

Mentoring the Minister

Local community members can be a great asset to clergy, doctors, educators ... who are asked to give leadership in the community

When I was a young seminary student, Granny Brooks became my mentor. She was in her nineties, had recently suffered a broken hip, and lived on the farm with her bachelor son. But she had developed a wonderful facility of knowing what was happening in the community. She used her experience and wisdom to distill these happenings so she could direct my pastoral work for the few hours I served as student minister in the community.

“Maybe you could stop for a cup of tea with (this individual) or talk with the young people who never got home till 3 AM last night.”

Among other things, this little woman – who came into the district as a pioneer school principal - taught me how to listen for the celebrations and sorrows happening around me.

Whenever I went to a new pastoral charge after that I looked for the wise ones who could tell the stories, discern the pain, point out those who suffered silently. Often, at the time of a funeral, these were the ones who could give me back-ground, and could interpret the expectations of the community.

To this very day, too often I see things through rose-coloured glasses. But my mentors will alert me to watch for those burdened by shame, or guilt, or hidden fears. Quietly and with confidence they trust these concerns into my care. But this is not a burden, for they also suggest ways I might handle the situation.

Pay a visit, be a listening ear or find others who can offer support, look for interventions. I’m reminded too, to include the merchants and farmers, the spouses and the children’s teachers in my Sunday prayers. Don’t be afraid to lead prayers of lament, but always remember the words of thanksgiving and hope.

We are not alone. We live in God’s world. Together we offer ourselves with love and expectation.

(written by Joyce Sasse)

Printed in CRCN/CiRCLe M Newsletter July 2011