



## Is Listening a Lost Art?

by Rev. Larry Deyss, HR

Image: M.W. Pixabay

There are so many words and so much information flying around that it gets overwhelming. Our world is increasingly hyped and we go along with it. A digital world and a life of multi-tasking set us up for this. One result of living in a constant hyper state is that we begin to lose clarity as to what is urgent and what is not. In the midst of the din we lose our sense of self, and our ability to see and hear one another becomes diminished.

### Before COVID

When everything was still open, my wife went to the Midwest to visit family. After several meals by myself, I decided to eat at a local restaurant. In the next booth were a man and a boy about eight years old; I assumed they were father and son. The father was busy on his phone while the boy was talking to him and pouring out all sorts of things. There was no response from the father, except for an occasional grunt. I found myself wanting to say, *“Hey guy, the real action is not on your phone. The real action is right there before you. Your kid is telling you things.”* While the urge to speak was strong, I decided against it since most likely it would have been counterproductive.

### But as I ate I got to thinking, “Is listening a lost art?”

Some years ago, a member of my congregation came to see me to talk. During our time together, I listened and made brief responses to further the conversation. That flow went on until we reached a point of silence which became an extended silence. I thought about making a comment that would perhaps further the conversation, but then I thought better of it. I continued to sit there and be quietly present. We sat together in silence. The silence was broken when my parishioner let loose with an emotional outpouring that ended in sobbing. All the pain and anguish that had been pent up for years was breaking open and flooding out. The real issue was now out and before us. It was a major breakthrough which in time resulted in healing and a new way forward. After the session I thought, I am so glad that I just let the silence be. Had I said something, the breakthrough might have been thwarted. That would have been most unfortunate!

### There is wisdom in saying

*“God gave us two eyes, two ears and one mouth and we should use them accordingly.”* That wisdom is not often practiced. A helpful exercise for us is to see how long we can listen without speaking. How long can we go without being the center of attention? It can be an informative exercise, and maybe even a startling one.

Sometimes we are on the other end of the listening exercise. You may find that when you are talking, you don’t get very far at all before the other person has to comment or maybe jump in, even

while you are in mid-sentence. Committee meetings are infamous for this behavior. Is listening a lost art?

### **This may sound like a jump in logic.**

I suggest that part of the reason why we have such a deep problem with racism is due to our poor listening skills. We need to hear people from their frame of reference and not ours. That is not easy. White people need to listen beyond a white frame of reference. People of Color have been crying out for a long time but we have not truly heard them because we have not been really listening or we have been listening only from our white world's frame of reference. Therefore we never got to the point of really hearing and seeing.

If COVID had not broken us open and made us vulnerable maybe we would not have heard George Floyd cry out, "*I can't breathe!*" Others before him had cried out and while we heard, we didn't really hear. But this time the world heard. It is good we heard, and it is good that we are educating ourselves to see and understand beyond our white race. This is work. It is also the road to peace and justice.

### **It is also living Christ's commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.**

One more jump in logic: Maybe the failure to listen is also part of the reason that we have a climate crisis. In its own way, the earth has been crying out to us for a long time but we did not hear. St. Paul may have been writing more wisdom than he was aware when he wrote, "*the whole of creation has been groaning.*" (Rom. 8:22)

### **Where do we begin?**

We start with ourselves. Listening is not easy. It takes time and practice. This is why daily prayer is so essential. By spending time in silence with the Word in a contemplative manner, we begin to get in touch with the Spirit. That will lead into getting in touch with our inner self, which moves us toward being in touch with the larger world and our place within it.

### **Contemplation is not easy.**

There will be times when one sits with the Word in contemplation and suddenly one becomes aware of something that they need to do. There is the impulse to just jump up and do that. Resist that impulse. The impulse usually comes at the moment when the Spirit is about to speak. The unease is a deep sense that there is a movement to something that we do not understand and may even wish to avoid. Stay with it. Something important is going on in you that should not be disturbed. Resisting the impulse to flee usually leads to insight. The practice of silence and sitting with the Word over time brings the gifts of the Spirit.



### **We need to listen.**

We need to listen long and quietly to what the Spirit is saying to us. We need to be fully present to others in our listening — hearing not only the words but also the thoughts and feelings behind the words. We need to listen so we can hear all people, and hear them in a way we have not done before. We need to listen to the earth in its song of beauty and in its cry for help.

