

“Presence and Listening 2”
Dianne M. Daniels; UUCN, October 19, 2025

Sermon: “Presence and Listening 2” by Dianne M. Daniels

Good morning, beloveds. It is a joy to be with you again in this sacred space - to feel your energy, to see your faces, to be part of this living, breathing community.

A few weeks ago, we explored the meaning of Presence and Listening. We talked about slowing down, grounding ourselves, and practicing sacred attention—being fully here, body and soul. Today, we continue that conversation. This time, we go deeper.

Because once we begin to live in presence - once we make room to truly listen - everything changes.

Presence and listening are not just spiritual ideas; they're practices that transform how we move through the world. They remind us of who we are and what we're capable of.

Presence is where transformation begins. Listening is how that transformation takes root and grows.

The Power of Presence

Presence isn't a performance - it's a way of being. It's that inner steadiness that says, I am here, fully, right now.

Presence connects us to our own center and to the sacred energy that lives in every moment. It asks us to show up with our

whole selves - not just our polished parts, but also our questions, our vulnerabilities, our humanity.

You've heard me say before: our presence carries power.

When we walk into a room centered and grounded in love, the energy shifts. People can feel it. When we bring calm to chaos, courage to confusion, or simply stillness to a space full of noise, we're living our faith out loud.

Your presence is your light - a reflection of that divine spark that lives in each of us.

Take a moment and imagine that light within you. It begins deep in your body, maybe at your feet, connected to the earth that holds you steady. It rises slowly - up through your legs, your center, your heart, and into your shoulders and head - filling you with warmth and vitality.

This light isn't loud or showy. It doesn't demand attention. It simply is. A steady, glowing power that reminds you: I am alive. I am whole. I am loved. And I am capable of love.

That's Presence.

And here's the thing - your presence isn't meant only for you. It's a gift you carry into every relationship, every conversation, every encounter.

When we show up fully - even for a few precious minutes - we affirm another person's worth. We say, You matter. You belong. You are seen.

That is Love in action - the heart of our Unitarian Universalist Values.

The Practice of Listening

Now, let's turn to listening - because the two go hand in hand. Presence prepares the soil, listening plants the seeds.

Listening - true listening - is one of the greatest acts of generosity we can offer. It costs us nothing and means everything.

When we listen deeply, without rushing to fix, advise, or compare, we make sacred space for another soul to unfold.

We listen with our eyes, with our bodies, with our hearts. We notice the silences between words, the pauses, the emotions that ripple underneath the surface.

And sometimes, the most compassionate response is simply to stay silent and hold the moment.

Listening, like presence, is rooted in Love. But it's also shaped by Interdependence - the awareness that our well-being is bound up with one another's.

The practice of listening reminds us that every voice carries wisdom, that every story has something to teach.

Our UU Value of Pluralism teaches that truth is not singular - it lives in conversation, in relationship, in the courage to hear perspectives different from our own.

When we listen - not to reply, but to understand - we honor that truth.

But listening is not easy in today's world. We are surrounded by distractions - by endless screens, by noise, by the pressure to react instantly to everything. Technology has given us more ways to speak and fewer ways to be heard.

We scroll and skim, but how often do we stop to really hear the person in front of us?

How often do we ask, "Tell me more," and mean it?

How often do we give the gift of undivided attention - not as a luxury, but as a spiritual act?

When you make eye contact, when you put down your phone, when you turn your whole body toward another person, you're saying, I choose you in this moment.

That is what listening looks like in practice - and it's powerful.

Listening as Relationship

Listening transforms relationships.

The reflection I read this week reminded me of that truth:

"All of the relationships in my life have meaning to me. How I act can influence their course, and I can control my actions. I provide value by listening to others - and this deepens the connection."

Listening isn't just about words - it's about energy. It's how we tell people, you are safe here. You can be yourself here.

When we pay attention to others - truly listen - we strengthen trust. We feel their feelings, hear beyond their words, and tune out distractions so we can focus on one heart at a time.

That's not small work. That's sacred work.
And it requires boundaries, too.

There will be times when we cannot listen to everyone, when we're tired, or our hearts are full, or our energy is low.

In those moments, presence means listening to ourselves.

It's okay to say, "I want to give you my full attention, but I need a moment to rest first." That's self-compassion - and it's also Justice and Equity, applied inward.

We are worthy of the same care and patience we offer to others.

Our UU Value of Generosity reminds us that generosity is not about depletion - it's about flow. We give from a well that we also refill.

So yes, listen to others - but also listen inwardly. Your inner voice, your body, and your spirit have messages too.

