

ENERGIZE YOUR CHURCH THROUGH LISTENING:

***Boost Engagement,
Strengthen Relationships,
Envision Possibilities!***

Joy Skjegstad & Heidi Unruh

Please introduce yourself!

We invite you to share your name, church and location in the chat box.



Introducing ... Joy Skjegstad

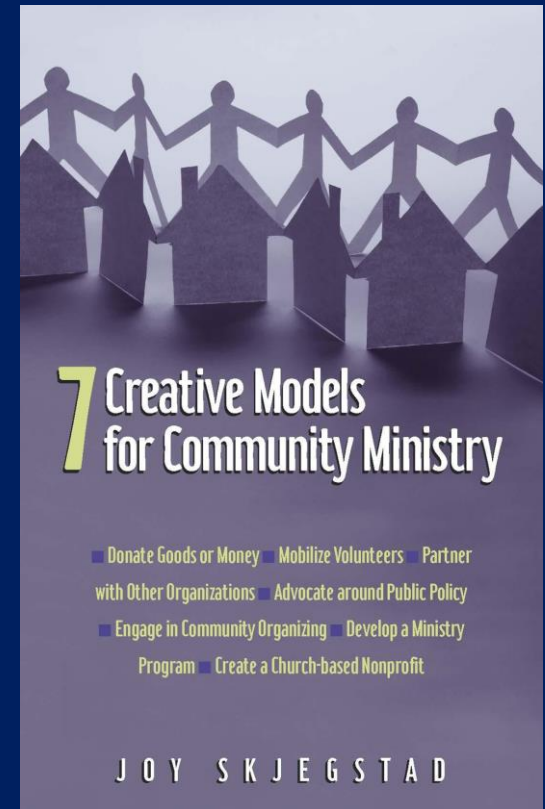
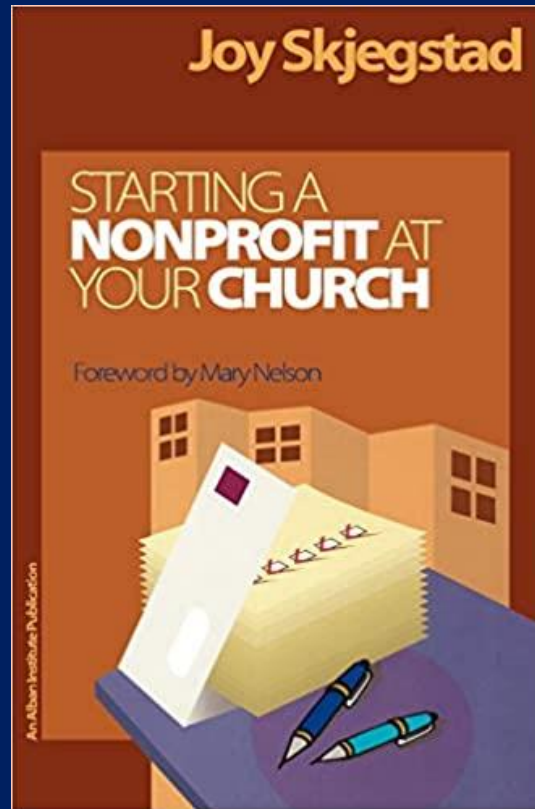
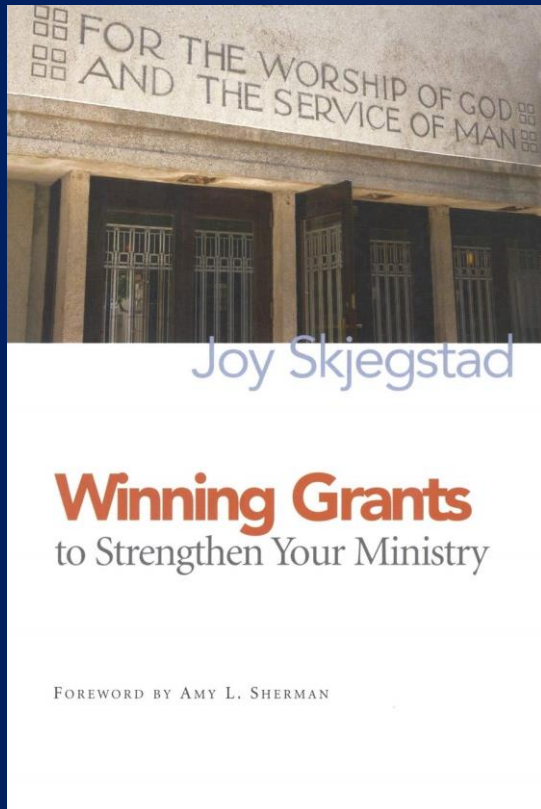
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Joy Skjegstad is a national speaker, author and consultant on nonprofit management and ministry development. She has more than 30 years of experience starting and growing nonprofit organizations, with a special focus on faith-based groups, and youth and community development.