Is listening a lost art? For many it is. But for those who are willing to set aside their activity and noise, and sit with the Word and listen, then wonderful things will happen. We will begin to hear the Spirit speaking in our souls and speaking to us through other people. We will also hear the song and the groaning of creation itself.

## WORSHIP



### Worship Plans for August

On Sunday, August 2, we begin live streaming worship. How will this work?

- Pastor Karen will lead us in live worship on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. (Only those involved in producing the service will be in the building.)
- A link will be sent out as usual, but to Facebook Live (you do NOT need a Facebook account to access the site).
- Other contributors (readings, etc) will be pre-recorded and incorporated into the service.
- We will continue to enjoy Zoom fellowship after the live stream worship.
- The live stream worship service will be recorded and a link to the recording will be sent by email and posted on our website.

Have questions? Please contact Pastor Karen at [pastorkaren@delmarpres.org](mailto:pastorkaren@delmarpres.org).

**The plan for September and beyond is to be determined.** It may be that we may try worship with small numbers. However our concern is that most experts are warning that the coronavirus infections will surge in the fall. So we will wait and see.

The task force and session will continue to meet over the summer to monitor the

information about the virus to determine when in-person worship is safe.

However worship, study and fellowship occur, Delmar Presbyterian Church will be alive, following Jesus, doing our best to continue Christ's work.

## DEACONS

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

7	Beth Walthall
8	Jim McGinn
9	Packy Carroll
13	Matt Lowry
18	Sarah Hamilton
19	Christopher Lowry
22	Jean Somerville

## BUILDING AND GROUNDS

### Quarantine Cleaning

Thank you to our volunteers! Your work around DPC's property have keep our church looking its best. Weeds have been pulled, windows washed, flowers planted. There are a few remaining projects ready to be claimed, or perhaps you have an idea for one. Please visit the link below to see what needs doing, or contact Matt Cooper with suggestions and questions:

734-945-3646

[mattpennycooper@gmail.com](mailto:mattpennycooper@gmail.com)

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AfHA5lNjhFsSrr1fp\\_FGKvuBL8\\_hEI1T-K81pCqCrDo/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AfHA5lNjhFsSrr1fp_FGKvuBL8_hEI1T-K81pCqCrDo/edit?usp=sharing)

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

### ***Session Highlights for June 16, 2020***

A quorum was declared. Elders broke into small groups for discussion about worship, then reported back to the entire group.

The agenda and May minutes were approved.

A summary of the COVID-19 Task Force meeting was presented. Topics: phases of reopening in-person worship, technical issues around live streaming, possibility of outdoor services, cleaning and worship issues.

Task Force Motion to Session: Maintain online worship through July, with “soft opening” in August.

After discussion, *a motion was made that DPC worship on line through July, a “soft” opening (smaller number in sanctuary) in August - with livestreaming, and full opening in September in whatever way state guidelines permit.*

***The motion was voted on and passed unanimously.***

Earth Care Task Force report:

- Minutes for Mission will be used to keep issues in front of the congregation.
- Community speakers will be invited on a monthly basis. This could be done by video, not necessarily in person.
- Other initiatives were mentioned that can contribute to DPC’s goals to be earth friendly: Using a carbon footprint calculator, reusable grocery bags, garden surplus, climate interactive calendar and getting to zero waste.

Congregational Life:

A former Family Promise resident has a food truck that we may want to support by inviting

him to an event at DPC. This idea will be followed up.

Building and Grounds:

Recently met and discussed option for future church cleaning and use of funds from the Bob Horn fund.

Communications:

Focusing on live streaming worship services

Outreach:

A request was made for a gift to PAZAPA in Haiti, meals were prepared for Family Promise and tote bags are being made.

Pastor’s Report:

Participating in Zoom meetings and studies, attending rallies, planning worship.

Next session meeting scheduled for July 21 via Zoom.



### ***DPC Protections Against COVID***

We are requiring all members and visitors who stop by the church to sign in each time you visit. This will assist us in contacting anyone who may be at risk of exposure to COVID.

Sign-in forms can be found by the entrances to both the office and the narthex. Hand sanitizer is provided and masks are required.

Thank you for your help as we care for one another.