



Joining God in Shaping Our Future

Invitation to Listening to God

through Scripture, One Another, Our Neighborhoods, and Ourselves

Over the past day and a half, you have experienced a taste of what it might be like to listen deeply for God through *Dwelling in the Word*, sharing stories of God's presence, and exploring what might be happening in your neighborhood. This has been a rich time of listening and reflecting together. On behalf of diocesan staff, our Bishop and diocesan leadership, we thank you for joining in this experiment with us.

We believe that God is inviting us into a new way of living together. This involves listening and attending to what God is up to in our congregations, our neighborhoods and ourselves. As you continue on the journey of discerning what God is up to, we invite you and your congregation to say YES to a three-month period of LISTENING.

OVERVIEW

All congregations in the Diocese of Newark are invited to a three-month period of LISTENING which will begin with a Kick-Off event on Saturday, March 4, 2017 and culminate with a Reflection event on Saturday, June 3, 2017.

During this three-month period, congregations will practice LISTENING to God in Scripture, in each other, in their neighborhoods, and in themselves.

Congregations will reflect on how the Holy Spirit is nudging them as individuals and as a congregation.

Congregations are encouraged to incorporate LISTENING into their regular activities in whatever way works for them. Below are some suggestions to consider.

HOW MIGHT WE PRACTICE LISTENING IN OUR CONGREGATIONS?

LISTENING to God in Scripture: *Dwelling in the Word*

Here are a few examples of ways you can introduce the practice of *Dwelling in the Word* into the life of your congregation:

- *Dwelling* could begin Vestry meetings or other committee meetings, grounding them in Scripture.
- *Dwelling* could be used in worship in place of the sermon.
- *Dwelling* could be included in Lenten activities.
- *Dwelling* could be introduced prior to participating in an outreach opportunity. Participants reflect on the connections between the text and their experience.

LISTENING TO God Through One Another: Sharing Stories

Here are a few examples of how you can listen to the stories of God's presence in your congregation:

- Coffee Hour Question of the Week: Invite everyone to ask at least one person where they saw God at work in the last week.
- Conduct casual one-on-one interviews at coffee hour. Ask questions about the experience of being part of your congregation and God's presence in your church.

- Invite youth/older children and older members to interview each other about their lives – or their best experience of being part of your congregation and how they’ve seen God’s presence in your church.

LISTENING to Our Neighbors

Here are a few examples of how you can listen to the stories of your neighbors and the story of your neighborhood:

- Spend coffee hour on a walk around the church’s neighborhood with a series of prompts for listening: What did you see? Hear? Smell? What surprised you? What are you curious about? Have landmarks for children to find.
- Put a map on a wall and invite people to walk a neighborhood, highlight it on the map and reflect on what they experienced.
- Two or more people attend a Town Council or Board of Education meeting and simply listen, and then reflect together. Dwell in Luke 10:1-12 beforehand.
- Encourage each other to speak with one person a day/week that you don’t know. Reflect on what happened and what you are learning about yourself and God over the three-month period.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Fill out the initial contact card and give it to your room facilitator.

Talk with and gain support of Congregational leadership (clergy, vestry or executive committee) for the following:

- A small (3-5 person) team to plan and lead for the three-month period.
- The team attends the two diocesan gatherings on March 4 and June 3.
- In consultation with congregational leadership, the team incorporates listening practices in the life of the congregation.

By February 15, a diocesan representative will check in with your designated initial contact person to answer any questions and see where the Spirit is leading your congregation. Perhaps you will be ready to say YES!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The TEAM will attend a Kick-Off Gathering on Saturday, March 4, 2017.

A CONGREGATIONAL COACH will be assigned to the team to support the development of a simple action plan based on the congregation’s unique context.

The TEAM will take the action plan back to their congregation and experiment with it over the next three months. The CONGREGATIONAL COACH will check in with them periodically for support and encouragement.

The TEAM will attend the Reflection Gathering on Saturday, June 3, 2017.

Clergy are welcome and encouraged – but not required – to attend the Kick-Off and Reflection events.

WHAT CAN I DO RIGHT NOW?

At coffee hour or announcement time, SHARE one thing from your time here at Convention this weekend that gave you energy or hope.

I HAVE QUESTIONS—WHOM DO I CONTACT?

Please contact the Rev. Ginny Dinsmore, Coordinator for Missional Church Strategy, at 973-430-9912 or gdinsmore@dioceseofnewark.org.