Books by Joy Skjegstad

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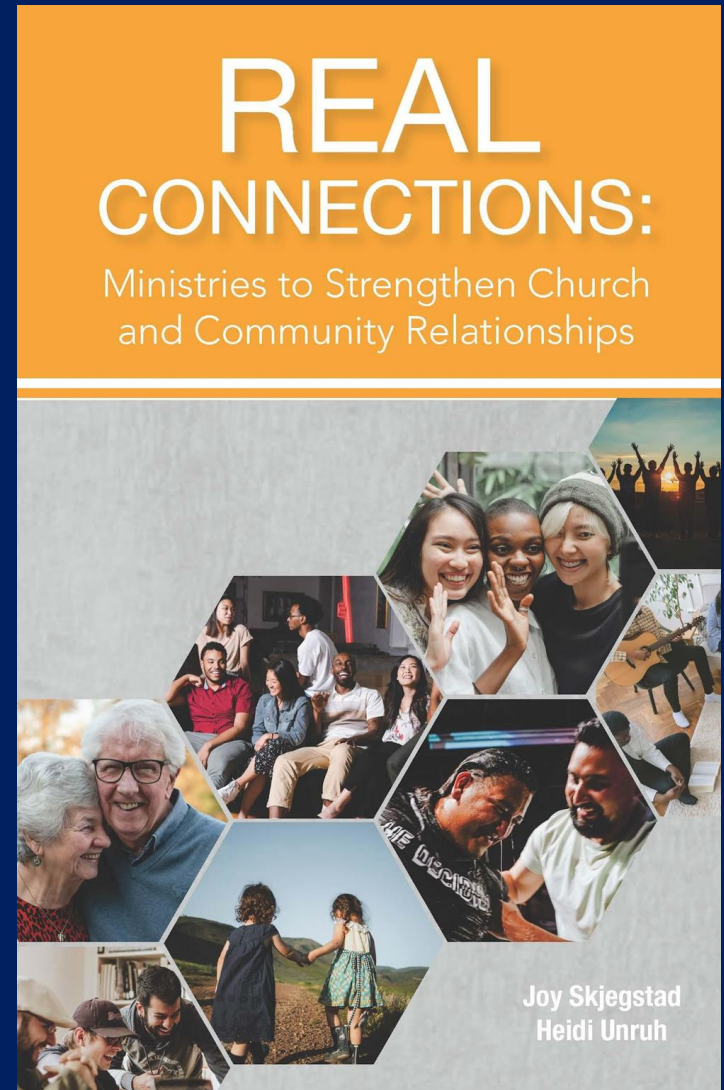
Our New Book!

Order from
[Judson Press](#)

