Ears to Hear: A Litany for Listening One to the Other

by Dee Dee Risher

(Prepare the group to begin in silence.)
ONE: Listen.
Hear your own breathing, the rustle of a neighbor's movement.
Listen to what is going on in this particular place at this moment.
Let every sound around you touch your ears.
(Pause)
Empty yourself.
The ancient teacher in the desert asked the disciple who was certain of herself,
"Do you want a drink?"
Then poured into a full glass of water more water,
Until it spilled everywhere and the disciple protested.
"Like the glass, you are full of your own opinions, ideas, truths.
You cannot learn to make peace until you empty your glass."
Empty yourself.
(Pause)
Job had many comforters, but when Yahweh came,
They were shadowed by mystery.
ALL: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?"*

ONE: O moving Spirit, displace us from our convictions
ALL: Into prayer.

ONE: Move us from our certainty
ALL: Into all we do not know.

ONE: Change us from warriors of righteousness
ALL: To people who know brokenness in ourselves and others.

ONE: Crack open our certain hearts,
ALL: Until we can whisper in the hollow spaces, "We may not be right."

ONE: If we could read the secret history of our "enemies," we should find in each life
ALL: Sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

ONE: Love your neighbor as yourself.
ALL: This is the difficult Word of God.

ONE: Pray for your enemies and those who persecute you.
ALL: This is the demanding Word of God.

ONE: Do justice. Love mercy. Walk in humility.
ALL: This is the lifelong work of the Word of God.

ONE: May we see within our enemies and persecutors
ALL: Something precious that we ourselves need.

ONE: We commit today
ALL: To listen for what is under hate.
To sense the pain under aggression.

To look for the wounds our certainty causes.
To find the truth our opponents hold for us.

ONE: Like a treasure. Like vision.
ALL: Like the gateway from the land of the dead to the land of the living. Amen.

*Job 38:4

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