



PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD

a way of listening

September 2022

Paying Attention to God is brought to you
by Threshold Listening, It is delivered in conjunction with
The Methodist Church in Ireland Board of
Ministry, Learning and Development



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STOPPING TO HEAR GOD SING

In the early months of lock down in 2020, when our streets were quiet, we heard the birds singing. Once lost in the din of life, their exquisite melodies were carried to us across the silence, reminding us of nature's rhythms and of a world bigger than Covid. Many of us realised that these birds had been singing all the time. We just hadn't noticed them.

Birdsong gives us a way of understanding how God is with us, in the middle of our ordinary days. Like the birds singing, unseen, every day, God is there. All the time. Always at work. Always with us.

... and yet we spend our days looking for him.

Would you like to learn new ways of seeing and being with God? Do you want a greater awareness of God with you in the ups and downs of your ordinary - even boring - days? Would you like to learn to listen differently - in prayer, in life, at home, to people, to your own heart - and in this listening, to enjoy the kind of life God wants for you?



*The Lord your
God is with you;
his power
gives you victory.
The Lord will
take delight
in you,
and in his love
he will give you
new life.
He will sing
and be joyful
over you.*

Zephaniah 3: 17

Welcome to Paying Attention to God.

Paying Attention to God (PATG) was developed in 2016 as a foundation year for training in Spiritual Direction. Since then, it has appealed to those wanting to take the year on its own, as a personal journey. Offering a chance to see and experience God in new ways in prayer and work, family and community, it encourages a different kind of listening and nurtures a way of life with God and others that feels real and intimate.

The Lord God has taught me what to say, to strengthen the weary. Every morning, he makes me eager to listen. The Lord gives me wisdom, and I have not rebelled or turned away from him.

Isaiah 50: 4-5

The year of PATG involves:

- a group of 12-14 Christians of all kinds, led by skilled facilitators, experienced in the areas of spirituality and psychology
- a gentle rhythm to each Saturday, with a carefully chosen blend of prayer, reflection, activity and listening
- well-grounded teaching and practices from across Christian denominations, drawing especially on wisdom from the Ignatian and Celtic traditions
- respect for different ways of being in a group: space to talk, space to listen and to be quiet
- plain English and practical examples. No lectures
- laughter - God has a sense of humour.

We meet together in a group one Saturday a month in North Belfast from 10am – 5pm. The mornings include a gentle blend of prayer, reflection and discussion.

Afternoons invite practical experiences of listening and of paying attention to what's going on outside and inside you, and encouragement to recognise God with you in it all. You will get ideas to pray and think about to let each day's experience sink in to your own life.

*I love the Lord
who listens to
my voice.
He leans
into the middle
of my life
so that he can
hear me.
He is always
listening to me*

Psalm 116: 1-2

The dates/topics are:

Sept 10	My Story in God's Story
Oct 15	The God who listens
Nov 19	Being myself with God
Dec 10	How friendship grows
Jan 21	God's need of me
Feb 18	Freedom to listen and live
Mar 25	Following the way
Apr 29	A listening life
May 21	God in all things

About our facilitators ...

Maria Morgan (BSc, PG Dip) **has served for the last thirty years in several roles, working with a diverse mix of people across the community, voluntary and statutory sector. She works alongside people to increase awareness good emotional health and wellbeing in family, work and local community. She has also worked with agencies to promote good practice informed by an awareness of the impact of trauma on a person's life.**

Maria trained in Spiritual Direction through Manresa (Jesuit Centre for Spirituality) and offers one to one spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition, bringing spiritually and emotional health and wellbeing into conversation in search for deepening relationship with God, self and others. She has been involved for many years in Ignatian training and formation of prayer guides and in the ongoing support of spiritual directors.

Gareth Bell served for over 15 years with Precept Ministries Ireland, implementing youth and men's ministry. He became National Director and was on the writing team of Precept Ministries International. He describes himself as a: Doubting believer, straight talking stutterer, Ignatian explorer, honest conjuror, passionate introvert, coffachocaholic and a thoughtful troublemaker. He has worked in engineering, health, charity and entertainment sectors. When he's not studying or creating courses for the development of others, you can find him watching Netflix, reading, or asking the question "would you like to see a magic trick?"

Gareth has spoken at youth and leadership conferences around the world. He serves as a Chaplain with YMCA Ireland. As a Spiritual Director, Gareth's desire is to engage with those on the fringes of society and for people to experience God as he truly is and not how culture defines. This summer, Gareth will complete his MA in Transformational Leadership.

Particular thanks are due to Rev. Dr. Ruth Patterson, Abbot Mark Ephrem Nolan, O.S.B., Rev. Alan Lorimer, Rev. Diane Clutterbuck and Fr. Michael McGinnity for their wise and encouraging contributions to planning and input over the years, and to BMLD (Edgehill Theological College), for its ongoing support.

PATG is not a course of study. It is a deeply personal experience of God with you in your day. It can improve your listening at work and at home, but its main aim is to encourage you to live a listening life, one in which you are more aware of God with you and more sensitive to his desires for you. It helps you to be more like Jesus in your listening, freer to enjoy the life God wants for you together.

You can go through this experience without opening a book but if you are a reader, we will have a few articles or chapters to give you. You might also like to read [The Listening life by Adam McHugh](#) and [God's Voice Within by Mark Thibodeaux](#). If you enjoy writing, the ideas we give you to pray and think about will be helpful guides if you want to keep a journal. We can help with this if it is something you'd like to try.

We're still offering a next stage to PATG but have deliberately shifted our focus from formal spiritual direction training to nurturing your relationship with Jesus and encouraging depth and discernment in a life of listening. More information about this next stage will be available during your experience of PATG.



BE OPENED!

To help you think about PATG, we invite you into the company of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. He offers the deaf man a chance to listen differently and to speak plainly. It is an invitation to a real, close, honest relationship with the God who sees you, the God who listens to you and the God who meets you in the middle of your days, with a crowd of your friends. Do you want more of this for yourself? Join us.

Jesus left Tyre and went up to Sidon before going back to the Sea of Galilee and the region of the Ten Towns. A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to him, and the people begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man to heal him.

Jesus led him away from the crowd so they could be alone. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on his own fingers, he touched the man's tongue. Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly! (Mark 7: 31-35)



APPLICATION PROCESS

Entry into PATG is not automatic. Our process helps us and you to decide if PATG is a good fit for you at this time.

Overleaf, you will see our simple application form. A paper copy is given with this leaflet. For a digital version, email James McClure: ministries@irishmethodist.org

Return the completed form by post/email to James by 5pm Monday 8 August, 2022

We'll contact you to agree a date for an (30 min) application conversation.

Fees for the year: £250, or donation, payable in instalments

We take great care bringing this group together. Our first round of applications is in June. This second round in August fills any remaining places.



Application form - sample

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This application is for year beginning 10 September and is to be returned to James McClure, Operations Administrator, Edgehill Theological College, 9 Lennoxvale, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT9 5BY by 5pm Monday 8 August, 2022. Applications may be emailed to ministries@irishmethodist.org

NAME

ADDRESS

Landline

Mobile

E-MAIL

Tell us what are you looking for at this time in your life

Why do you want to join the group in Paying Attention to God?

SIGNED

DATE

