

Inspiration from a Shut-In

The Rev. King Duncan, a United Methodist minister, is a writer and inspirational speaker who shares a personal story that is instructive for those of us who work in Life Care and Century Park.

He said he was totally unprepared when he was assigned as pastor to his first church. “I will never forget my first-shut-in. She was a dear lady who had been a member of that church for 80 years, but now she was in the declining years of her life. For all practical purposes, this dear lady was deaf, she had Parkinson’s disease, her speech was garbled, she was blind, and she was bedfast.”

Duncan said he was not used to being with older people. “I wanted so badly to minister to her, but I felt awkward. What kind of small talk could we make, even if – with all her handicapping conditions – we could talk? What did we have in common? I was totally incompetent, but I was faithful. I visited her regularly, though each time I felt like a complete fool. I had a prayer to close each visit, but how can you shout a prayer into someone else’s ear? It was a totally frustrating experience.”

Eighteen months after the pastor’s first visit with the woman, she passed away, and Duncan conducted her funeral.

“Can you imagine my surprise when at that funeral the two daughters of this poor lady handed me a note? On it was scrawled, almost illegibly, the last message this lady ever communicated to anyone. On it were these words: “Please tell my young pastor how much his visits meant to me.”



Duncan said he has often looked back on this experience “with wonderment and awe. I have come to this conclusion: As I sought to minister to this dear lady, it was not I who was giving comfort to her. It was Christ.”

In the work you are called to do with those you serve, perhaps you may feel awkward or even incompetent at what you may consider an inability to connect or communicate in an effective manner with a certain individual with substantial needs.

Your actions – your love, your concern – may speak louder than words can ever do.

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter