



PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD

**ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION
&
APPLICATION
PROCESS**

Paying Attention to God

Application Process

We ask you to write to us using the outline at the end of this document. Send your application to:

Gareth Bell, at Ballyards Castle
123 Keady Road, Armagh, BT60 3AD
or email: school@ballyards.org

On receipt of your information, we will be in touch about arranging a mutually convenient time for a conversation with Gareth Bell and Breige O'Hare at Ballyards Castle. The purpose of such is to help discern if this is a good fit for your journey at this particular time. Conversations will take place week commencing **10th September 2018**.

The closing date for the second round of applications is **Friday 4th September 2018**.

Fees for the year: £325, payable in instalments.
The following may help you decide if the course is of interest to you.

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Paying Attention to God

Introduction

I have plans for you, God says to Jeremiah. Look for me with all your heart, he reassures him. You will find me. This conversation between Jeremiah and God is familiar to us, so familiar that we might miss the significance - the magnitude - of what God is offering. Too often, we focus on the first part of this conversation, the piece that refers to the God's plans and our listening to God centres on picking up 'the plan'. We listen for instructions, for some sign to reveal God's opinion of our actions or some clue as to what God might want us to do next. We do so at the expense of the main purpose of God's communication with us, highlighted in the second part of the conversation with Jeremiah. God wants to be found, to be known: God is offering relationship, intimate relationship.

The primary focus of this year together is our shared desire to deepen and grow in relationship with God, so that we might know God better, recognise the longings of his heart and pay attention to that heart's unforced rhythms pulsing in our lives. In an approach rooted in Ignatian spirituality, drawing on the wisdom of Christian tradition and psychology, we pay attention to God, not only in prayer and reflection on scripture and but also in our own stories and in the ordinary events of our daily lives.

In paying attention to God over the coming year, we are not aiming to listen out for something new, nor are we going to apply a technique to switch on some 'spiritual sound system'. We rely on the fact that God's communication is always happening in us: God's voice is already familiar to us. We are going to pay attention so that we might notice what we are already hearing, the voice of the Shepherd God. We will do so trusting that he speaks into every aspect of life, with all its ups and downs.

A major part of the year is the recognition of the need to reclaim the lost art of paying attention to the simplest and most basic details of this life and to the relationships and conversations we have with others. As the year continues, we become more aware of our own inner world of thoughts and feelings, desires and fears, those things that lead us to God and the things that seem to distract or divert us. We notice what gives life and what drains us.

We become more aware of the blocks to our own listening and our blind spots and hopefully become less judgemental of others as a result. We learn to listen differently, to be present in this moment, present to ourselves, to others and to God, without agenda or expectation, relieved of the need to fix, sort or make better, more accepting of and attentive to what is...now.

What might you expect over the eight Saturdays?

- Each day begins and ends gently with scripture-based prayer
- We use adult learning methods - a mixture of short inputs, experience, conversation and prayer/reflection. We are aiming for a group of 12-15 people, a diverse blend of Christians - Catholic and Protestant - representing the full range of Christian denominations. We will spend a good deal of time on the first Saturday forming the group as a safe place for people to participate freely - which means feeling free to speak and free to be quiet. It is important for some people to get space to think; others need a chance to talk things out. We try to accommodate different preferences.
- The general themes for the Saturdays are given on page 4. The learning experiences will be shaped by contributions of group members. Each day, there will be opportunities for engaging with the input through prayer, reflection and discussion/activity. Each afternoon, there will be a blend of opportunities for personal reflection, one-to-one conversations and group discussion of what we are learning through listening. Group members will already be experienced listeners in ministry/work/home settings. We hope that these learning experiences will enhance self-awareness and sensitivity to God present and active in that listening.
- You will be asked to keep a course journal as a vital tool in the process of your own learning. We realise this might be new to some people so we ease you into it gradually. We review your journal after Saturday 3 and Saturday 6 and provide some feedback to help you to get the most out of the process.
- Background reading is not compulsory in this course but we do recommend two books in particular: *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* by Adam S McHugh and *God's Voice Within* by Mark E Thibodeaux SJ. You will be given copies of chapters/useful articles along the way. We choose authors for their capacity to write in plain English and to connect their awareness of God with the ups and downs of daily life.
- Our hope for the year is that you enjoy the learning experience. So while there are serious subjects, sensitively handled, we deliver the days with a light touch and pepper them at appropriate moments with humour. God has a sense of humour. It would serve us well at times to remember this.

Overview of the eight Saturdays

You will notice below that we spend the first half of the year encouraging you to listen to yourself. This might seem counterintuitive if your interest in the year is on how to pay attention to God and others. Not so. Often our listening is quietly and powerfully influenced by our unrecognised agendas and the emotions, expectations and assumptions we bring into conversations/prayer with us. The more awareness we have of these important undercurrents, the more freedom we have to be truly present and available to God, self and others.

Date	Title	Focus of Input and Reflection	Focus of practice: paying attention to...
6 October	My presence will go with you	The Heart of the Covenant: God's story meets your story	Being present: the power of stance and silence
3 November	Who do you say that I am?	Who God is in scripture. Who God is for you.	Self-awareness: your body alive in the present movement
1 December	It's me. Don't be afraid.	Being yourself with God.	Being yourself: noticing and naming emotions
2 February	Come down Zacchaeus	Becoming Beloved Journeys of growth	Personality and growth
2 March	Streams of Living Water	Our inner compass: clues to God's longing in our desires	'highs and lows' and 'pushes and pulls' in conversation
6 April	Let me see again	Voices that build you up and beat you down. An intro to consolation and desolation	Keeping company with pain and distress
4 May	Remain in me	Developing a discerning heart	Setting aside your own agenda, listening with your whole heart.
June 1	And their eyes were opened	God's story meets your story	A way of listening

Why this year might appeal to you...

- Your work requires you to listen to others, either in small groups or in a one-to-one context. You have basic listening skills but want to become a more sensitive listening presence.
- You are the person others go to if they need to talk. You want to be able to listen in a way that is helpful and life-giving for you as well as for those who speak with you.
- You are working in ministry. People come to you for spiritual guidance and comfort. You have that five minute conversation with a parishioner outside the church or sitting at a bedside not sure what to do. You want to be a better listening presence, more aware of God with you in the moment.
- You are making work/family decisions and want to develop ways of paying attention to God in the process
- You are a good listener, attentive to the needs of others. You suspect that it is time for you to know a God who is listening to you, who is paying attention to you and who cares about your needs also.
- You have experienced the benefits of spiritual direction and want to deepen your own capacity to listen to others and to yourself.
- You may be feeling the stirrings of a call to this ministry of spiritual direction for yourself and want to inform and give space and time to reflecting on God's plan stirring in you.

Please note: This programme is a necessary entrance for the STEPS ...in Spiritual Direction programme presented by Edgehill Theological College, Belfast.

Opportunities for one-to-one spiritual direction can be made available in the weeks between each Saturday, for those who want to try it. Again, this experience is essential for those considering spiritual direction as a particular call.

Profile of facilitators

BREIGE O'HARE (BSc, BAgr MA) has nearly 20years experience as a spiritual director. She is now based in well.com, a Christian Centre for Psychological and Spiritual wellbeing. Trained by the Jesuits in Manresa House, Dublin, she has an MA in Pastoral theology and a Certificate in Counselling from QUB. She works with lay and ordained people, offering one-to-one sessions, as well as reflective prayer and learning experiences and retreats for groups and congregations.

Breige is author of two books, *The Nearness of God: Rediscovering God's Love and Longing* (Shanway Press 2011) and *Whole Parish Catechesis: Faith development for the Faint Hearted* (Columba Press, 2005). Her research into growth in relationship with God is used internationally in the training of spiritual directors. She has worked extensively in training and formation in many settings, most recently in the 2014/16 STEPS...in spiritual direction, based in Edgehill Theological College.

GARETH BELL is a graduate of the Steps in Spritual Direction Programme and the internationally acclaimed Arrow Leadership Programme. After serving with Precept Ministries International (Ireland) for over a decade in the roles of Youth and National Director he recently took up role as Spiritual Director at Ballyards Castle, Armagh. In this role he oversees the development of the Mission & Training school as well as retreat and renewal ministry within the Castle, which is an extension of Drop Inn Ministries.

Acknowledgement of support:

This interdenominational work has been well received and supported across the denominations. Particular thanks are due to Revd Dr.Ruth Paterson, Dom Mark Ephrem Nolan, OSB, and Rev. Diane Clutterbuck for their wise and reflective contributions to conversations in the planning stages and their ongoing support for this initiative.

Application for year beginning Saturday 6 October, 2018

To be returned to
Mr Gareth Bell,
123 Keady Road, Armagh, BT60 3AD by the application
DEADLINE: Friday 4th September, 2018

Name
Address
Tel (Landline)
Tel (Mobile)
Email
Current / Recent Occupation
Recent experiences of being a listener:

Tell us why you want to join us on this journey?

Signed

Date