

Caring Connections

An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling



Mentor and Mentee: Sources of Influence and Growth

The Purpose of Caring Connections

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written primarily by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable, solidly grounded in the practice of ministry, and theologically probing. *Caring Connections* seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries and concerned congregational pastors and laity.

Caring Connections also provides news and information about activities, events and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

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Application forms that are available from Christopher Otten [ELCA] or Brian Heller [LCMS]. Consideration is given to scholarship requests after each application deadline. LCMS deadlines are April 1, July 1 and November 1, with awards generally made by the end of the month. ELCA deadline is December 31. Email questions to Christopher Otten at christopher.otten@elca.org and to Brian Heller brian.heller@lcms.org.

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Introduction to This Issue

Bruce Hartung

OPENING MY NORTHWESTERN MAGAZINE, Fall 2024 issue, I noticed the title of a brief article on page six: “Who Was Your Mentor?” There were four brief responses to that question, with the “mentor” being a student and later peer of an athletic coach and three university professors. **Nancy Wigdahl**’s article in this issue highlights a quotation from Edward Sellner’s book, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*: “Mentoring is a helping relationship which presents as coaching in the world of business, sponsoring in self-help groups, apprenticeship among the trades, and a relationship of learning (often mutual) in academia and in the many contexts where this relationship of helping and learning exists.”

The American Psychological Association used its publication, *Monitor on Psychology*, 2019, to focus on “Your Guide to Mentoring”. One of the articles, “New Ways to find the Right Mentor” states: “ Now, thanks to mobile devices, email and other technologies, it’s much easier to find the best mentor for your unique needs. You can even find mentors who offer just short-term guidance on specific topics, peer-to-peer mentors or reverse mentoring relationships in which early career psychologists guide already established ones. Until recently, if you wanted someone to help guide you in your career, the pool of available mentors was limited by geographical location—specifically by your university. And the pool of possible mentors who shared similar values, experiences and backgrounds with you was even smaller. APA divisions, psychology leaders, students and others have developed innovative mentoring approaches to help in any form, area or level you need.” (p. 7)

Mark Whitsett’s article in this issue asks: “Do I even know what a mentor is? Is it like a spiritual advisor, director? Is this a teacher-disciple relationship? Is there a type of ‘wise woman’ or ‘wise man’ credential or identity to which one gravitate?” **Nathan Spaulding**’s article is “The Mess and Mystery of Mentorship,” a title that might apply to this whole issue. But Nathan grabbed the title first.

The University of New Mexico’s Mentoring Institute is hosting its 17th Annual Mentoring Conference entitled “Inclusive Developmental Networks: Building Transformative Communities Through Effective Mentoring.” The dates of the conference are October 21–25 of this year. MI-CONFERENCE-L@LIST.UNM.EDU.

“Until recently, if you wanted someone to help guide you in your career, the pool of available mentors was limited by geographical location—specifically by your university. And the pool of possible mentors who shared similar values, experiences and backgrounds with you was even smaller.”

HRD Press offers The Mentoring Competency Model and a computerized test, including a “Comprehensive Report Output Including Your Mentor Role Competencies Profile.”

Its description: “This assessment provides mentors with an objective means of assessing their mentoring skills, especially those behavioral competencies that are essential for productive interaction with a diverse group of mentee’s. The scale measures six distinct and important components of the adult mentoring relationship, which together constitute the complete mentor role.” HRD Press offers-hrdpress.com@shared1.ccsend.com. While this test is contextually in an employer-employee relationship, its insights might well be helpful.

John Schumacher, Diane Greve, and I offer our personal observations in the ending three articles that highlight various diverse aspects of what, perhaps, is to be called mentoring.

What a way to title an issue! A common word is used with, as it turns out, a distinctly uncommon and remarkably diverse meaning. But titled it is and we all on the *Caring Connections* Editorial Board hope that this issue is stimulating as well as informative. Like all of our issues, we welcome feedback from you, our readers.

About Our Next Issue . . .

How to participate, and we hope you will!

WE ARE TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT and experimental for our next issue. We would like your participation by writing and submitting your responses to Walter Brueggemann's classic book, *Prophetic Imagination*.



1. This issue, 2024.3 is the last issue for this year. We are taking a publishing break, at the same time giving our readers lead time to write.
2. We are all invited to write about prophetic imagination — how does that play out in your ministry? To do this we invite you to consider Walter Brueggemann's book on this subject, *Prophetic Imagination*. Three members of our Editorial Team offer reasons why Brueggemann's book was chosen for us to explore.

Diane Greve: How does our theology undergird our ministry? At first glance we may not see how Walter Brueggemann's classic book, *Prophetic Imagination*, speaks to pastoral care/counseling. Yet, we know that helping people name how things are not as they should be and helping them to deeply grieve brings a newly imagined future.

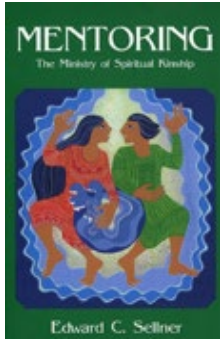
We are inviting our readers to acquaint (or re-acquaint) themselves with Brueggemann's thought and share your insights with our readers. How do you see this work affirming the work of your ministry? You might also watch or read the interview by Krista Tippet: Walter Brueggemann — The Prophetic Imagination | The On Being Project, <https://onbeing.org/programs/walter-brueggemann-the-prophetic-imagination-dec2018/>.

Philip Kuehnert: Another old Book? Walter Brueggemann's 55-year-old book has breathtaking relevance for anyone who not only grieves the current global and national crises, but also for those of us who sit with patients and clients for whom their world and consciousness no longer works. Surprisingly, *Prophetic Imagination* provides, on the basis of reading Jeremiah and Isaiah, for those enough who brave are brave enough to take on the prophet role, a new way to think about hope and to be a prophetic presence.

We are inviting our readers to acquaint (or re-acquaint) themselves with Brueggemann's thought and share your insights with our readers.

David Wurster: In *Prophetic Imagination* Walter Brueggeman leads us into the ministerial dance (pastors, chaplains, counselors, and all others too). It does not begin with us but with the God of living fire saying, “I AM for you to be who YOU ARE!” This God exposes the impotence of all false gods (in Egypt, in Israel, in all dead religion—ours included). Impotence exposed—stale forms break. Jeremiah speaks through grief to death; only tears melt frozen hearts. Isaiah leads through despair into new life. Only doxological song opens despair. “They buried my body and they thought I’d gone; but I am the life that’ll never, never die—I’ll lead you all in the dance said HE.” *Prophetic Imagination* is a music score for the life dance.

3. Send your responses, 1500 words maximum, to Diane Greve, dkgreve@gmail.com.



Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship

by Edward C. Sellner

Nancy Wigdahl

BACK IN MY MANAGEMENT DAYS, I volunteered to be a mentor for new leaders in my healthcare organization. This was an assigned relationship of a few months' duration where current leaders like me were paired with someone who was recently promoted to a leadership rank in the organization. I was pleasantly surprised to find that, as a spiritual care provider, I was always matched with someone in finance, which is an area where, I humbly admit, I have rudimentary skill at best. While our sessions often focused on the work relationships that my mentee was experiencing, I found myself learning much about the logical and orderly world of finance and the personalities who claim numbers and order as their comfort zone.

Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship (Cowley Publications, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 2002) is a revised and updated edition of an earlier version written by Edward Sellner in the 1980s. Recently retired, Edward Sellner is a long-time professor of pastoral theology and spirituality at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. This book provides a helpful overview of the art of mentoring plus provides many examples of the relationship of mentoring. Sellner wrote this revision in response to his observation of the growing depersonalization of burgeoning technology and the apparent growing hunger for personal contact, intimacy, continuity, and depth such as is found in mentoring. He observed that many were seeking the transformative experience of being heard by another, a mentor or teacher who is willing to share what they have learned in their own "school of suffering." (p. x)

Sellner begins with a thorough discussion of the many facets of mentoring, which is neither scientific nor prescriptive, but satisfying for those who are able to tolerate a global understanding of the mentoring dynamic, a dynamic which is art rather than science. Mentoring is a helping relationship which presents as coaching in the world of business, sponsoring in self-help groups, apprenticeship among the trades, and a relationship of learning (often mutual) in academia and in the many contexts where this relationship of helping and learning exists.

Sellner wrote this revision in response to his observation of the growing depersonalization of burgeoning technology and the apparent growing hunger for personal contact, intimacy, continuity, and depth such as is found in mentoring.

The author names his purpose as helping people name some of the mentoring they have already experienced or done, and also to help laypeople in particular to recognize their own potential as spiritual mentors. He sees mentoring as a form of contemporary ministry wherein Christian values and faith are consciously brought to others, teaching them about developing and encouraging a type of leadership, whether in societal or ecclesial institutions, that is further committed to the ongoing transformation of our world. (p. xi)

“Spiritual mentoring” is distinguished by greater depth and more concern with vocation and relationship with God. There is an overlap of spiritual mentoring and spiritual direction. Spiritual mentoring is distinguished by mutuality, reciprocity, and friendship rather than a “top down” relationship such as spiritual direction where someone provides guidance to a seeker. (p. xii)

A mentor is an agent of transformation, regardless of whether it is considered “ordinary” or “spiritual.” Mentoring is concerned with facilitating another person’s maturity and spiritual progress in living more in touch with one’s true self (p. xii). Mentoring is hardly age-bound; mentors may make a significant difference in someone’s life anytime one faces crises and transitions (p. xi). Mentors help us to clarify the questions of our lives, help us to discover options, to make choices and ultimately to fulfill the unique calling that is ours (p. 8). Mentors affect us in a positive way, calling us beyond ourselves. We may not recognize their importance immediately but may find appreciation for their significance in hindsight (p. 14).

