**Holy Listening**

**Written by: Jaymie Derden**

**What is Holy Listening?**

*“When a person is fully present with another person: listening; not judging; not distracted; not analyzing; not diagnosing; and trusting that as they listen, God has joined them to offer wisdom, guidance and healing. As we enter into Holy Listening, God is present, and there is an air of holiness and sacredness” Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley*

The purpose of Holy Listening is to help children and teens know they are cared for, taken seriously, and that they are loved. The intention is to remind them they are wise and wonderful and to help them remember they have the inner wisdom of God to help them make good choices and to move toward health and healing.

Holy Listening is founded on the belief that we are all made in the image of God, the *imago dei.* Holy Listening looks for the image of God in the other person. The listener respects that image, treating the other person as a beloved child of God, even when the person is not reflecting that image.

Holy Listening involves listening skills, but adds the essential vertical dimension of the presence of God, a conversation of Three.

* Holy listening is taking the time to be quiet and listen to other people. To REALLY listen to other people. To listen to their words instead of composing our response. To take the time to digest what someone else is saying instead of thinking about what we will say next.
* Holy Listening accepts that person without judgment or evaluation, but with the openness of the spirit of God’s love, even when we may not feel love ourselves.
* Holy Listening does not try to “fix” a situation by offering advice or solutions, rather the listener allows the presence of God to provide the wisdom, guidance and healing.
* Holy Listening implies expecting God to act in the listening. It is God’s blessing in action.
* Holy Listening can be reinforced through the use of symbols.

**Holy Listeners at SSUMC:**

1. We will offer Holy Listening Time during dinner on Wednesday nights.
2. Tables will be designated and children/youth will be invited to visit the Holy Listener as they feel the need.
3. Each table will have a candle. As the child approaches, invite them to sit and light the candle, reminding them that God is with us and hears us. God is the third Person in the Holy Listening session.
4. Listen empathetically to the child, without giving advice or trying to “fix” the situation.
5. What do you say? Less is more. You may wish to use statements like this:
   1. “I can see you are hurt.”
   2. “That must be very hard.”
   3. “I’m so sorry…”
   4. Non-verbals -- Nod, eye contact, lean in as you talk, pay attention to them
   5. Paraphrase what they are saying - “Sounds like you are saying…”
   6. Ask clarifying questions: “What do you mean when you say…."
   7. Avoid saying, “It will be ok” or “I know just how you feel.”
6. You may use Holy Listening stones or the handout to help the child name his/her feelings.
7. Once the child has shared, pray and together blow out the candle (change the light). This is part of our Wednesday night ritual and reminds us that God is with us in the Light, but also goes with us everywhere we go, just as the smoke from the candle moves out from one place to every place.

**Resources:**

Leanne Hadley “Spiritual Transformation of Children, Teens and Adults” workshop presentation, August 2015

http://jemanzo.blogspot.com/2014/05/holy-listeners.html

http://www.blessingcenter.org/pdf/dmin/BBSN-w-Confirmation-VanDoren.pdf

http://www.1ststeps.net/Resources/PrayerBlessingBasedSpirituality/MovementPrayers/tabid/1053/Default.aspx