REAL CONNECTIONS: Ministries to Strengthen Church and Community Relationships

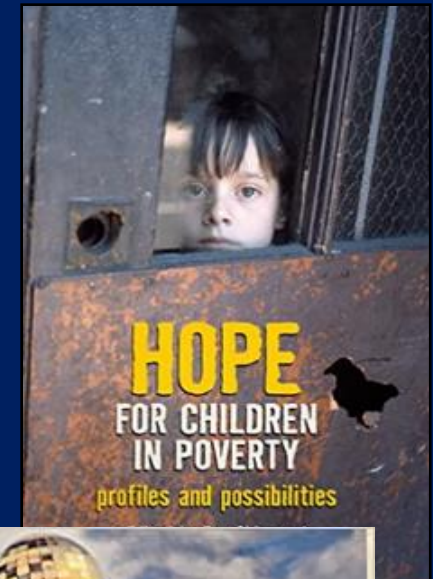
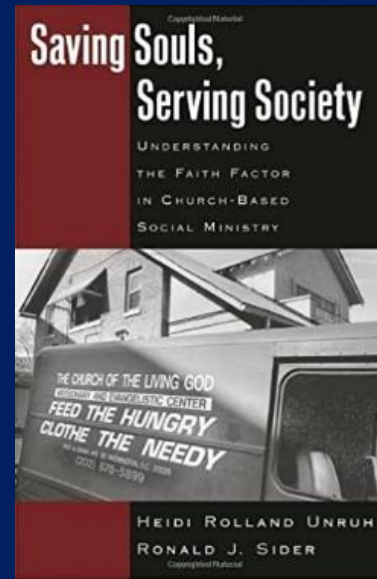
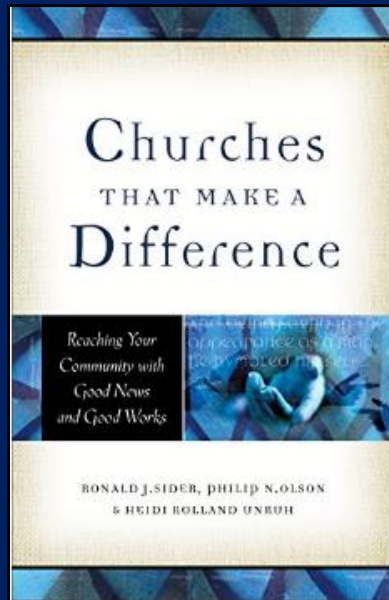
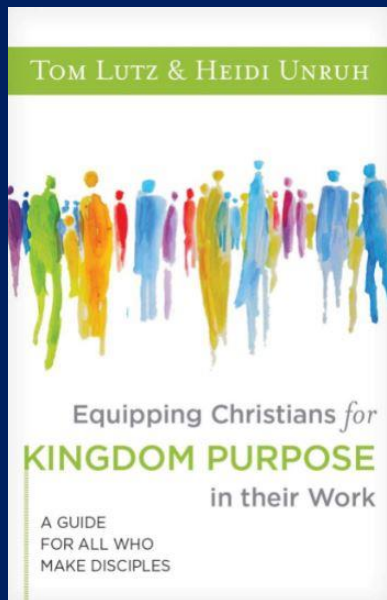
Plus FREE download –

[“Guide to a Congregational Listening Process”](#)



Introducing ... Heidi Unruh

*Coming alongside leaders and their good ideas,
so good works can shine! (Eph. 2:10)*



**Congregations &
Community Outreach Project**
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**SHINE
WRITING SERVICES**

**Author coaching
Developmental editing
Book project planning**

Roadmap for our time together

- What is “intentional listening” and how can it make a difference for a church?
- How to listen? 6 types of listening activities
- What to ask? Key listening goals and sample questions
- How to set up a listening team
- How to follow up on a time of listening
- Tips and troubleshooting for fruitful listening

The struggle is real

What we are hearing from many churches:

- The church feels “stuck,” or out of energy
- Things that used to work aren’t working
- Hard to get people engaged in supporting programs or planning new ministries



