

# EXPLORATIONS



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**A Spanish Translation of Listening Hearts**

**Joe Gill  
 Severna Park, MD**

*Hola!* The trustees of Listening Hearts Ministries (LHM) are delighted to announce that in spring 2021, Church Publishing (CP) will print a Spanish translation of *Listening Hearts (Corazones Escuchando)* together with an updated 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the book. How this came to be is a story of call, persistence, response, and convergence.

For the past few years, a consistent topic of conversation at LHM trustee meetings has been the desire to make our work more accessible to the Latino community. Trustee Patricia McLean has been a soft-spoken advocate, noting in particular that a Spanish translation would invite the Latino community “to participate in spiritual discernment, but perhaps more importantly to engage in dialogue with us that could lead to a newer and richer understanding.” In late 2018, Patricia contacted Nancy Bryan, our editor at CP, and asked if they would be interested in a Spanish translation of *Listening Hearts*. Nancy liked the idea and asked for a proposal.

We began building a case for the project. Stephanie Hull, coauthor of *Grounded in God*, attends the *Comunidad Episcopal de la Resurrección* in Baltimore. She advised, “Talk with some Latino people who are bilingual and see how this idea strikes them and what they see as possibilities,” noting that there are “ways of communication that go deeper than just language.” LHM trustee and founder Suzanne Farnham contacted Rev. Gladys Diaz, former chair of the Eastern District of New York Commission of Congregational Development and a member of the diocesan Commission on Ministry. She is active in Latinx leadership development churchwide and has been ministering to Latinx communities her entire vocational life. In a strong letter of support in November 2019, Gladys wrote that there “is no better book for engaging the Latino population in the working of God’s call in their lives.” The letter continues:

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. . . in the Episcopal Church there is a limited number of credible religious writings in Spanish. By “credible,” I mean books of spiritual simplicity, of beauty, and of high quality. *Listening Hearts* is such a book. It uses a universal language of the heart that binds us together. Its depth is perfect for Latinx new communities, exiting congregations, lay leaders and vestry groups. *Listening Hearts* is also effective. I know that it has been sold, read and used by English-speaking Episcopalians and other Christians across the country. I read it years ago and was touched by the power and grace of its teachings. I know that Spanish-speaking Latinos of all ages will be equally moved.

The Rev. Tim Grayson, LHM trustee and coauthor of *Keeping in Tune with God*, secured an endorsement from an American-born, bilingual Episcopal priest with friends in ordained ministry in Cuba. Tim, who was an executive at a publishing company prior to ordination, also researched Spanish publications in the area of spiritual discernment. He concluded that there is a receptive market for books of this type in Spanish.

In March 2020, Tim contacted Nancy Bryan at CP and formally pitched the concept of a Spanish translation. She replied that CP had recently assembled a small group of Spanish-speaking advisors, who would consider the idea. Following a meeting with them, Nancy asked if the authors could update the English language version and offer a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition in both English and Spanish. The authors agreed. Later, the trustees asked her how the idea of a simultaneous Spanish translation and 30<sup>th</sup> edition came together. She replied that considering whether to publish a book normally has two steps. First, CP considers whether the book would appeal to an audience. Next, and only after the first step is taken, CP asks the marketing department whether and how the book could be marketed. In the case of *Listening Hearts*, the idea of a Spanish translation came up at a CP staff meeting and a member of the marketing department asked, Why not publish a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition at the same time? Nancy called this “synchronicity,” a meaningful coincidence. Or, in the words of *Listening Hearts*, “convergence,” “strands of experience that . . . begin to converge and fit together.”

The authors of *Listening Hearts* spent the summer working on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. More on this in the next issue of *Explorations*.

*Joe Gill, trustee of Listening Hearts Ministries, is a coauthor of Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community and a leader of the Day of Discernment program.*

## **Listening to God in Themselves**

**Judith Bowers and Kathleen Rawson  
Vienna, VA**

It seemed natural and exciting for us as fellow Listening Hearts Ministry Team members at our parish, the Church of the Holy Comforter, to invite a group of parish seekers to read and discuss this small book brimming with wisdom and insight. *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, inspires sharing, questioning, and contemplating different perspectives. Each chapter begins and ends with Scripture quotations.

We hoped that participants would grow closer to each other and to God as they read and exchanged ideas. A group of six to eight people met weekly for five weeks over the summer, on Sunday afternoons for an hour and a half. Part of what made the program unique was a fifteen-minute meditation, after which participants were invited to comment. The texts for the meditations came from “Heartlinks,” on the Listening Hearts website, and *lectio divina*, a Scripture-based discernment format. They offered a gentle way to begin exploring ideas and feelings.

At the first meeting, we shared the Listening Hearts purposes for the book discussion:

to help participants clarify and expand their understanding of call, ministry, discernment, and community as they relate to one another; to provide participants an opportunity to grow in their relationship with God; to increase their sense of listening to God in themselves, through others, and in everyday occurrences; to become more aware of the value of the support of a faith community.

We covered two chapters per session. There was no trouble eliciting comments and questions. People found plenty to talk about in each chapter and could see relevance and application to their lives. We moved line by line, as there was such depth and richness packed into each sentence. The discussions helped build community, trust, and mutual support, which are valuable ingredients in one’s spiritual walk.

Listening is a key ingredient in discernment. We paraphrased four of the ten Discernment Listening Guidelines—speak from your own life experiences; listen intently and prayerfully to one another; allow for silence between speakers; focus on the one speaking, not on your next question. These reminders help the group to set a pace that honors each voice in an intentional and open environment.

The experience of combining “Heartlinks” meditations and a *Listening Hearts* book discussion was, like all Listening Hearts program offerings, a gift of being in thick, palpable community and Spirit. People new to these practices shared with the group some unexpected images and ideas that arose in the meditation sessions. Kathie’s own unexpected response was gratitude, that folks were drawn together and that maybe the Spirit used us in this drawing together to invite moments of rich listening.

As leaders, we greatly enjoyed the process of developing the book discussion and participating in the group. Everyone readily engaged in lively discourse, gaining insight into new avenues for seeing God in their lives. Their experience confirmed once again our experience, that however many times one reads *Listening Hearts*, there is more to discover and learn each time.

*Judith Bowers, happily retired, enjoys being actively involved in her church, reading, writing, and meditating, and visiting with her family and friends.*

*Kathleen Rawson, a seeker at heart, has been a Listening Hearts trainer for ten years.*

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#### MISSION STATEMENT

Listening Hearts Ministries provides a range of programs, publications, and services that teach people the practice of spiritual discernment through prayerful listening in supportive communities.

*“Something happens to us when we consult one another in Christian community. In sharing our thoughts with others, surprising insights often emerge—opening our eyes to what we have not seen and our ears to what we have not heard.”*  
– Listening Hearts, p. 46

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## Amen

**Wendy Gayle  
Fredericksburg, VA**

As  
I move  
through my day  
getting things done  
I pray as I go.  
Each movement a prayer  
like strokes of an artist’s brush  
dancing with the Holy Spirit  
across the canvas of creation.  
Joy is the reward of a job done well.

*This poem was first published on Miss Gayle’s blog, <https://www.windowstothspirit.com/> on March 10, 2019.*

*Wendy Gayle is a newly-trained Senior Program Associate for Listening Hearts Ministries, a mentor in the Education for Ministry four-year study course, and a discernment facilitator for the Diocese of Virginia. Writing poetry for her is a method of spiritual meditation and a way of showing intention. The blog is called Windows to the Spirit because through the words, windows have opened and insights gained into her life’s spiritual journey.*