



A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger. Proverbs 15:1

Dear friends,

Ever wish you could converse with your dog? (apologies to cat owners)

I don't mean just talk to your dog. I mean converse with your dog.

I'd really like to know what my dog, Barchester, thinks about things. I'd like to know how he feels and what his view of his life really is.

Why? Well, he's my dog. He's been part of my family for almost thirteen years. And, he's getting old . . . slowing down . . . growing deaf.

Actually, he's gone deaf. When I see him each day I wonder what he thinks about his condition. Does he even think about why the birds don't sing anymore? Or why he hears no fire engines racing by our house? Or why my mouth moves and why he doesn't hear me anymore? Does he have an opinion about my silence? Does he attribute it to my loss of love for him? What does Barchester think?

People grow deaf, too. Not just physically deaf – intellectually and emotionally deaf. When conversations stop, do they wonder why? Do they accept it as part of the cycle of life? When I'm the person who is now silent, do they know that I still want to have a conversation?

Barchester knows, I think. I've done everything I can to let him

know. Extra pats, an occasional back rub, scratching him in that favourite place right behind his right foreleg.

I wonder, do I invest as much in people who have gone intellectually and emotionally deaf to me as I have in my dog? Have I looked for ways to communicate that I care? Have I found new ways to open the conversation?

I think Barchester probably doesn't mind being physically deaf as long as I scratch in his favourite place. I think he understands me even though the audible words have failed.

Has some conflict rendered someone you care about deaf? Do they see your mouth move but no longer hear what you say?

When words fail, find another way to understanding. Do something that communicates well. Scratch that favourite place.

Shalom – Salaam – Peace,

Stephen Taylor

**COMMON
GROUND**

In this edition Stephen Taylor writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC