

The South Australian Council of Churches invites you to

A Day of Listening

To listen.....

To the sounds and noises of our environment
To the cries of pain from our planet home



To the voices of hope stirring in Earth

on

The Feast of John the Baptist

Tuesday June 24th , 2014

and choose

A Time of Silence.....

To listen for God speaking through these voices

On this Day of Listening we will listen to our environment, wherever we are. We will listen with our hearts, minds and spirits...perhaps even keeping a diary of what we discern.

For more information & resources visit the SACC website: www.sacc.asn.au

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South Australian Council of Churches Inc



Produced by the Eco-Mission Team of South Australia

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We are extremely grateful for the work of Norm Habel in the initiation of this day and the development of many of these resources.

Resources

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We would love to hear the way you have experienced A Day of Listening. You may be interested in sending your reflections - prose, poetry, visual (jpeg file), music (MP3 file) etc to adayoflisteningsa@gmail.com. Reflections may then be posted onto the blogsite, <http://adayoflisteningsa.blogspot.com.au>, with all contributions acknowledged. The blogsite will provide a wonderful repository for reflections from individuals, schools, work places and churches.

Introduction

A Story of Listening

In the Church's calendar we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist. John in his life and witness was responding to a call by God that was there from his conception. That is not to say that John could have made choices that diverged from the purpose for which God was calling him; indeed I believe that is so for us all. There was, for John and for us, a need for a deep listening to the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, a deep attentiveness to the resonance of our being with our God given calling.

I recall the process which led to me offering for ordination. It was in some ways part of a continuum which could be traced back many years but for the sake of brevity it was part of the process which had commenced when I came back to the church after a long absence. There were only a few years between return and offering for ordination. It was a time of listening but listening that took many forms:

1. Listening to the yearnings of my very being, that which was within me which could only find fulfilment, 'its rest', in doing God's will; a sort of paraphrase of Augustines' oft quoted words, 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.' For me this is not always about listening to a still small voice, but rather a responding to a deeply felt gut intuition.
2. Listening to those around me, sometimes complete strangers, who would say something that prompted or completed my own thought patterns about how God might be calling me.
3. Deliberately seeking others opinions, opinions of people I held in high regard for their Christian maturity and spiritual wisdom. Listening to them and being open to hear what I would have preferred not to hear at times as I tested, most particularly the gut intuition.
4. Listening to the voice that would speak to me from the material that I was reading or from what I was watching. A preparedness to 'hear' what was being said through various media and through a variety of senses; often from sources that at times would seem disconnected from faith.
5. Listening to the Scripture, reflecting upon the meaning of scripture for me personally, for the church and for the world at large.
6. Listening to the places in my life and being where there was an emptiness. In those days leading up to my candidating it was about listening to my sense that there was a lack of purpose in my life and responding by seeking to identify the purpose for which I was made.

Much of this listening involves a very deliberate and active engagement, a seeking to 'know' which is a feature of my personality type.

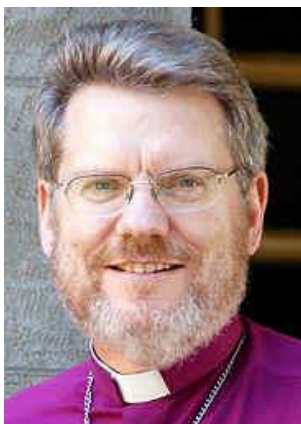
As time has gone on I have come to deeply appreciate the times of listening to the silence. A few years ago I prepared a retreat that used the ministry of the Prophet Elijah as a starting point, with a particular focus on the Mount Horeb experience where God is revealed in silence, minded in sheer silence.

I have come to deeply appreciate listening to the silence of God's presence with me, most particularly when the situations that I am involved in are most difficult. To be present and to 'hear' the silence and yet know God's presence is deeply calming; to be! From that sense of the silence one is somehow empowered to act.

In listening to the silence one can also find that which resonates within us with the whole creation. In the silence we are more attentive to our place as part of God's good creation; part of the web of life, our interconnectedness with all that is. We can recognise in the silence how we are God's beloved and how all of creation is beloved of God. In listening we find our place as stewards of the creation and recognise our responsibility not only to human brothers and sisters but also to brother sun and sister moon, to paraphrase and appropriate a Franciscan concept.

Listening can slow us, it can allow the silence to indwells us and calm us, it can allow God to be heard and from that place for us to act.

