



# Practicing Compassionate Awareness

1. The first and most important response is simply to listen attentively and non-judgmentally to people's concerns—as an individual and as a community.
2. Then help people to build compassionate awareness of their own fears, listening and holding their anxiety and resistance without judgment or guilt. Prompts like these will help:
  - “Why do you believe that is the case?”
  - “How long have you felt that?”
  - “What has it been like to feel that?”
  - “Thank you for telling me about it. I value your story and will hold it with you.”
3. After the person has shared fully, you may respond by “telling a new story” to the fear. This does not deny the reality of fear. Rather, you are presenting a fuller picture of reality to hold next to what remains a legitimate fear or anxiety (if only to the person who feels it). Consider these various ways of telling that new story, putting the fear into perspective and preparing a person to keep moving toward transformation:
  - a. Share your own experience with a similar fear—particularly a fear of some marginalized group (including your own group) or of some coming change—along with what it taught you, and how you learned to sit with it, honor it or move ahead in spite of it.
  - b. Invite the person to reconnect with the dream of God—whatever vision it is that inspires them to welcome The Other and becoming God's radically welcoming people.
  - c. Draw on the resources of your shared tradition—scriptures, theologians, church history, common prayers, etc.—to hold out an alternative reality.