

Shortly before she entered a nursing home for her last year on earth my mother observed, "I know more people up there, then I do down here". And in some real sense, she was right. Her family of origin, her husband, most of her life long friends, and one of her sons had already died. She was not being morbid or expressing self-pity. She was simply noting the reality of life as she aged. Her world, in so many ways, was getting smaller and smaller. Her children and grandchildren, always important to her, became even more important. They were her entrée into the world around her. They were visible reminders and silent reassurance that life still made sense and was still worth living. Thankfully most of the time the children and grandchildren understood that and took the time to be present with her.

The sad truth is that many people, as they age, do not have those reminders, that reassurance necessary for fulfilled living. I see people every day that long for a visit from a familiar face, who pray their family member will surprise them. I see people every day who never see their pastor or members of the church family of which they were once an active part. And I sadly see people who, because of the loss of connection, give up spiritually and physically.

As one who does a lot of training of church people in ministering with and for older adults I find myself constantly saying: "Visit, Visit, Visit." Ministry at its best is a ministry of presence. At every age we thrive on interaction and find meaning and purpose for our lives in relationships.

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also."

As always Jesus points the way to ministry in his name! As important as offering worship services for the aging is, as important as providing recreational activities for them is, there is nothing more life-giving than face to face visiting. Our incarnational theology tells us God took flesh and dwelt among us. Should we as followers of that Incarnation not be God in flesh for others?

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