

Being a listening church is not only about developing a *listening attitude*, but also about making it *visible* both inside and outside the church.

Would you like to become a better Listening Church?

Acorn in Scotland has tutors trained to run a variety of listening courses to meet particular needs. In its simplicity this model of listening can be powerfully effective, empowering and healing.

The listening is 3 dimensional ~ listening to others ~ listening to God ~ listening to myself.

Perhaps Acorn in Scotland can help your church to become a Listening Church. Courses can be arranged locally within individual churches or as an ecumenical event.

For all information and costs on available courses and resources through Acorn in Scotland please contact:

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Becoming a Listening Church

Deitrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together* wrote,

“Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians because Christians are talking when they should be listening. He who no longer listens to his brother will soon no longer be listening to God either.”

This statement challenges churches to consider how well we listen to others but also to reflect on the implications of poor listening for our faith journey and relationship with God.

Listening is fundamental to the art of good communication yet it is the aspect which is often underestimated or overlooked. Listening is paramount in all healthy relationships and as such should be an integral part of the way communication happens within churches.

People's expectation of church can often be that they will experience perfect relationships. Churches though, like families are filled with ordinary people with strengths and weaknesses, people of all ages journeying life's path through both the good times and the times of difficulty, pain and struggle. Many will be at different stages in their faith and experience. Inevitably there will be times of difference of opinion about deep issues of faith, choices in music and style of worship to simple practical decisions concerning the fabric of the building. ~ all a normal part of life in relationship.

The big challenge for us all within churches is to learn to relate to one another in a mature Christian way ~ to love, support and encourage each other through the rough reality of daily life.

Listening helps us in our relationships because it shows respect and gives value to others especially those who are different from us. Learning to listen well also teaches us about acceptance and real care.

How well do you think you really listen? Perhaps you might consider your own natural way of listening to others.

- *Do I want to give advice and help you out?*
- *Do I want to criticise you or offer opinions?*
- *Am I waiting for you to stop talking so that I can tell you my story?*
- *Am I wanting to rush over and comfort you?*

Good listening is not easy—but we can all learn to listen better.

Acorn in Scotland – listening for life, health and community ~ is committed to providing high quality listening training to help individuals become better listeners and contribute to the development of Listening Churches throughout Scotland.

Some thoughts and ideas about becoming a Listening Church

- Good Listening raises an awareness of the needs of those around us.
- Those involved in caring for others can be equipped with listening skills based on a safe model with clear boundaries that not only ensures good practice but also offers a greater level of confidence when difficult or sensitive situations arise.
- Periods of quiet reflection as part of worship provide the opportunity for people to feel they have time and inner space to listen to God while still being in communion with others.
- Listening is encouraged across the generation gap.
- Listening attitudes are encouraged within all meetings ~ respectful listening especially to those whose opinions are different ~ summarising of contributions ~ checking that people feel they have been heard potentially preventing unnecessary conflict.
- Good listening within bible studies encourages people to share their doubts and questions without fear of judgement or criticism.
- Listening to ourselves provides the opportunity to be honest and open with God and raises self awareness of our failings and our gifts.
- Listening to God for insight and guidance on ways to engage with the community of which we are a part.
- Listening for improved ecumenical relationships