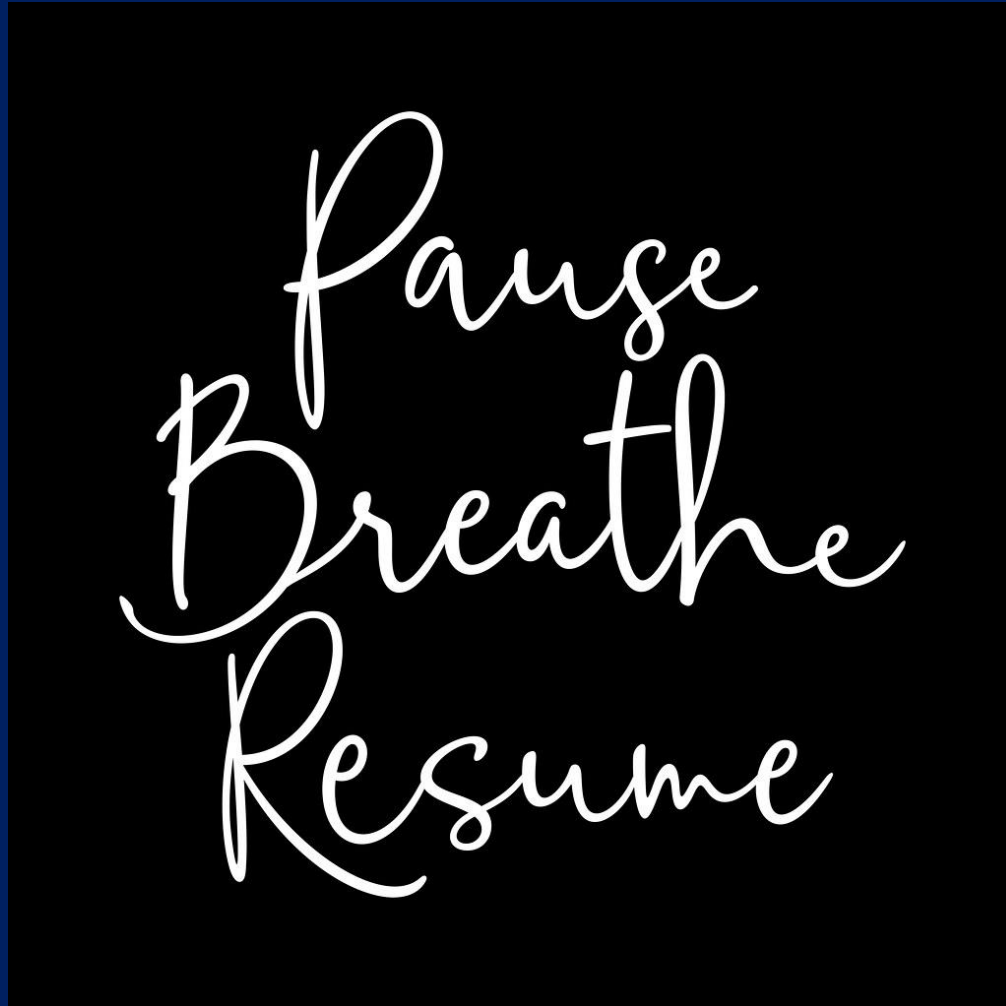
The struggle is real

Many church members are ...

- Feeling disconnected – some haven't come back
- Struggling but don't let others know
- Tired of dealing with change & crisis
- Frustrated with ongoing divisions



These are signs to consider a **pause for intentional, prayerful listening!**



How does listening make a difference?

Listening can re-energize ...

Ownership *that inspires involvement*

Connection *with one another
(and the community)*

Discovery *of gifts and needs*

Vision *for new possibilities*



We want to hear from you!

**What is a challenge you face
at your church right now?**

**What sparks your interest in energizing
the church through listening?**

Please share in the chat box

Intentional listening means ...

LEADING ACTIVITIES to hear from people
in the congregation



Intentional listening means ...

CREATING SPACE to get people talking to one another



Intentional listening means ...

TRACKING what is shared to discern themes and gain new insights



Intentional listening means ...

HAVING A MINDSET that listening is
“doing something”



Jesus listened

“Who do you say I am?” (Matt. 16:13-17)

“What do you want me to do for you?”
(Matt. 20:29-34)

“What were you arguing about on the
road?” (Mark 9:33)

“Why are you troubled?” (Luke 24:36-40)

Is this a good time to take a “pause for listening”?

- Give your blessing to focus on listening
- Scale back or take a short break from current programming
- Plan times and a safe environment for sharing



Introduction to listening activities

1. Partner interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Group dialogue
4. Table talk / World Café
5. Panel discussions / story sessions
6. Creative input

1. Partner interviews

Provide questions and put people in pairs for short listening sessions. *Good for encouraging new, deeper or intergenerational connections.*



2. Focus group

Select 6-8 people (either a specific demographic or cross-section) to discuss a set of questions.
Good for targeted input on a specific issue / idea.



3. Group dialogue

Discuss questions in an existing group setting (e.g. Sunday school class or choir). *Good for widely getting input or checking in.*



4. Table talk / World Café

Break into groups of 3-5 to discuss a question, then shuffle groups and ask a new question.

Good for getting diverse input and connecting.



