

PRESBYTERY PORT PHILLIP WEST

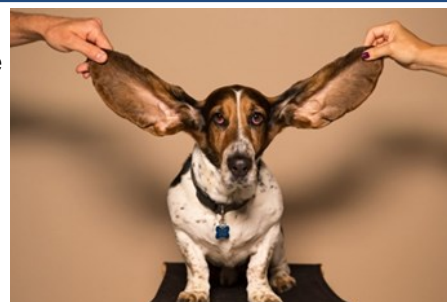
OCTOBER 8TH 2020—NEWSLETTER NO.17



Learning to Listen Rev. Narelle Collas

How well do you listen to another person? Are you a good communicator? Most people would answer very well and yes to these questions. After all, listening and communication are easy, right? We all do them both every day. As long as you keep nodding, don't interrupt, and can repeat what the other person said, you're a good listener...right? Well, not exactly.

Listening involves attention, being present, and hospitality, and it is a component of devotion, nurturing, and wonder.



Listening is our bridge to the wisdom of sacred texts and spiritual teachers. It is an essential part of the discernment process whereby we identify God's messages for us. Have you been taking the time to listen for that still small voice during these uncertain times? Doing faith at home is so important for each of us. It is not just about worship with the gathered group, we are responsible for our own faith development. What are you doing about your relationship with God @ home? How are you listening and communicating with Jesus?

There are many passages within the bible that encourage us to draw near to God, to listen to God's words to us and to communicate that to others. **Mark 4: 23 – 24. NLT says "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given, and you will receive even more".**

Listening also enables us to tune in to others and our inner voices of intuition and conscience. It is how we know we are part of the natural, technological, and media worlds all around us.

There is probably no greater gift that we can give our friends, family and even strangers than to truly listen to them. The attitude of selflessness that is involved in truly listening leads to a deepening of relationships and this kind of communication is just so important within our churches and ministry contexts. In the last newsletter we talked about mission and the best and first step for any Christian mission is to listen well.

An inability or unwillingness to listen is a symptom of self-centeredness. It signals that we are shut up in ourselves, not interested in participating in what is going on around us. It can also indicate an obliviousness to our own best interests which may be trying to make themselves known through our inner voices. The writer of the book of James encourages us this way

James 1:19 (NLT) ¹⁹ Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

Listening to ourselves, to our own self-talk, the voices from our past and our life commandments which often direct our lives is another vital part of our faith journey. Understanding the 'scripts' or things that we are told or that we tell ourselves is part of growing as a Christian as they affect our beliefs about ourselves, God and others. There are times when we need others to listen to us to help identify these life commandments and by our careful and sensitive listening to others, we may be able to help them.

Let us all try to be truly present to our God, others and ourselves by listening intentionally. Don't be distracted by our own plans, assumptions, voices, or need to respond.

Experience the deep communion that is possible as you deeply listen.

Mental Health Matters

Rev Fiona Bottcher [Deacon]

I struggle to find the words to describe those times when I'm wondering, and mulling, and thinking, and looking for answers - feeling disoriented and confused - and then, out of nowhere, an answer appears from the most unexpected places.

God moments?

Often when I'm desperately looking, or longing, for something; perhaps a sense of direction, or some kind of affirmation, I almost always get it from exactly the place I would least expect it! Or more specifically, the people I would least expect to receive it from. And because it's from, well, exactly where I didn't expect to hear it, it lands with a gravity I don't think it could if it came from mentors, scholars or any of the "great thinkers".

I whisper, thank you God.

We often look to those who have some kind of status, or authority, for wisdom and yet it's the wisdom given selflessly from the depths of real human experience that often stirs us to the core. Saint Ephraim El-Souriani (The Syrian) said: "Inside the meek and humble man, the spirit of wisdom rests" and the more I work with those in the margins, the more I find this to be true.

Let anyone with ears to hear listen!
~ Mark 4:9



Meditation On-line

Pilgrim UC Yarraville - Ros Harris

Ros Harris leads two Christian meditation groups at Pilgrim Uniting Church in Yarraville. Each week, group members read a short passage relating to meditation; meditate for 30 minutes in silence; and spend a few minutes in conversation, deepening their commitment to a Christian contemplative life. Here, Ros reflects on some of the positives to come out of their online experience.

In March, with faith communities around the world, we exchanged the pews and stained glass of our physical church for Zoom and our living rooms. **And our numbers increased!** A few meditators found it hard because of additional work/home pressures during lockdown. But for others, being online meant they could attend more readily – no rushing to get children fed before evening meditation; no safety concerns for those with health issues.

Some meditators say that the group is the highlight of their week – a chance to connect deeply and meaningfully with others during a time of uncertainty. Conversation on Zoom is more structured, of course, than when we are face to face – but it's not stilted. In fact, being online has allowed people to speak without interruption and to be deeply listened to. Using break out rooms every three weeks, gives people a chance to speak on a more intimate level with each other.

