



MARCH 2023 PRESIDENT'S LETTER

ON THE MOUNTAIN

The season of Epiphany is ending as I write this. Transfiguration Sunday is coming, and Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent will begin. I am amazed when I look at the calendar. Where is the time going?

I can account for some of the time, by reviewing my calendar and remembering what I did last week or last month. There are external reminders. What about the internal changes that occur when a church season changes? What is happening spiritually? How might I be growing and changing along with the new church season?

The theme for this year for the Network is It is Well with My Soul. We are exploring aspects of physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health as they affect faith formation leaders and those we are in ministry with. The text for Transfiguration Sunday is Matthew 17: 1-9. Our spiritual practice for this month is Listening. This text and theme come together in these verses: *"While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased: listen to him!"* Matthew 17: 5 (NRSV)

Similar words were spoken at the baptism of Jesus, so we reflect on that event as we move forward to the events of Lent and what is to come. Movements and events in church life and ministry can happen quickly. How might we pay attention to the words: listen to him? Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on the mountain when God spoke. Mountains in the Bible are often places where people encounter God.

We can all remember mountaintop experiences in our ministries. We may experience a special closeness to God, a strong connection to others, an intense experience of community. The challenge is we can't stay on the mountain. We must continue onto the next challenge that awaits us as we come off the mountain. Whatever this challenge is, the practice of listening can be lived into as a way of continuing our closeness to God and to one another.

When is the last time you truly listened to another person? When is the last time you felt deeply listened to? And how are you listening to God and to other people as we journey through Lent?

We listen too often to respond, to offer advice, to try and fix the situation. How might we listen to accompany one another, to walk alongside each other, to be a companion rather than a fixer? These are all important questions in our ministries as faith formation leaders.

We can be about connections as we go from the mountaintop to whatever part of the journey is next. May this Network provide and facilitate listening moments for all of us.

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*"...that they may be encouraged
in heart and united in love..."*

Colossians 2.2 (NIV)