



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

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## Listening with Empathy

Listening is an attitude of the heart, a genuine desire to be with another which both attracts and heals. – *J. Isham*

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer. – *Henry David Thoreau*

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### Opening and Chalice Lighting (3 min.)

Within the circles of our lives, we dance the circles of the years, the circles of the seasons within the circles of the years...□□ And then we turn aside, alone, out of the sunlight gone into the darker circles of return.

– *from "Song (4)" by Wendell Berry*

Flame of fire, spark of the universe  
that warmed our ancestral hearth—  
agent of life and death,  
symbol of truth and freedom.

We strive to understand ourselves and our earthly home.

– *Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, Hymnal #451*

### Quiet Reflection (2 min.)

The first duty of love is to listen – *Paul Tillich*

### Agreements (2 min.)

*Please remember the Agreements that we discussed during our first gathering, and that are posted here. Does anyone have any questions or concerns about them?*

### Sharing/Check-In (35 min.)

*Take this time to share how you are spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically. We want to know how you are in this moment.*

### Quiet Reflection (1 min.)

*Let's join together in a few moments of shared silence, holding what each of us has spoken, as well as what remains unspoken, within the circle of this group. Together, may we celebrate each other's joys and offer our kindness and compassion to those among us who are struggling.*

### Topic Readings (3 min.)

Effective listeners remember that “words have no meaning – people have meaning.” The assignment of meaning to a term is an internal process; meaning comes from inside us. And although our experiences knowledge and attitudes differ, we often misinterpret each other's messages while under the illusion that a common understanding has been achieved. – *Larry Barker*

Listening effectively is difficult because people often have different needs, wants and purposes for interacting. The different types of levels of communication also add to the difficulty. The four different levels are – Clichés, Facts, Thoughts and beliefs, Feelings and Emotions. As a listener we attend to the level that we think most important. Failing to recognize the level most relevant and important to the speaker can lead to two people not being on the same wavelength. – *Larry Allan Nadig, Ph.D*

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**Break/ Quiet  
Contemplation**  
(10 min.)

To listen closely and reply well is the highest perfection we are able to attain in the art of conversation. □ - *Francois de La Rochefoucauld*

Be a good listener. Your ears will never get you in trouble. □ - *Frank Frank Tyger*

Listen. Do not have an opinion while you listen because frankly, your opinion doesn't hold much water outside of Your Universe. Just listen. Listen until their brain has been twisted like a dripping towel and what they have to say is all over the floor. - □ *Hugh Elliott*

**Sharing/Deep  
Listening**  
(40 min.)

*Speak about this topic in any way that is comfortable to you. If you choose to use the questions, focus on just one or two, as this will allow you to explore the topic in more depth.*

- Have you changed your habits of listening? What event in your life influenced that change?
- What is your listening style? When you are giving someone your full attention, how do you act (e.g. do you close your eyes, maintain eye-contact, lean forward, nod your head, take notes, etc.)?
- Talk about a time you learned something about your listening style.
- What listening experiences have been most enjoyable for you? Most difficult?
- To what extent have your growing up experiences shaped the way you listen to others?

**Discussion**  
(15 min.)

*This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

**Likes & Wishes**  
(5 min.)

*What did you like about this gathering?*

*What would you like to see change at future gatherings?*

**Announcements**  
(2 min.)

**Closing Reading/  
Extinguish Chalice**  
(2 min.)

Remembering that the universe is so much larger than our ability to comprehend, Let us go forth from this time together with the resolve to stop trying to reduce the incomprehensible to our own petty expectations, So that wonder—that sense of what is sacred—can find space to open up our minds and illumine our lives...  
- *Marjorie Newlin Leaming*