And no-one has missed travelling at night in the cold and the dark and the rain for 7.30 pm meditation – including me! The evening group may well continue to meet online next year (at least during winter) – a reminder that what started off as a second-best option, might turn out to be just what we needed. *If you would like to know more about running a Christian meditation group online, please contact Linley on Linley.liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au and she will put you in touch with Ros.*

Listening to God

Book Review

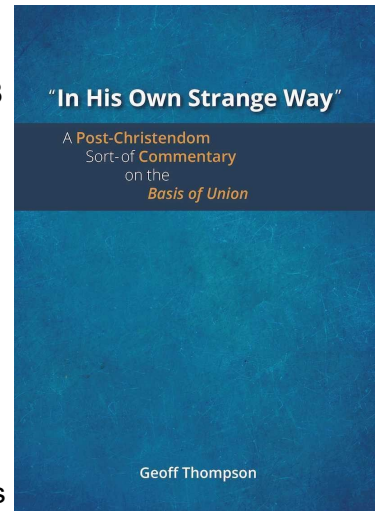
Ennis Macleod (Printed with permission)

In His Own Strange Way, by Geoff Thompson

It is always a useful thing to reexamine one's roots; to see what they say about what is happening with us today. That's what Geoff Thompson's 2018 'sort-of commentary' of the *Basis of Union* does. Our churches have members who lived through union in 1977, but increasingly, many members have no knowledge of the document around which the decision for union was made, or the fact that in 1997 this document was recognised as the theological foundation of the UCA. Geoff's book is an engaging resource around which groups could dip into the *Basis*, and examine for themselves what realities and opportunities are opened up in the world of 2020, from a text that still has relevance today

He examines what was established as the founding theology of the UCA and demonstrates its relevance to the post-Christendom world in which we find ourselves. An illuminating image he proposes is that the *Basis* is useful when we see it not as a map with defined routes to follow, but as a compass that provides directions in unfamiliar territory.

Each chapter of the book examines the relevance of a section of the *Basis* to issues that arise in the post-Christendom world, with easy to read summaries headed 'Post-Christendom reality' and 'Post-Christendom opportunity,' as well as relevant questions and Bible passages to think about individually or as a group. [The book is available through Mediacom and can be ordered online via this link.](#)



Intercultural Retreat—All Welcome



Oct 13th 9 am—1 pm **Intercultural Seminar:**
Rev Dr Randy Woodley, PhD, Activist TO
REGISTER [click here](#).

Oct 14th 10—12:30 pm **Intercultural Forum**
9.45 am 9.45 am Join Zoom Meeting: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83667935737?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83667935737?pwd=RnpUc3ZHYkNDTnExYytVYktBREVOdz09)
[pwd=RnpUc3ZHYkNDTnExYytVYktBREVOdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83667935737?pwd=RnpUc3ZHYkNDTnExYytVYktBREVOdz09)
Meeting ID: 836 6793 5737 Passcode: 165037

Lay Preachers Chat

28th October 4:30 - 6 pm

Hosts: Mel Perkins, Linley Liersch
& Rob Coulson

*We want to hear how you are?
What you are doing?
and learn together...*

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5946928859>

Meeting ID: 594 692 8859

Code of Ethics

**15th October 6:30pm or
16th October 2pm**

Topic Grooming
Booking on Trybooking:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BLMJ0>

Ministry Agents' Chat

**14th October
4 - 5:30pm**

<https://zoom.us/j/4790460893>

Meeting ID: 479 046

9 minutes @ 9

PPW Presbytery Ministers pledging to pray with you twice a day...

- ♦ We pray for the Moderator, Rev. Denise Liersch and the General Secretary, Rev. Mark Lawrence that they may be strengthened and guided by the wisdom of God.
- ♦ God Bless the Presbytery Standing Committee as it discerns what is ahead for PPW in 2021.
- ♦ We pray for ministers and ministry placements changing during COVID' .
- ♦ God Bless the lay preachers across the presbytery who may find themselves taking on new ministry tasks.
- ♦ God Bless our congregations with your regenerating spirit that we all may be participants in the mission of God.
- ♦ Give us a heart that listens for the discernment of your spirit in our lives.

Linley Liersch

PPW POSTCARD

Darebin North West UC congregation has been donating food and cooking up meals each week. To deliver it to the homes of people in their care. This week a note and this biblical quote was slid under the church door.

The note reads: *"This is to those who have been providing my community with food parcels. You guys were the light at the end of the tunnel right from the beginning! Signed Much Appreciated, (name)."*

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you, Declared the LORD, Plans to prosper you, and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future."

