**Heart Listening Exercise in a Group – RETREAT EXERCISE**

For the Group: This exercise provides an opportunity to “hold space” and honor each person in the group. The experience is an opportunity to create a safe, sacred space for sharing in the presence of God and one another. Be aware of the sacredness of each individual.

Listeners: Listening is valued just as much as speaking. Pay attention to the principles of dialogue, noted below, as you listen. If you find yourself getting distracted, take a breath and begin again. Take note of what may be distracting you.

Speaker: This is an opportunity for the speaker to practice sharing without interruption, fixing, problem solving, judgment, or feedback. It is a safe space to share what is deeply inside of you that is being tugged or poked/prodded by God. You may find yourself saying something you didn’t know about yourself, your beliefs, or your experiences. This is normal. It is in speaking out loud that we may come to know ourselves more deeply.

Sharing around this Question:

**As we have sat with God, ourselves, and others today,**

**what most wants to be shared from your heart at this time?**

**It could be as simple as what prayer practice spoke to you most and why.**

Speaker: Take 5 minutes to share around the question. You are welcome to pause and think/feel during your sharing time. If there is still time available when you are done sharing, the listeners will “hold the space” until time is up. Often times, additional thoughts or feelings that want to be shared may bubble up.

Take a minute of silence before the next speaker starts.

Timekeeper/facilitator: Make sure everyone that wants to share has a chance to do so tending to the overall time of 30 minutes during this exercise. Adjust the 5 minutes if there are more or less than six members in the group.

**Debriefing will be in the Large Group at the end of the Small Group sharing:**

Share any insight you gained as the speaker and/or as a listener.

What was the experience like for you?

Did anything surprise you?

Was there any discomfort?

**Principle of Dialogue**

1. When you are listening, suspend assumptions.
2. When you are speaking, speak for yourself using “I” language.
3. Listen and speak without judgment.
4. Suspend status
5. Honor confidentiality
6. Listen for understanding, not agreement or belief.
7. Ask clarifying or open-ended questions to assist your understanding.
8. Honor silence and time for reflection.
9. One person speaks at a time

Practicing the Sacred Art of Listening by Kay Lindahl

Seeking the Spirit Within – 2021 Winter Retreat – Hope in the Wilderness

Terri Storer, Certified Spiritual Director – [tstorer@neb.rr.com](mailto:tstorer@neb.rr.com)