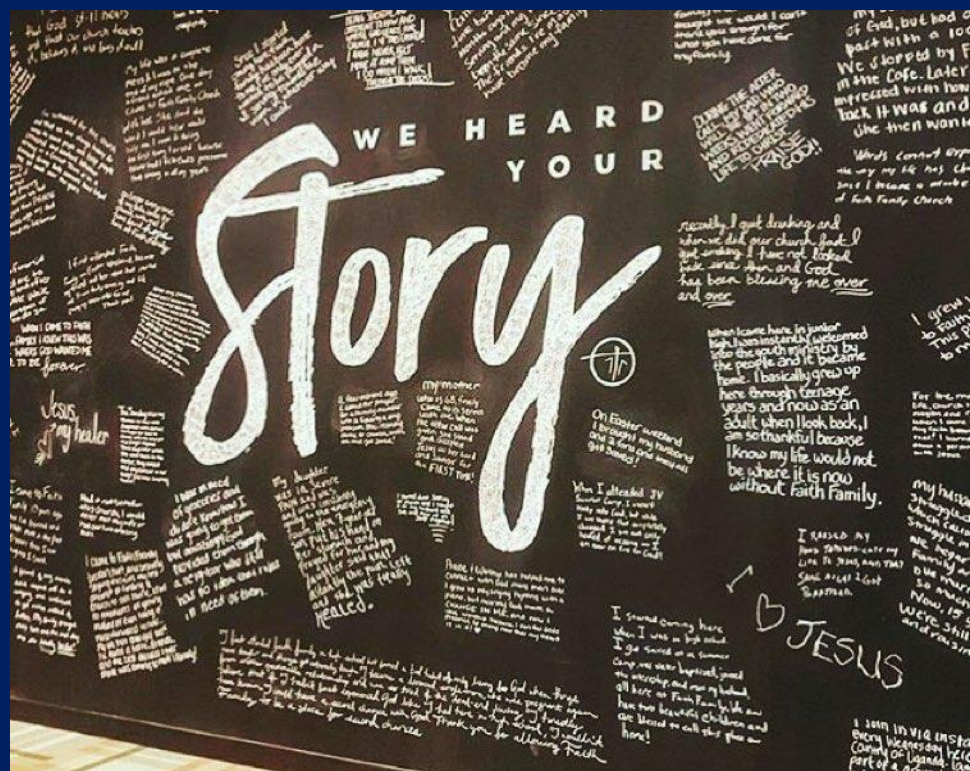
5. Panel discussion / story session

Conversational style interview with 1-4 people, with others listening. *Good for sharing personal stories or a curated set of perspectives.*



6. Creative input

Invite input via creative media--art installations, video booths, journals, online platforms, etc.
Good for encouraging vision, breaking out of ruts



We want to hear from you!

**Have you used any of these
listening activities in the past?**

**Which of these are you most
interested to try?**

Please share in the chat box

Encourage broad participation

- Beyond the core group and the squeaky wheels
- Seek representation from various “types”
- Plan a variety of times and formats



Pay special attention to ...

Invite perspectives from:

- Both newer and long-time attendees
- Youth / young adults
- Occasional or home-bound attendees
- Those most affected by changes or new plans



