covenant Groups—January 2015

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Reading

Let us listen...Just for a while

Let us silence our minds and open our hearts.

Just for a while

Let us listen from within.

Listen...

Not to gain knowledge,

Not to formulate questions,

Rather to chance upon sacred bonds and profound wisdom.

Just for a while

Let us not seek information or answers.

Let us not rouse the intellect

But embrace the spirit.

If thoughts cloud the brain may we let them pass.

If replies tingle on the tongue.

Let us breathe them away silently.

Return to them later

But here...

Here in this precious time of sharing

Let us listen...

Let the words wash over us

And seep into a still, quiet pool.

Let us listen.

(“Deep Listening,” by Mary-Elizabeth Cotton, *UU Fellowship of the Peninsula, Newport News, VA*)

Review of covenant

Topic Exploration

Ralph Emerson Roughton, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, has this to say about listening:

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem,

you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked was that you listen, not talk or do—just hear me.....

When you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and can get about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them. Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people—because God is mute and he/she doesn't give advice or try to fix things. "They" just listen and let you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me.
And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.

Questions / Sharing

1. Have you ever felt like Mr. Roughton? Give examples of when you spoke and no one listened.
2. Why do you think it is so hard to simply listen?
3. Think of a time when you were really listened to about something that was close to your heart. Describe what happened, how it felt, and what it meant to you.
4. Can you think of any ways we can encourage deeper listening in this group?

Closing Reading

In the words of a proverb,
"To listen well is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well,
and is as essential to all true conversation."

When we listen with full heart and mind,
we let go of the inner chatter
that tempts us to listen elsewhere.

When we listen with full heart and mind,
we dispense with judgment.

When we listen with full heart and mind,
we are present to each other
and are at risk of transformation.

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping