

# PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD

a way of listening

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Beginning September 2021

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




## STOPPING TO HEAR GOD SING

In the early months of lock down, 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? To have greater awareness of him 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 the listening ministry of 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 18 | My Story in God's Story   |
| Oct 16  | The God who listens   |
| Nov 20  | Being myself with God   |
| Dec 11  | How friendship grows  |
| Jan 15  | God's need of me  |
| Feb 19  | Freedom to listen and live  |
| Mar 19  | Listening to heart's desire   |
| Apr 2   | Emmaus - paying attention together  |
| May 21  | God in all things:<br>day of prayer & reflection<br>for PATG past participants. |

## About our facilitators ...

Breige O'Hare (M.A., B.Sc., B.Agr., P.G.C.E, C.R.E, Cert. Couns. Q.U.B) has twenty years experience as a spiritual director and facilitator. Jesuit-trained and with an MA in Pastoral Theology, she is based in well.com, a Christian Centre for Psychological and Spiritual Wellbeing in Belfast. She provides 1-2-1 spiritual direction, prayer, reflection and retreat experiences for people who want to relate to God in their homes and town/city streets. She is author of two books, *The Nearness of God* and *Whole Parish Catechesis*. Her research into growth in relationship with God is used internationally in the training of spiritual directors.

Jonny Watson ( B.Sc., Dip. S.W., Dip. Spirituality) worked for 15 years in a range of social work roles, including child protection, youth justice and fostering. At work and home, he realised that people were increasingly sharing with him at a deeper, more soulful level and that this brought about authentic long lasting transformation - when they paid attention to it. Jonny trained in Spiritual Direction in Manresa (Jesuit Centre for Spirituality). He holds certificates in Counselling and Theology. He offers 1-2-1 spiritual direction, facilitates a number of grassroots community initiatives and teaches spiritual practices on a range of other courses.

*Particular thanks are due to Rev. Dr. Ruth Patterson, Abbot Mark Ephrem Nolan, O.S.B., and Rev. Alan Lorimer, Rev. Diane Clutterbuck and Fr. Michael McGinnity for their encouraging and wise 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.

PATG can prompt an awareness of the particular calling to spiritual direction. You may wish to explore this call with us during the year. If so, you will be asked to complete a reflective journal to a required level over that year. We will provide information on this during the application process (see overleaf).





## 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.

Opposite you will see our simple application form. A paper copy is given with this leaflet. For a digital version, email James McClure: [bmldoffice@irishmethodist.org](mailto:bmldoffice@irishmethodist.org)

Return the completed form by post/email to James by 5pm Monday June 7, 2021.

We'll agree a date with you for an (30 min) application conversation, during week beginning 21 June, 2021.

Fees for the year: £250, payable in instalments



We have a summer round of applications to fill up any spare places. Deadline 9 August, 2021. Conversations begin 31 August, 2021.



# Application form - sample

## **PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD....a way of listening**

Application for year beginning 18 September, 2021. To be returned to James McClure, Operations Administrator, Edgehill Theological College, 9 Lennoxvale, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT9 5BY **by 5pm Monday June 7, 2021**. Applications may be emailed to [bmldoffice@irishmethodist.org](mailto:bmldoffice@irishmethodist.org)

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**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**

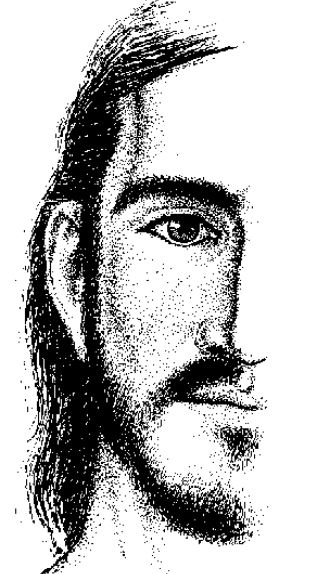
**DATE**

## 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)*







# THRESHOLD LISTENING