

Listening with Your Heart

Disciples Women Installation Service

By: Doral Main

Purpose:

To celebrate and remember our past and listen for God's direction as He leads us into the future.

This program is an adaptation of an installation service written by the late Rev. Doris McCullough in 1998. It is with pride and honor that I have the privilege of adapting this service.

Scripture: Micah 6:8; Mark 12:28-31

Suggestions for the Leader:

1. Worship is incorporated into this program and it is suggested that the worship director and music leader be included in the planning of the service.
2. Make this service a celebration of the past year's accomplishments, recognizing those who have given leadership and a new challenge to the incoming board.
3. For the worship center, cover a table with a white cloth. On it, set numerous white candles of different sizes i.e., pillar, tapers, etc... In the center place several red hearts of different sizes. You will also need a bell with a sweet tone, loud enough to be heard throughout the room.
4. Listening with Your Heart Awards – on the last page of this program you will find certificates of appreciation that may be duplicated to present to those you are honoring. They can be filled out ahead or they can be completed on the spot.

Program:

Sisters in Christ, it is time to take stock, to remember, to evaluate and to celebrate – to offer to God the past year with its successes and its failures, its strengths and its weaknesses, its sorrows and its joys. And then it is time to begin anew. No matter what season of the year, our beginnings are interwoven with our endings and in every ending is the seed of a new beginning.

The life of the CWF fits into this prescribed pattern too. Whatever our circumstances we have much to celebrate, for God is a loving and forgiving God who is always with us. In searching for God's direction we know that listening with our hearts is something more – maybe a lot more!

The hearts on the worship center are to help us focus on the theme "Common Roots". The lighted candles remind us that all light, all understanding is from God. The bell is for listening and remembering that the Holy Spirit surrounds us. *(Ring the bell)*

Invocation

O God of justice, love, mercy and direction, thank you for your plan of endings and beginnings. Be with us in our gathering as we celebrate the past year and install our leaders for the exciting year to come. Amen *(Ring the bell)*

A Time of Remembering

Begin this section with brief annual reports from various chairpersons to refresh the group's memory of what you have accomplished. This is the time to remember goals that were or were not met for budget, membership, service projects, etc. Be sure to include significant worships and study's as well as fun and fellowship activities.

A Celebration of Persons

Remember and offer thanks to persons who have given service to Disciples Women, the church, and the community during the past year. Begin with the Disciples Women officers. Call them by name and give each one a "Listening With Your Heart Award". (See "Suggestions for the Leader")

After the past year's officers have been appropriately recognized and thanked, you may want to recognize others, for example, persons who have chaired special events, your pastor(s), the church secretary, the choir director.

Invite the group to name others who have provided leadership and inspiration throughout the year. Name each person and tell what he or she did. Be generous with your recognitions. We all work better with thanks and appreciation. Recognize those present with a personal word of thanks and give each a "Listening with Your Heart Award."

Close this time with a personal prayer of thanksgiving and praise for the persons who have shared their talents in order to help build God's realm on earth. (Ring the bell)

The Service of Installation

Hymn *"In Christ There Is No East or West"* (Chalice Hymnal, # 687)

Scripture Readings: Micah 6:8 and Mark 12:28-31

Meditation

Listen with your heart for God's Direction! I love it! Listen with your heart! Such a warm evocative image. I am reminded of Valentine's Day with declarations of love and constancy. It's full of joy and romance and happiness. It is hearts and flowers, champagne and chocolate. It is teddy bears and cuddly babies and Grandma's cozy kitchen. It's full of promise and possibility. That's my first response and, indeed, it is all of these good things.

But right away we suspect that listening with the heart for God's direction is something more—maybe a lot more! For when our hearts get involved, so do our emotions, and living becomes a whole new ball game. Feelings run the gamut from happiness and great joy to anger and deep sorrow. Our feelings can take us from the mountaintops of delight to the depths of despair. When we listen with our hearts, we become vulnerable to frustration, rejection, and disappointment. Sometimes it's going to hurt—sometimes it's going to hurt a lot—and often that pain may

be almost unbearable. We know this from our experiences with children. When they suffer, whether physically or emotionally, so do we.

The two scripture passages we read bring even more light to what it means to listen with the heart. Both are probably familiar to you and may seem immensely different on first reading, but they have a strong kinship. They are commands or requirements from God. In Mark we are “commanded” to love God, neighbor and ourselves. In Micah we are “required” to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. I believe we will discover that when we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, we will find his direction to do justice and mercy as he asks.

