

January Course to Focus on Compassionate Listening

The January offering from Ventures in Christian Discipleship will be “Building Bridges Between Brethren through Compassionate Listening: Let Thy Kingdom Come!” to be presented by Barbara Daté, Harriet Koscho, and Joe Vecchio. It will be held online in two sessions, Tuesdays, January 20 and 27, both at 7:00-9:00 p.m. (Central Time).

Course Description: This interactive workshop invites Brethren from across the denomination to strengthen relationships through deep compassionate listening. How we are going to accomplish this is via using the facilitated Daté Discernment Circle (DDC) process. We believe that sharing deeply with heartfelt understandings can be a catalyst to healing. Further, that any fresh understandings could foster stronger connections as we build up our beloved Brethren relationships by offering one another compassion and empathy.

Come prepared to listen. Come prepared to share if you wish. Each person who shares will begin with a “Prompt” designed to focus on what is meaningful about “being Brethren”, for example: “What ‘Being Brethren’ in this time and place means to me...” or “Pain I am recovering from...”. We will be coached to use the deep compassionate listening skill, micro-paraphrasing.* As we take turns sharing what is meaningful to us, we will also ensure that each person is listened to with respect and understanding by each “Special Listener” requested in turn by each “Speaker”. What is especially compelling about this DDC model is Barbara’s belief and witness to the “breaking through of the Spirit in our midst” so often that she nurtures the sacred space for that possibility!

Our hope is that a broad cross-section from across our denomination will participate. Then as we nurture compassionate understandings we will be able to turn together, shoulder to shoulder to: “Bring forth the kingdom of mercy! Bring forth the kingdom of peace!”: Thy Kingdom Come! Amen!

For those registering, an email with further information will be sent before the workshop. In addition, Barbara will offer an extra “Hot-tips” session about the DDC process a few days in advance for those who might want a little more preparation.

**For those curious or even anxious about the skill of micro-paraphrasing (which we will be utilizing to reach our goal of deeply understanding one another), feel free to be in touch to request more information. You can also check out Barbara’s Ventures session on “Deep Compassionate Listening” (April 15, 2023). In that previously recorded session, Barbara introduces and teaches the skill of micro-paraphrasing. Register for this course free in the Ventures course archives:*
<https://www.mcpherson.edu/ventures/archive-registration/>

Assisting **Barbara Daté** with the workshop will be **Harriet Koscho**, member of Olympic View Church of the Brethren, and **Joe Vecchio**, member of Restoration LA Church of the Brethren. All three facilitators work intensively nurturing intercultural relationships. Barbara and Joe have teamed up together for over 30 years, and Barbara began mentoring Harriet two years ago.

Continuing education credit is available for \$10 per course. During the registration process, you will have the opportunity to pay for CEUs and give an optional donation to the Ventures program.

To learn more about Ventures in Christian Discipleship and to register for courses, visit www.mcpherson.edu/ventures.

Presenter Bios:

Barbara Daté is “Hapa” (Hawaiian for “half”) Japanese-American (Sansei) and almost half English with a Great-Great-Great-Great Gilliam grandmother who was free but from a slave family in Virginia. Raised in the intercultural, interfaith residential York Center Co-op of 79 families founded by Church of the Brethren Bethany Seminary couples, Barbara witnessed firsthand diverse folks working through conflicts and living together in harmony. This early life experience from age 2 years old provided Barbara with the vision that “Peace and harmony is possible!” That foundational experience prepared her work with Brethren in 17 Church of the Brethren districts and with indigenous peoples in North America, the Pacific Islands and the Irish (in the Republic of Ireland and N. Ireland). She was invited by Brethren Press to be the process consultant (along with Mennonite raised/turned Brethren, Phyllis Sensei) to rescue the Hymnal Project after years of conflict, resulting in the publication of the 1989 Hymnal (with the Mennonites). Barbara wraps up her term on Mission and Ministry Board July 2026. She continues yet another decade on the Intercultural Ministries Advisory Team.

Barbara’s academic and community expertise is in the field of individual & cultural differences and deep compassionate listening. She was gifted with the innovative “Daté Discernment Circle” model in the midst of an intense district conflict in 1987. This unique procedure has been successfully used throughout the world, having first been facilitated by Barbara during an intensive teacher’s strike, and then in myriad contexts, including the 50th anniversary of the bombing at Pearl Harbor and at various denominational gatherings.

Barbara holds an Interdisciplinary Master’s Degree in Interpersonal and Small Group Communication and Conflict Resolution, as well as a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology, specializing in Prosocial, Proactive Behavior. She taught at 9 colleges/universities and 3 seminaries. Barbara has been a member of the Springfield, Oregon Church of the Brethren and the Madtown Brethren Fellowship in Madison, WI. For fun and exercise Barbara has been blessed to play her cello in a dozen orchestras in North America, Mau’i and Salzburg.

Harriet Koscho is a member/leader of the Olympic View Church of the Brethren. She has an M.S. in Statistics/Computer Science from Purdue University, but her real education came when she started a youth group for at-risk minority children in Seattle. Career-wise, she excelled at finding, diagnosing, and eliminating difficult software problems - sometimes traveling to China or India to work out solutions. Meanwhile, on the weekends, she learned how to de-escalate tensions and inspire young people to create a beloved community. As a member of the Standing With People of Color coordinating committee she has taken up the co-leadership of the new role, Racial Justice Advocates for Brethren congregations and districts. Harriet loves engaging with all kinds of people and she hopes to help you bring out your most authentic self.

Joe Vecchio was a Church of the Brethren pastor in the 1980s and worked for the Pacific Southwest District Church of the Brethren as District Administrative Assistant for 30 years. He served almost three

decades with the Intercultural Ministries Advisory Team and 35 years as a camp leader at Camp Peaceful Pines. In the past he also worked as a school bus driver and a Union printing press and camera operator. Currently, Joe serves with Kids Church and Greeters Ministries at Restoration Los Angeles Church. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from California State University LA and a Master of Divinity from Fuller Seminary. Joe is a third generation Sicilian.