

EXPLORATIONS



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Listening Hearts Launches its Ministry into the Future

**Suzanne Farnham, Founder
Baltimore, MD**

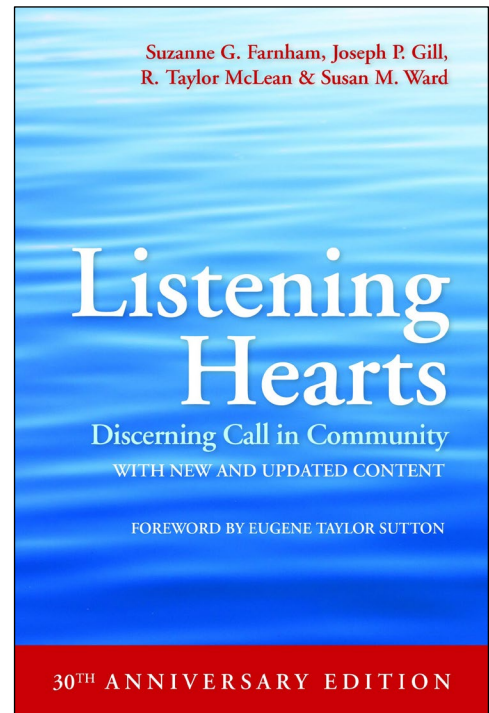
In June of 1991 *Listening Hearts* came off the press with nine concise chapters of distilled wisdom, gleaned from spiritual literature on discernment of call in community, spanning the centuries. In clear everyday language it made what had been the preserve of monks, nuns, and ordained clergy accessible to the average reader.

Within a year the book had attracted readers across the North American continent and spilling over into South America. A year later it was listed as required reading for the London Yearly Meeting of Friends. It was being used by congregations, dioceses, and seminaries. It was speaking to a spectrum of people ranging from high school students to bishops.

In addition to the nine chapters, the book featured appendices of practical suggestions to help readers put the accumulated wisdom to practical use. An annotated bibliography and endnotes sketched out the complexities beneath the simple text and pointed the way to original sources for those interested in delving deeper.

Now, with thirty years of experience in working with groups and trying to live out the principles the book puts forth, we have the 30th Anniversary Edition scheduled for publication in June. It preserves the original chapters intact, modifying some word choices to reflect recent changes in usage. Beyond that, there are new features:

- A new segment highlights five real-life stories of call.
- Appendix 1 (Guidelines for Discernment Groups) further updates an appendix that was substantially rewritten for the 20th Anniversary Edition.



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- Appendix 2 (Types of Questions to Raise When Serving in Discernment Groups) has been rewritten to benefit from practical experience since the 20th Anniversary Edition.
- A newly written introduction makes a special point of welcoming seekers who consider themselves spiritual but not religious, as well as readers from other faith traditions.
- The 30th Anniversary Edition features a foreword by the Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton, Bishop of Maryland, while retaining the 20th Anniversary Edition's foreword, written by Parker Palmer.
- The glossary of discernment terminology, which was new in the 20th Anniversary Edition, remains in place.

The basic text of the original book provides a solid foundation, with time-tested universal principles of spiritual engagement as the building stones. The updated appendices strengthen the structure. The new material imparts a feeling of warmth and hospitality, inviting quiet introspection. The 30th Anniversary Edition of *Listening Hearts*, newly retrofitted, is ready to help the Spirit carry the ministry to new horizons as days and years unfold before us.

The 30th Anniversary Edition will be available on June 17, 2021 and may be pre-ordered at Amazon.com (type in "Listening Hearts 30th").

Suzanne Farnham, an Executive Senior Program Associate, is the founder of Listening Hearts Ministries, coauthor of the Listening Hearts series of books, the original architect of the Listening Hearts programs, and serves on the Board of Trustees. She has been leading programs from coast to coast for close to thirty years.

In Memoriam: Coauthor and Trustee R. Taylor "Teto" McLean

**Joe Gill
Severna Park, MD**

Listening Hearts coauthor, longtime Listening Hearts board member, and former board president Teto McLean passed away on January 15, 2021. He was 92. Teto was a lawyer, birder, music lover, tennis player, father, and husband to Listening Hearts board member Patricia Friend, and formerly to Peggy Merrick, who died in 2002. He was an informal scholar of St. John's Gospel and the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A full obituary from *The Baltimore Sun* may be found via Google using the words "obituary" and "Teto McLean."

What was most truly significant during that time of prayer was that I personally experienced the Lord's presence. And that experience of turning to God and finding Him has remained central to my existence ever since.

I met Teto in 1997 as my coauthor in the writing of *Listening Hearts*. His hallmarks were humility and humor—a twinkle in his eye was ever-present—and his strong sense of purpose. Often, he would say—and mean it—that "God has work for us to do." Though reluctant to draw attention to himself, at the board's invitation last year he shared with us his experience of God's early presence. He titled the essay, "Turning to God."

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and for those who made in-kind contributions in 2020.*

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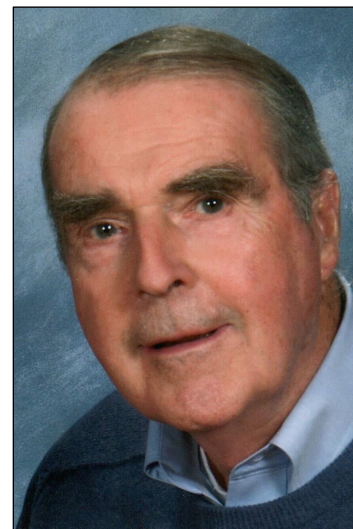
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In the 1950s, I had the experience of turning to God on a matter that was causing me genuine concern. I had been asked by our Rector to give a sermon. I was in my 20s and newly returned to my earlier Christianity.

What was bothering me was that giving a sermon seemed to me to involve a conclusion on my part that I was worthy of preaching to others. I knew this was not the case, and I was troubled. As a consequence, I almost unconsciously found myself turning to God in prayer. While this was more than 60 years ago, I can still remember vividly the physical surroundings of where I was as I did so.

The particular matter bothering me was incidentally and satisfactorily answered, then and ever since. But what was most truly significant during that time of prayer was that I personally experienced the Lord's presence. And that experience of turning to God and finding Him has remained central to my existence ever since.



R. Taylor "Teto" McLean

Teto was one of a kind. His humility, warmth, and deep faith carried him through life as a light to all whom he met. My memory of him is a blessing.

Joe Gill is trustee president of Listening Hearts Ministries and a coauthor of Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community.

Full Body, Full-time Contemplative Prayer

**Suzanne Farnham, Founder
Baltimore, MD**

In her book *Seeking God*, the Anglican Benedictine scholar Esther de Waal beckons us to "listen with every fibre of our being, at every moment of the day." Although this is an unattainable goal, it is well worth aiming toward. I have found that the effort in and of itself profoundly impacts every aspect of my life.

I think of it as trying to open every cell of my body to God's presence—a presence that permeates everything visible and invisible, throughout the cosmos—all the while trying to stay tuned in to that sacred energy that connects us with all that is, ever was, or ever will be.

Often this prayer lies dormant as I become engrossed in the activity of daily life. Even so, it emerges at random intervals throughout the day and night.

Reading, writing, discussion and debate, analyzing, and socializing inform my prayer; but the actual prayer leans toward the nonverbal, as I silently try to open my feelings, my senses, my entire being, all that dwells within me, to the power of Love and Truth. When I pray for a person, I try to simply feel their presence and their circumstances within my body. I tend to experience gratitude physically as prayer. I hold feelings of distress in my body as prayer. Whatever the prayer, it connects me with God's creative energy and transmits God's wisdom and healing power.

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Listening Hearts Ministries provides a range of programs, publications, and services that teach people the practice of spiritual discernment through prayerful listening in supportive communities.

*“As the waters of the Spirit converge,
they turn into springs that release the
life-giving power of God into the world...”*
— *Keeping in Tune with God, p. 36.*

Often this prayer lies dormant as I become engrossed in the activity of daily life. Even so, it emerges at random intervals throughout the day and night. It can surface when I am walking, driving, sitting in a waiting room, standing in a line at the post office, eating, relaxing in an easy chair, or sleeping.

For me, this kind of prayer has required deliberate cultivation. In many circumstances it totally disappears, especially when I get very task oriented. Even so, it has borne unanticipated fruits in abundance and many blessings.