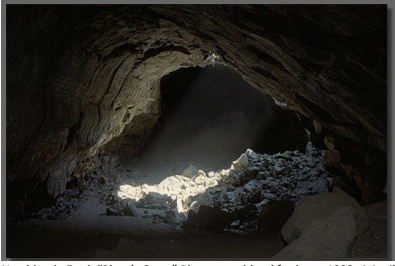
Sisters & Brothers be present before God and listen,
+John



Bishop John Stead is a Kentish Man, having been born in Kent, west of the Medway River in 1956. He was Baptised in the Church of England in Ellecombe (Devon) where his fraternal grandparents lived. Due to his Father's occupation as a professional soldier he has lived in a variety of places, including a stint in Elizabeth, South Australia in the early 60's. The family finally emigrated to Australia in 1967 living in Canberra. John attended secondary school in the ACT and completed a Bachelor of Education (Primary) at the University of Canberra and taught in the ACT for 15 years prior to offering as a candidate for ordination in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn following an extended period of absence from the church. He was consecrated Bishop in 2009 and served as Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Bathurst, NSW prior to his election as the Seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Willochra in 2012.

Resource One

Five Leads for Listening from the Bible



Northbank, Fred. "Pluto's Cave." Photo. northbankfred.com 1999. 4 April 2013 <http://www.northbankfred.com/pluto.html>.

Listen to the Silence

When Elijah waits to hear God's voice in the cave at Mt Horeb, the voice is not in the storm, earthquake or fire, but in the stillness, the silence (1 Kings 19).

Listen to the Land

When the land cries out in pain because of the evils caused by humans, Jeremiah listens (Jer. 12.4) and the Lord responds: 'The land mourns to me' (Jer. 12.11).



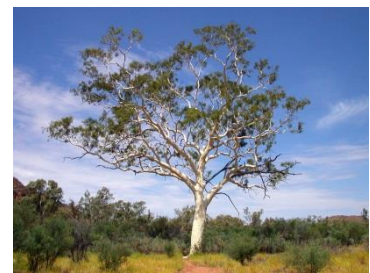
Listen to the Wind



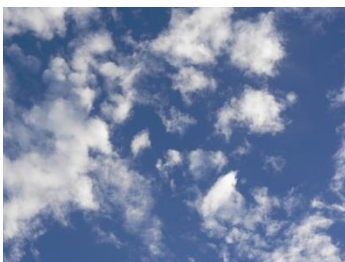
You may hear the wind blowing and sense it's sound coming from 'who knows where' (John 3.8) but that wind from God is the very breath of life for us, as it was for Adam (Gen. 2.7), and the gift of the Spirit for all who are baptised (John 3.5-8).

Listen to the Trees

The Psalmist is especially aware that the trees of the forest sing for Joy before the Lord (Ps. 96.12). Listen to the trees and celebrate in song or silence.



National Aeronautics and Space Administration. "The plaque says that this is the largest ghost gum in the Eastern MacDonnell Mountains. It's a little ways off the road to Trephina Gorge." Photo. Nightglow This file was last modified February 23, 2003. April 15, 2013. <<http://fsd.gdic.nasa.gov/archive/nightglow/wildlife.html>>



Listen to the Skies

Ever since the morning stars sang for joy on creation day (Job 38.7), sounds have been emanating from the skies whether as frightening thunder (Ps. 29) or as songs of praise (Ps. 148).

Resource Two

Five Leads for Listening through the Day



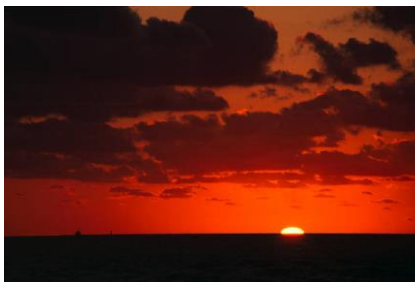
At Dawn – walk outside and listen to the music of nature in the early morning and feel the presence of light giving life to the day.

Morning – on the way to work and at work we are conscious of what sounds fill the environment, pausing to listen from time to time and wondering.

Silence – for an hour in the day we stay silent and listen intently, whether in nature, in a church or a special place.

Dinner – at dinner we are aware of the sounds that sustain our lives, our minds, our bodies and our spirits.

Dusk – before and after sunset, we listen to the signals of life emanating from nature. The beneath the night sky we listen to the heavens, the winds and the songs of the stars.



