

BLESSINGS ALWAYS
July 10, 2020
Association Minister Message
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LISTEN. *"Listen! A sower went out to sow...Let anyone with ears listen! Hear then the parable of the sower."* (Matthew 13:3b, 9). This parable of Jesus is a familiar one for Christian faithful. It is one of the first faith stories that I remember since third grade. Living in a farming community, *"of course"* planning, planting, harvesting and market were important considerations. *"Of course"* where seeds were planted was a *"no-brainer"* because *"we"* just knew seeds could not be planted anywhere if one expected a generous yield. But what always caught my attention of this parable are Jesus' words: *"LISTEN"* and *"Let anyone with ears LISTEN!"* *"Of course"* if you have ears you can listen. During confirmation my pastor remarked, *"Parables are earthly stories with heavenly meaning."* Seeds. Planting. Harvest. Ears. Listening. There is more to the parable than the words. Yes, ears help us hear but are we listening? How do deaf people have amazing listening skills? It is more than listening to sounds; it is also listening to inner joy and/or pain of others and within ourselves. Jesus explains the parable and reminds us of being attentive to the world around us. Words/sounds have the power to be blessings or curses, love or hatred. Public (societal) conversations recently use words/sounds of condemnation, rejection and insensitivity. Words/speech damage relationships and seeds of suspicion (fear of losing power) do not allow much listening. Seeds of racial disrespect, discrimination and revenge are tearing apart the social fiber of communities/nation/world. Needed are seeds of decency, care, peace, justice and welcome to those who seem so different than my/our comfort zones. *"Let anyone with ears LISTEN!"* Where seeds are planted allow the roots to thrive or die. Our lives are rooted in so many soils (traditions, places of comfort and power)—familial, societal, religious, financial—that give many people privilege, advantage, opportunities and benefits. There are many people who have faced discrimination, enslavement, terror, rejection or disrespect just by having different skin color or appearance or speech; this causes fear, hopelessness, belittling, contempt, physical and mental harm. LISTEN! It is time to claim that we all are created in the image of God—not God—with the relationship to God as family members, all daughters and sons, to be Christ-like and empowered by God's Spirit as caretakers—not owners—of creation. *"Let anyone with ears LISTEN!"* BLESSINGS ALWAYS.