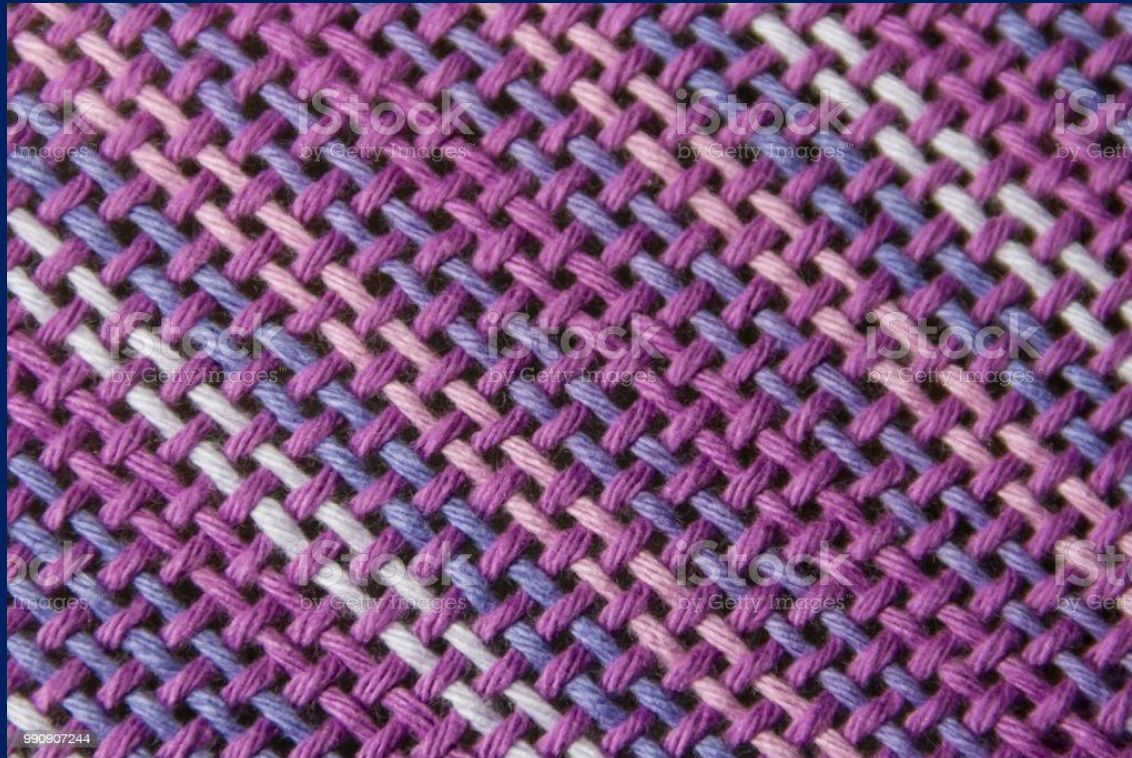
Listening to the community

Can open up listening activities to include people in the community. Listening is a powerful ministry as well as a great way to build connections!



Encourage a “culture of listening”

Weave in lots of opportunities for people in the congregation to share with one another!



**What do you hope to
learn by listening?**

What questions will you ask?



Sample listening goals and questions

Personal check-in

- *How have you and your family been doing?*
- *How have you been seeing God at work?*
- *Share about something or someone you are praying for.*

Sample listening goals and questions

Building connections

- *What are meaningful ways that people in the congregation have connected with you?*
- *What ideas do you have for how we can strengthen our relationships as a congregation?*
- *Share a story about meeting someone new or getting to know someone deeper in the church.*

Sample listening goals and questions

Ministries / passions

- *What ideas do you have for engaging young adults?*
- *What concerns or topics would you like to see our church address?*
- *What are new ways our church could connect with the community?*

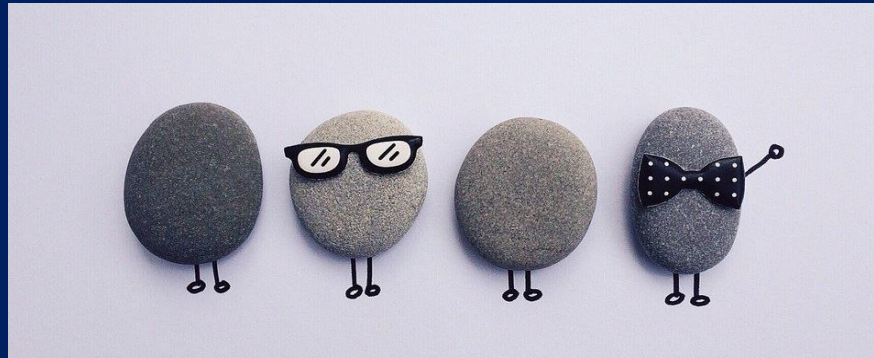
Sample listening goals and questions

Feedback / perspectives

- *What are your ideas for how we might improve hybrid services?*
- *Share about the times when you are most energized in your involvement with the church.*
- *What is your prayer for our congregation?*

Getting started

Helpful to set up a **Listening Team** of 4-6 people



Look for people with gifts of: *hospitality, organizing, inviting, facilitation, note-taking, discernment, creatives ... and listening!*

Make a plan

What's your goal for a listening project?

Who will be involved?

What listening activities will you try?

How long will the project last?



