

Listening—UUFVB Covenant Groups— January 2020

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: What is most on your mind today?

Opening Reading: *"Picking Clean the Bones," (Sally Atkins, American poet)*

Tell me, she said:
What is the story you are telling?
What wild song is singing itself through you?

Listen:
*In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.*

It is the song you are living now,
It is the story of the place where you are.
It contains the shapes of these old mountains,
The green of the rhododendron leaves.

It is happening right now in your breath,
In your heart beat still
Drumming the deeper rhythm
Beneath your cracking words.

It matters what you did this morning
And last Saturday night
And last year,
Not because you are important
But because you are in it
And it is still moving.
We are all in this story together.

Listen:
*In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.*

Pay attention:
We are listening each other into being.

Topic Exploration

The acronym HURIER is sometimes used in academic texts to summarize a model of effective listening skills. This model was developed by Judi Brownell of Cornell University.

H – Hearing

'Hearing' is used here in a very broad sense. Not only does it refer to the physical act of hearing, but also to picking up on non-verbal and other signals; tone of voice, body language and facial expressions, for example.

U – Understanding

Once the message has been 'heard', the next step is to understand. This means tying together all the elements of 'hearing' to create a coherent understanding of what was communicated. Factors like language and accent may affect your understanding.

R – Remembering

Remembering requires focus. An effective listener needs to be able to remember the message they are receiving in its entirety.

I – Interpreting

Interpretation of the message builds on, and enhances, understanding. Interpretation means considering factors such as the context in which the message was sent. Importantly, here the listener also needs to be aware of, and avoid, any preconceptions or biases that they may hold that may affect how the message is interpreted.

E – Evaluating

Evaluating requires that the listener keeps an open mind on the messages they are receiving and doesn't jump to conclusions about what is being said. Evaluate all the information and only then start to formulate a response.

R – Responding

Finally, your response should be well-measured and demonstrate that you have understood what was communicated. It may be necessary to use techniques such as clarification and reflection as part of the response.

Questions / Sharing

1. What do you think the poet meant when she said "We are listening each other into being"?
2. Is there actually a difference between hearing and listening? How do you define these terms?
3. We know that listening to another person requires emotional energy. Does listening require a response? If so, when? If not, when and why not?
4. When is listening easy to do, and when is it difficult?
5. Could we learn to build a 'vocabulary' of listening skills?

Closing Reading

"If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear." (*Mark Twain, American author and humorist*)

Check-out and reflections on today's session: Please express any thoughts on the content or process of today's session.

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