I invite you now to sit in silence for a few minutes and ponder what it means to you to listen with your heart. *(After a few minutes-whatever seems right to you-ring the bell to end the silence. If you have time, invite them to discuss their ponderings with a neighbor for about five minutes.)*

Ask three people to read the following parts:

Leader: Three friends were discussing what it means to listen with their hearts for God’s direction. Here is how they put it:

Mary: When I was very young, a beautiful and adored *eighteen*-year-old aunt was diagnosed with tuberculosis. I was puzzled and shocked. I wasn’t allowed in her room, but I could sit in the doorway and talk with her and read my little books to her. I remember wishing there was something I could do and praying for a miracle of fantastic proportions to make her well again. I wanted to be her. It was hard to understand when she died at age 22 and it hurt, for I had listened with my heart. Later, when my children were small, sometimes their hurts and joys were so real to me that I could feel them in my own body and mind. When I became a teacher and needed to understand the so-called incorrigible behavior of a child, listening with my heart opened up new

avenues to an understanding that we both needed desperately. Now that I am an older adult, a senior citizen, eccentric behaviors of elderly persons often become clearer and more acceptable to me when I listen with my heart. *(Ring the bell)*

Adelaide: When I listen with my heart, all that separates me from others—status, race, gender, economics—recedes into the distance. It allows me to cast aside my critical judgments, meet others where they are, and encounter them as they are, without prejudice. I begin to find the sacred, the divine, a spark or glimpse of the hold in that other. I think that’s what Martin Buber meant when he wrote of the “I” and “Thou” in human encounters. *(Ring the bell)*

Diana: When I listen with my heart for direction, the first thing I notice is that I begin to care, and when I care I have to get involved. I can’t just sit on the sidelines and cry, “Lord, Lord!” I have to do something. Sometimes it’s risky and it’s not always popular or successful when you try to do justice. Yet, in order to be faithful I believe I have to do what I can. When you’re choosing action, it’s really important to be loving and spend time in prayer in order to stay on God’s track.

I try to keep my actions for justice balanced between personal involvement with people and more impersonal, but no less important, things like writing letters to TV stations, the newspaper, members of the city council, and legislators. I shall never forget Hubert Humphrey saying that the true moral test of government is not how it treats those in the prime of life, but how it treats those in the dawn of life—our children, how it treats those in the twilight of life—our elderly, and how it treats those in the shadows of life—our poor and dispossessed. “Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.” I believe that’s what it means to live a spiritual life—to follow God’s direction by listening with my heart. *(Ring the bell)*

Leader: So, we have seen vulnerability, understanding, forgiveness, compassion, love, pain, sacrifice, solidarity, action, challenge, and God-with-us. It's true that as we listen and obey, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do and to be more than we ever dreamed possible. The basic question is not how to do things right but how to do the right thing, for faithful action rooted in faithful discernment will help us find God's direction by "listening to our hearts".
(Ring the bell)

The Installation of Officers

Will the officers for the coming year please come forward as I call your name.
(Read names and office each will hold.)

You have been chosen because of your deep faith and devoted service to God. You have shown your ability and your commitment to the work of the Disciples Women. You have been elected to specific offices and responsibilities. Serving as a Disciples Women's leader is an opportunity to hear the concerns of people and to respond to them under the direction of God. Responding to needs with justice, action, and mercy is a way of sharing your faith.

In preparation for your installation, let us hear again the words recorded in Mark 12:30-31: "The Lord our God is the only Lord; Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself". And the words recorded in Micah 6:8; "And what is it that the Lord asks of you? Only to act justly, to love loyalty, to walk humbly before your God."

That is your charge. Do you accept the responsibilities to which you have been called? If so, answer, "With God's direction, we will."

(Turn now to the membership and ask them to stand)

You have heard these whom you have elected, affirm their willingness to follow God's direction and serve. What happens in the New Year is not up to them alone,

but it is the shared responsibility of the whole membership. Are you willing to be full partners in this journey? If so answer, "With God's direction, we will."

Let us pray the CWF Prayer in unison.

Unto you, O God, we give our thanks
And lift our hearts in prayer.
May your presence be with us and your love
Surround us as we work together in the
Christian Women's Fellowship.
Open our eyes to the needs of the world and
Fill our hearts with concern for all people.
Guide us that we may truly serve you
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Congratulations on your installation and God bless you.

(Ask everyone to be seated and ring the bell)

Let us now receive the offering ("Sweet, Sweet Spirit" can be sung or played) Chalice Hymnal #261

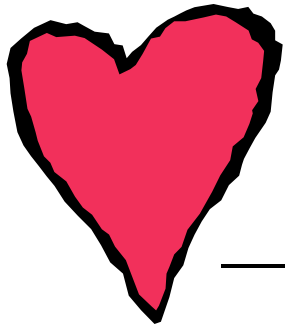
Offering Prayer

O God, bless this offering that it may help us to do even the very small things or just the one small thing that is the part you have given us in fulfilling your purpose and direction. Amen

CWF Benediction *(Stand, join hands, and say the CWF Benediction in unison)*

God, be merciful unto us and bless us, that your way be known upon the earth, your saving health among all nations, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. *(Ring the bell)*

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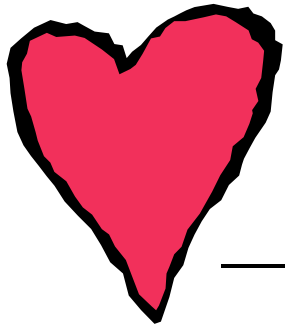
Listening With Your Heart Award

This certificate is presented to:

In grateful appreciation for:

Dated this: _____ day of _____ 20_____

Presented by: _____



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In grateful appreciation for:

Dated this: _____ day of _____ 20_____

Presented by: _____