After a time of listening

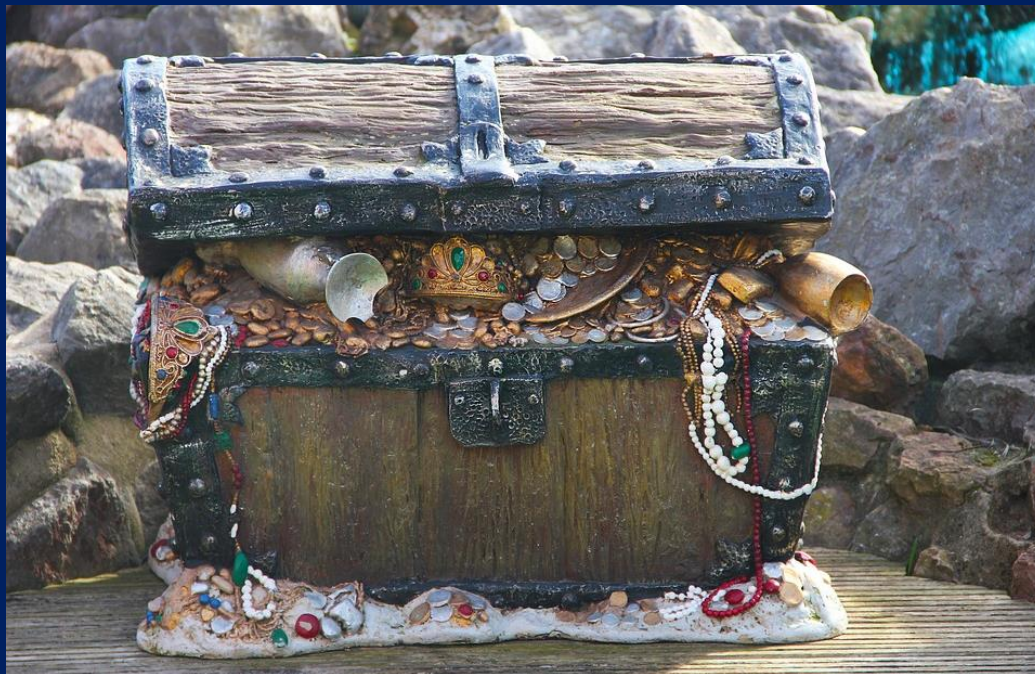
Debrief – meet to compare notes and prayerfully reflect on the experience



After a time of listening

Assess recurring themes, important insights, great ideas, discoveries about gifts and needs

Share these nuggets with the congregation!



Follow up on discoveries

Act on what you learn through listening:

- New ministry ideas
- What members care about and are gifted to do
- Conflicts, issues or needs to address
- Ways to improve church life and strengthen connections



Tips for fruitful listening

- Listening and prayer go hand in hand
- Incorporate food and fun!
- Track all information gathered
- Follow-up on needs and ideas
- Self-care for listening team

Tips for fruitful listening

Over-communicate throughout the process

COMMUNICATE
COMMUNICATE
COMMUNICATE

Troubleshooting

How to handle ...

- Monopolizers
- Shockers
- Debaters
- Critics
- Trauma



If this sounds new and scary ...

Consider starting with:

- Listening team - practice on yourselves!
- Existing groups with a good bond
- Embedding listening in a fun activity
- Get-to-know-you and “safe” topics

We'd like to hear from you!

What most energizes you about listening in your congregation?

What might be a good way to start?

Share one idea in the chat box!

Joy & Heidi

Connect Church and Community

Services we offer include:

- **Training** via webinars and workshops
- **Consulting** on strategic plans for community ministry
- **Coaching** that walks with leaders to implement ministry plans and get “unstuck”
- Facilitating an **asset discovery** process
- Guiding **listening activities** in the church and community
- Hosting **conversations** to help explore new directions

Training to Strengthen Connections

Sample training topics:

- Everyone can make a friend at church
- Getting to know your neighbors
- Building relationships in a hybrid world
- Strong community partnerships
- Connecting with people who are hidden & hurting
- Building bridges through difficult conversations
- Cultivating community with young adults
- How to talk to strangers

Our process is customized and flexible.
We work with individual churches, leadership bodies,
or a group of churches learning together.

*How can we support your ministry
in these difficult times?*

Your questions and comments for Joy & Heidi!

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