

Sacred and Secular Interface

When secular friends ask about the church, what do we say?

Church folk have a pretty good understanding of the multiple roles the church plays in our communities.

But our secular friends seldom comprehend these roles in a world that is rife with institutional scandals and that is dominated by secularism. Weddings and funerals are no longer the exclusive domain of the church. Worship services are often more about form than content. And few are cognizant of the way denominations support each other and work together.

We are past the era when churches established hospitals and medical outreach programs. Programs for unwed mothers and their off-spring are no longer directly sponsored by the ladies of the church. Workers with the “homeless” may be church folk, but their funding comes from various levels of government. And the denominations no longer make presentations to Parliamentarians. We got those things going, and handed them over to others with more funds. Now we are lumped together with NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organizations).

Is it not time we found new ways to tell about our work with the youth and elderly; our initiative in encouraging the development of viable local communities; our championing of environmental causes...?

These are places where people of all ages work together, struggle to cross social barriers, and search out how traditional values can be understood in a contemporary world.

When a secular friend asks why I, a minister, read the Western Producer, or how come I’m going to a government-sponsored Conference on Rural Development, or why my clergy colleague wants to be a member of the School Board, I need to be better prepared to speak out about how this is part of our ministry.

The cornerstones of our tradition include truth and justice and finding the sacred in the every-day. We celebrate life and feel one with creation. With humility we are always aware that God calls us to new duties.

(Notes by Joyce Sasse)