Chairman

This year has been marked by challenges and changes for The Listening Place. In a world which is increasingly marked by entrenched rhetoric and a deafness to opposition, a society where the poorest and most vulnerable are often directed and denied, a space where people can simply speak and be heard is a precious gift.

It has been gratifying to see a marked increase in people referred to The Listening Place by G.P.s. It shows a growing confidence in what we are doing but it has caused some strain on our resources. So we continue to need to recruit new listeners and will need to explore new possibilities if we are to serve all who need to be heard. Nonetheless there are times when Listeners wait patiently but have no takers. Such is the nature of ministry, waiting for the karios moment, the moment which is right for God, not necessarily for us. Such patient waiting is as much part of our gift as the listening.

There have been changes in the Acorn training programme and unfortunately the new courses do not offer the practice that we require before accepting listeners into our team. This too has presented us with a challenge and we are exploring how we might continue to train with as much practice as possible.

These reports demonstrate the vigorous life of The Listening Place. Our thanks are due to Sue Robbins and the other members of the executive, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that this gift is available to all who need it.

Of course, our greatest thanks needs to go to all the listeners and supporters without whom God’s care in this community would not be manifested. Thank you for your commitment and patience.

David Hookins
Dear Friends,

It is a year ago in October that we enjoyed Rev Jo Naish’s talk about the Importance of Listening – and listening well. Recently some of you may have heard the ‘Listening Project’ on the radio and may have been captivated by what you ‘listened’ to. We at the Listening Place have the privilege of allowing clients time to ‘off load’. One client ‘ring fenced’ the time she came for appointments as ‘her’ time, ie. quality time for her.

Imagine this: you are propped up against a wall, one hand holding a sandwich, one hand holding a phone. One ear on a friend updating us on their day, one on the football scores. Sound familiar?

We are ‘hearing’ but not always listening – and listening can be the simplest way to relieve the burdens of others. Try and make a point of giving someone the profound gift of your availability. Listening is not a soft option – it is a gift to be offered with compassion, humility, integrity and authenticity. Good listening has the potential to transform communication within families, schools, churches, workplaces and communities. Listening helps people feel valued and can help people feel they are not alone.

The Listening Place has seen a fairly steady growth in the call on our service; however, this year may have seen a significant change. The data we collect is still being analysed but, so far, 2017 has seen TLP at Salisbury Methodist Church (SMc) busier than ever before, particularly in the number of repeat sessions for clients (see graphs below that compare 2015-6 and 2016-7).
There are also indications of a greater variety of clients. All have differing needs, many need multiple sessions (as indicated by the increase in repeats) and all need the assurance of being 'listened to' from the first moments of contact.
Procedures and processes are subject to ongoing appraisal but these changing demands have brought the appraisals more sharply into focus and the new Handbook was completed in January 2017 (including Risk Assessment, Lone Working and Safeguarding). We have also engaged with SMc over the need for some IT support and over issues with the telephone system. As always SMc has been very supportive and the recent provision of an iPad will greatly enhance communication within the team and support more complete capture of the data that shows how our service is being used.

Our first point of contact with clients is often by telephone and sometimes we have struggled to give them the privacy and attention they require within the limited capability of our current landline. Most morning sessions are now busy and it is not good (and can be awkward and embarrassing) for our Listeners to be forced to ask potential clients to keep repeating themselves. The content of these phone calls may be deeply personal and confidentiality is vital. Over the last few months a number of instances have shown the need to review the technology we use – and that review is currently in process.

In the meantime, sessions at Bemerton St Michael 'tick' along and, while some extra Listeners on the Bemerton rota would be welcome, we are concentrating our efforts in coping with demand at SMc.

On the people front, two Listeners have 'retired' but two new Listeners joined the rota and so we continue to keep our head above the water. However, we do need to boost our Listener cadre to cope with increased demand and general rota pressures like sickness and holiday. We have also gained two new supporters from within the SMc congregation who volunteered when the word got out that help was needed. Thank you so much.

Eight team members completed the new Safeguarding course over the Summer ready for another 3 years of service. All Safeguarding and DBS clearances are now in date and the next tranche of 'renewals' for Listeners and Supporters is due in 2018.
Formal training is reported separately but, in addition to that, we have had two constructive sessions of Listeners Ongoing Training for the team. The first was held at Bemerton Methodist church in April 2017 and was a Bereavement Course delivered by Peter and Dianna Wright (Acorn approved trainers from Bridport). It was a very well attended, informative and helpful evening.

The second, last month, included 'practice' Listening training and an introduction to the new Diary reporting system, delivered by Sarah Buckwell (formerly Acorn) and Rachel Clarke.

Looking ahead, we are having a fund-raising concert on Saturday 11 November at 7.30 pm here at SMc. Do please come along and support the Listening Place if you can. Your donation will be much appreciated and certainly needed and well used.