Advent Resources

Chris Barnett

Chris Barnett is helping resource to make Advent and Christmas special under any circumstance!

[Advent in a Box](#) on the Building Faith website. Advent in a Box was designed to provide faith at home resources to support, love, and connect families where and when they need it most. We hope that families will open the box with delight and think, "We can do this. We can hold spend a few special moments together on the real purpose of the season."

[Messy Christmas](#) Three complete sessions and a treasure trove of Ideas for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Messy Church Book. \$15-.

[Messy Sheep Trails](#) Stories from Messy Nativity 'Sheep Trails' on-line

[Road to Bethlehem](#) 'Road to Bethlehem' run every year in Melbourne is offering a virtual tours.

[Cake in a Cup devotion](#) Christian playgroup networks have a cake in a mug recipe with a simple devotional about 'Tasting God's Goodness'

[Resources for a Blue Christmas](#) 'Acknowledging our Pain' is a resource for a Blue Christmas service. Create a space and a time for people who are grieving this season.

[Transfer, Translate Transform article](#) John Roberto asks us what are we doing when we put worship on-line. Are we merely transferring it? Or can we transform worship?

[2020 Advent Engage Together Worship Resource](#) free resource from the eLM, 3 different themes, 5 worship service outlines.

Messy Church

22nd October—3:30 - 5pm

**Host: Chris Barnett & Linley Liersch
talking all things Messy!**

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5946928859>
Meeting ID: 594 692 8859

Pastoral Care Seminars - 2020/21

Rev. Jeanne Beale (Deacon) & Rev. Narelle Collas

The Presbytery of Port Phillip West is delighted to offer a series of Pastoral Care Seminars to our Presbytery community and beyond. This series of seminars seeks to equip participants with the skill of listening with empathy – a skill that bridges the wide caverns of communication break-down. Some of the shyest of people have walked away from these seminars empowered to care for others.

Who should come to these seminars? These seminars offer a selection of skills that have the power to transform the way we listen to others. They are ideal for anyone who wishes to enhance their pastoral skills. They have been designed to enrich existing relationships, as well as teach valuable listening skills that will be of use in all avenues of life.

Rev Narelle Collas and the Rev Jeanne Beale (Deacon) Presbytery Ministers for the Presbytery of Port Phillip West will be leading these seminars and both have been teaching this material for over twenty years.

Seminar 1 Listening Lab: Rapport Building and Relationship Development. Thursday Oct 29, 6.30 - 9:30pm or Friday Oct 30, 9.30am – 12.30pm (Or at beginning of 2021) *Seminar 1 is a prerequisite for further seminars* This seminar will take us through the basics of “Active Listening” and then teach participants two pastoral skills to try-out on their family and friends: simple easy tips that can transform conversations. We will also walk through the four stages of a relationship and rediscover what is needed to keep our relationships healthy, as well as helping us to identify when a person is struggling with a relationship.



Seminar 2: Life Commandments: Listening to ourselves, understanding what makes us do the things we do. Thursday Nov 26, 6.30 - 9.30pm or Friday Nov 27, 9.30am - 12.30pm This seminar helps us to identify the scripts in our heads that control our behaviour patterns. At certain times in life, some of these scripts can stop working for us, and may in fact become destructive. Understanding why we do, say or think of things the way we do, can unlock a path out of a confusing transitional time. At times we will need to break, change or adjust our scripts in order to become an individual. Seminar two is especially helpful to unlock the life commandments that keep us locked into certain behaviours or thought patterns. This seminar offers the ability to help shift something that is life -draining and replace it with something that is life-giving.

Seminar 3: Story listening: Identifying the deeper meanings to the stories we tell. February and March 2021. The third seminar in this series begs the question “Why do we tell the stories we tell?” Story Listening is a bit like reading between the lines of story. We look at the themes and metaphors in the story to help us arrive at the deeper meanings to our stories. Have you ever asked yourself “Why do people tell the same story over and over?” It may be because that person has not felt heard by others or may not have heard it (the meaning of the story) themselves. When we can help someone unlock the deeper meaning to their story, they can bring it to conscious awareness and resolve any unfinished business. This is a pastoral gift beyond measure.

Seminar 4 Conflict Resolution: Dealing with emotions and managing conflict. February and March 2021. In this seminar, we will identify why it is important for individuals to be aware of the way they respond to their emotions; Naming our emotions is half the battle, the other half is finding the best way to deal with them. If we cannot do this, our emotions will spill over into a behavioral response: Acting out or Acting in. When we encounter others dealing with emotions, it is likely to trigger an emotional response from us, rather than jumping to our own defense or wanting to counter-attack, we have another pastoral option. Come along to this seminar and learn some clues to conflict resolution.

Register through trybooking: <https://www.trybooking.com/BLUPF> FREE Seminars.