At the end of the day we reflect and record those sounds of the environment that disturbed us, delighted us or lifted our spirits.

Resource Three

Five Leads for Listening from Mystics

Listen to Wendell Berry

The mind that is not baffled is not employed:
The impeded spring is the one that sings.

Listen to Bill Niedije

The earth she sick from mad mankind.
Read the land. Listen to it!
Only then will you be free.

Listen to Margaret Mead

If one does not love one part of this Earth and every tree and blade of grass on it, how are you going to love the whole Planet?

Listen to an Aussie Camper

Find a spot, a special place, a spiritual home...a creek bed, a river red gum, a broad beach, a hill top, a garden corner. Let nature take hold of you and listen. Let the richness of creation flow through you. Visit it often. It will become for you a Sacred Site.

Listen to Mary Oliver

Who made the world? Who made the swan and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper? Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Resource Four

Five Leads for Listening in Schools



Hi-5 for the earth

We take the opportunity on World Environment Day to listen to the sounds and noises in our environment and spend time in silence reflecting on the blessings we receive, the cries of pain we hear and the call to action we face.

NOTICING WITH MY EYES

What are my favourite things to look at in nature?

LISTENING WITH MY EARS

What are my favourite sounds in nature?

GIVING THANKS FOR WHAT I SEE

What is the best thing I have seen someone do to care for nature?

REFLECTING ON MY ACTIONS

What is the best thing I have done to care for nature?

TAKING ACTION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What is one thing I am going to choose to do from now on to make a difference to caring for our earth?



I give thanks to God

Resource 5

5 Leads for Listening from A Rocha

A Rocha: Christians in conservation calls us to

- ❖ Listen with Christ
- ❖ Listen to our call to care and protect
- ❖ Listen to our call to advocate for justice
- ❖ Listen to and value all partnerships
- ❖ Listen to our Christian hope



A Rocha (Portuguese for the rock) is an international environmental organisation with a Christian ethos, operating in 20 countries.

A Rocha's mission is to protect and restore the environment through community based conservation projects, research and education. www.arocha.org/



Resource Six

Five Leads for Listening to God in Creation

Our day or our hour of silence listening to God in creation may seem simple yet may demand much from us and in return offer us a rich experience of learning through the Holy Spirit. We are invited to listen:

On Holy Ground

Be present with Christ as you sit silently or walk on holy ground, with God in creation beneath your feet, by your side and in the cosmos beyond.

With All Five Senses

Engage all five senses and deepen your awareness of God in the many sounds and sights around you. Listen to your body, be aware of your breathing and be alive to all your senses.

Observing closely

Observe all your emotions in relation to God's creation, whether boredom, distraction, joy, wonder or surprise. Take notes to remember what you observe and experience.

Staying Still

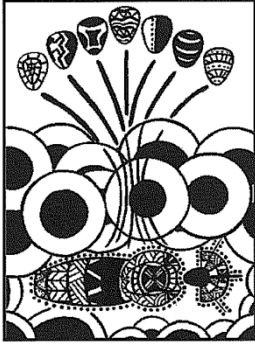
Be still in the presence of God in creation with a cool attentive spirit. You may choose to take a photograph, sketch a picture or record sounds to remember the moment.

In Prayerful Silence

Remember to switch your phone off or to silent for the time of silence and speak only when necessary. Pray silently alone or with others conscious of God's presence then and there in creation.



Resource Seven



*The Spirit of Christ Rises from the Land
to Renew our People and our Land*

Five Leads for Listening from Custodians of the Land

The Rainbow Spirit Elders are a group of custodians of our land. In their book, ***Rainbow Spirit Theology*** they also offer



*Life-forces from the Rainbow Spirit Emerging
from Sacred Sites in the Land*

five leads to listening to the land. We are invited to listen because:

The Creator Spirit is Crying

The deep spiritual bonds present with the land and its people have been broken and sacred places of the land have been desecrated. (p. 42, 44)

The Land is Crying

The people assigned by the Creator Spirit to be its custodians have been torn from the land by force. (p. 45)

The Land is Calling

The life-forces deep in the land are not bringing forth rich vegetation and abundant animal life. (p. 46)

The Custodians are Crying

They want to be free again to be responsible for the land and make it free. (p.51)

The Custodians are Calling

Both the land and the people cry out for freedom. Will anyone hear their cry? (p.53)

Indigenous Groups Map of South Australia- www.reconciliationsa.org.au