When you are rested, grounded, and whole, your listening becomes deeper and more genuine.

Listening as Transformation

Every time we listen - truly listen - we create space for transformation. I've seen it happen in pastoral care visits, in board

meetings, in family conversations. A person walks in with anger or fear or grief, and by the simple grace of being heard, something shifts.

Their shoulders lower. Their breath steadies. Their heart opens just a little more.

That's not magic - that's presence at work.

Listening allows people to hear themselves more clearly. And in that clarity, healing begins.

Listening also changes us.

When we take in another person's truth, when we sit with a story that challenges or stretches us, our hearts expand. We become more compassionate, more resilient, more open.

That is Transformation - another of our UU Shared Values - unfolding right before our eyes.

But let's be honest: *sometimes listening is hard*. Sometimes we hear things that unsettle us or force us to face uncomfortable truths.

It's tempting to interrupt, to defend, to change the subject.

In those moments, try this: pause, breathe, and silently remind yourself, Love is still at the center. When we stay rooted in Love, we can hold discomfort without losing connection.

Love allows us to say, "I don't agree, but I'm still here."

Love says, "Your story matters, even when it's different from mine."

Love says, "I will stay present long enough for understanding to grow."

That is the kind of Love our world is starving for.

From Listening to Action

Presence and listening are not passive. They move us toward action - informed, compassionate, grounded action.

When we listen well, we discern more clearly what needs to be done and how to do it in a way that honors everyone involved. We move from reaction to response - from impulse to intention. And in that shift, we embody Justice.

Because justice is not only about what we stand against - it's also about how we stand with.

It begins in the simple, everyday moments:

When we choose patience instead of irritation.

When we ask questions instead of making assumptions.

When we make room at the table - or build a new table altogether.

Each of those moments says: I see you. I hear you. You belong here.

That's presence in action. That's listening with purpose.

That's how we build communities of equity and compassion - one interaction, one conversation, one heartbeat at a time.

Coming Home to Presence

Let's return to where we started - to presence itself. Presence is not about perfection. It's about awareness. It's about showing up for life - for yourself, for others, for the holy that moves through all things.

It's in the way you hold your morning coffee, the way you listen to a child's story, the way you pause before reacting, the way you breathe in gratitude before sleep.

Presence is what allows us to notice the sacred woven through the ordinary - to see wonder in the everyday. And listening, my friends, is what keeps that wonder alive.

When we listen - truly listen - we participate in something bigger than ourselves. We touch the pulse of humanity. We remember that we are not alone, that our voices and stories matter, that each of us has something to teach and something to learn.

Listening helps us rediscover the divine rhythm that runs through all creation - that unbroken thread of Love connecting one heart to another.

So let's practice. Let's bring presence into our conversations this week. Let's bring listening into our families, our friendships, our workplaces.

Let us be the calm in someone's chaos, the encouragement in someone's doubt, the quiet strength in someone's storm.

Because that is what Love looks like when it's lived out loud.

That is how we embody our faith - through Presence and Listening, through Love and Interdependence, through every small, sacred act of paying attention.

Beloved community, these practices - presence and listening - are not luxuries. They are lifelines.

To be present is to love.

To listen is to serve.

To practice both is to participate in the healing of the world.

May we each leave this place a little more awake, a little more open, a little more ready to listen.

And as we do, may we remember:

Every act of presence, every moment of listening, every word spoken with love - is a thread in the great tapestry of justice, compassion, and transformation that we are weaving together.

So may we keep weaving, keep listening, keep loving - one breath, one moment, one sacred conversation at a time.

Amen, and may it ever be so.

Closing

Beloved community, presence, and listening are not luxuries. They are the very heartbeat of our faith.

To be present is to love. To listen is to serve. To practice both is to embody our UU Values and to offer healing in a world that desperately needs it.

Let us return, then, to the simple gifts of presence and listening. Let us practice them not occasionally but daily. Let us create and strengthen a community where everyone feels seen, heard, and held.

Amen. And may it ever be so.

**Closing Words – May Love Always Be at Your Center as
the Work Continues by Rev. Linda Barnes, Rev.
Michelle Collins, Rev. Dianne M. Daniels**

May love always be at your center...

May you embrace your transformation with compassion.

May courage be yours as you answer your heart's calling.

May beauty and wonder be yours even when the going gets
rough.

And may love always be at your center, as the work
continues...

This chalice flame ends for this service, but our work
continues.

May our hearts remain open as our practice of compassion,
our presence, and our ability to listen,

Grows stronger with each passing day.

May it ever be so.

Amen. Ashe. Blessed Be. Have a beautiful week ahead.