Stop press. I am very excited (and a little nervous) with the opportunity presented by a very recently arranged interview with The Listening Place. This is being recorded in the Sanctuary at SMc by ‘That’s TV’ on the morning of the AGM. They found out about us initially from the Council and then through our website (all the links worked, thank you Nick. Brilliant!). It is scheduled to be broadcast at 6pm that evening on Channel 7 and should also be repeated at intervals throughout the following day. I hope that many people will manage to watch it.

Finally let’s all try not to forget this thought:

“listening can be a greater service than speaking”.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffe)

*Sue Robbins*
Publicity

Once again we advertised in 4 issues of the Valley News, spread over the year, plus a free editorial. The Salisbury Journal carried a report and photo of the Annual Meeting, as did the Valley News, and it is hoped that they will do so again this year. We have decided not to continue with the Valley News ads in the coming year, though hopefully any events will be included for free. It was decided to target local magazines instead to try to increase awareness of what we offer. To date we are in the Bemerton Outreach and Wilton Parish News with many others to be contacted.

In the Spring another distribution of leaflets and posters took place to over 100 venues and they were well received. We had been receiving an increasing number of referrals from GP’s so we made sure all the Salisbury surgeries were covered as well as some villages. We also added Funeral Directors to the distribution list. This is a huge task, only possible with the help of our willing band of deliverers so a big ‘thank you’ to them for giving up their time to do this. With additional venues and the loss of a couple of volunteers it would be great to have more distributors so if you feel this is something you could help with, please let me know.

We became aware that our website was greatly in need of improvement and updating. Our thanks go to Nick Rutt for agreeing to undertake this task and for all his hard work. It is now much clearer and more attractive and Nick kindly keeps it up to date with current information. As a result we have recently been contacted by That’s TV Salisbury who are coming to do an interview about our service! (They found out about us via a council list, SMC website and a link from there to our website). We also need to thank Graham Addison who has continued to be a great support both in technical matters and in generously offering his design and printing services for which we are extremely grateful.
In recent weeks efforts have been made to advertise the Effective Listening Practice course as widely as possible and so far the response has been encouraging. The next major event, the Hampshire Guitar Orchestra concert in November, is included in the Music in Salisbury brochure and posters/flyers will need to be distributed around the town and area in the coming weeks to ensure a good attendance.

*Monica Gillings*

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**Training**

During the past twelve months, Acorn Christian Healing Foundation have completed the three modules of their new training programme for training Listeners.

We have delivered the first module (*Effective Listening Practice*) three times - in Amesbury, Boscombe and Shaftesbury - and plan to deliver it in Salisbury on October 14\textsuperscript{th}.

We have delivered the second module (*Applied Listening Practice*) once - at Bordon in Hampshire - and plan to deliver it in Salisbury on November 25\textsuperscript{th}.

Because of the Listening Place’s urgent need for more trained listeners, we used the previous Acorn course - *Called to Listen* - to train Listeners in the early months of 2017.

For Listening Place Listeners, Sarah Buckwell led a Listening practice session on 5\textsuperscript{th} September at Salisbury Methodist Church.

*Cecil King*
Financial Statement Year Ending 31/08/2017

General Account

Income

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Expenditure

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**Balance carried forward**

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With many thanks to Lorraine Wood who has served as our treasurer for the past seven years. We all wish her well as she enjoys her retirement in Bridport.
We live in a busy world where there are so many pressures coming at us from all sides. For many people there is a longing for space to breathe, to talk, and to be heard. If you would like to learn practical skills to improve your ability to ‘listen well’, this course is for you.

**Effective Listening Practice**

**Where?** Bemerton Methodist Church, Roman Rd., Salisbury SP2 9BH  
Free parking available

**When?**  Saturday 14 October 2017, from 9.45 am until 4.00 pm

*This is Module 1 of the Listening modules produced by Acorn Christian Healing Foundation and participants will learn active reflective listening skills. Topics covered will include the following: Why is listening important? What is good listening? What is bad listening? Looking at feelings. Expression of feelings. Identifying feelings in groups. Listening activities. Principles and boundaries.*

The Listening Place ([www.thelisteningplace.org.uk](http://www.thelisteningplace.org.uk)) is offering the course on this occasion for a nominal fee of £5 per person, payable on arrival. Tea, coffee, squash and biscuits will be provided. Please bring your own packed lunch.

To enrol on the course or for further details, please contact  
Mrs Monica Gillings: Telephone :01722 743700  
Email: monica.gillings@btinternet.com

“To be truly ‘heard’ is to be truly loved” (Wes Sutton, Acorn’s Director)
An Evening of Guitar Music

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND
the hampshire guitar orchestra
Sat 11th Nov  |  7.30pm
Salisbury Methodist Church
St. Edmund’s Church Street SP1 1EF

something for all the family

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(£4.00 Children) available from:
Monica Gillings - 01722 743 700
Heather Drage - 07557 985 935
Graham Addison - 07944 858 623
or email: salisburylisteningplace@gmail.com

“The I’d known it was going to be this much fun, I’d have come last time”

www.hago.org.uk

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