Mentoring may serve as a process of turning toward interiority and an acknowledgement of and reconciliation with what may be perceived as opposite within ourselves (p. 20). This helps me to understand why my assigned mentees mentioned at the beginning of this writing were from the world of finance. Both myself as mentor and my mentee had opportunity to experience our respective opposites in this particular mentoring relationship.

Mentoring often begins with the experience of being mentored (p. 30). The mentoring relationship can be transformed into a relationship characterized by the mutuality and equality found between friends, or perhaps friendship and mentoring are but a breath away from each other. I encountered a mentor during my parish internship back in the 1970’s. Or perhaps this transitional point in my personal and professional life was ripe to receive the wisdom and clarity offered by one incredibly wise with life experience. Oscar was a curmudgeonly octogenarian from Bergen, Norway, decorated for shipbuilding for the Allies during the Second World War, and deeply pietistic in the flavor of Hans Neilsen Hauge, a nineteenth century Norwegian Lutheran lay minister, spiritual leader, social reformer, and author.

He sees mentoring as a form of contemporary ministry wherein Christian values and faith are consciously brought to others. . .

I did not know that I was seeking a mentor when Oscar and I became friends, but we soon engaged in conversations about faith and ministry over simple meals of fish and potatoes at his home. His frequent commentary included what he called “practical Christianity” which resonated with something deep within my faith formation and professional development as a minister of Word and Sacrament. Our correspondence continued long after my parish internship ended, and I went on to serve as a parish pastor and hospital chaplain. Oscar often penned nuggets of wisdom about faith, ministry, and long life. Indeed, he was determined to live to the age of one hundred and to meet once again in person the king and queen of Norway. Oscar died merely two weeks after achieving those milestones. I have repeatedly used the term “practical Christianity” and other bits of Oscar’s wisdom in the mentoring relationships I have established with CPE students over the past thirty years of being a CPE educator.

Sellner presents the option of being mentored by the writings of Thomas Merton and C.S. Lewis, both of whom mentored others not only in person and through their writings, but also through extensive letter writing to both friends and strangers.

Sellner presents the option of being mentored by the writings of Thomas Merton and C.S. Lewis, both of whom mentored others not only in person and through their writings, but also through extensive letter writing to both friends and strangers. Lewis’ mentoring relationship with Joy Davidman began by letter, then in person when she moved to England. Lewis and Davidman later married. In response to reading many of Lewis’ works, Sellner made a pilgrimage to Lewis’ home and place of professorship at Oxford, England (p. 35). Indeed, there is something powerful about sharing the physical space of someone who has shared their wisdom and who we have identified as a mentor, even long after they have died.

The idea of identifying someone as a mentor whose writings have inspired us is a new concept for me. There are indeed many people who have identified themselves as a scholar of Martin Luther or of Dietrich Bonhoeffer or of Jurgen Moltmann. My question is, would they also consider themselves a mentee of the authors of their scholarly studies?

Sellner also discusses the concept of the Irish *anamchara* or soul friend. He identifies *anamchara* a part of spiritual mentoring which includes the wisdom literature of the saints such as Jerome or Teresa of Avila or Aelred of Rievaulx (p. 63). Again, he emphasizes the spiritual wisdom found in writings by religious figures often acknowledged as saints among religious traditions. He describes this mentoring relationship of *anamchara* as one of spiritual counseling and healing (p. 71), which bears the characteristics of maturity, compassion, respect for others, confidentiality, appropriate self-disclosure, a reflective scholar of self and one’s relationship with God, and, an ability to identify “movements of the heart” or growth and direction in a spiritual journey (p. 81).

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of mentoring is to help and support someone in identifying or clarifying their dream and/or vocation. Such mentoring might be prompted by a question such as: What is your dream? Your ambition? The direction you would like to see your life take? (p. 111). How does a mentor empower another to accept their gifts and talents as they clarify their call? It seems to me that mentors appear in those times when a crisis or conversion stirs us to ask questions and seek direction. Often, I have heard life stories of students who perceive that they are led to ministry, chaplaincy, or spiritual direction following the loss of a loved one, a life-changing illness, or a conversion experience of some sort.

Edward Sellner's book is clearly directed at those who are claim a Judeo-Christian orientation to life and faith. He presents a global understanding of mentoring, inclusive of those who each of us may identify as our mentor in our personal and professional life, and to the wisdom persons of Judeo-Christian tradition whose writings inspire us centuries after they have lived among us. This is a book worthy of reading and reflection, for those who serve as mentors as well as those who have found themselves in the mentee role.



Rev. Nancy Wigdahl is a retired ELCA Pastor, ACPE Certified Educator, and APC Board Certified Chaplain living in the Minneapolis St. Paul area. She is a member of the Caring Connections Editorial Board and remains active with ACPE as a chair for program accreditation site visits.

Mentoring: The ‘Discourse Encounter’ Is Greater than We Might Perceive

Mark Whitsett

A Journey into the Weeds

The invitation and task seemed straightforward enough. Identify and reflect on the significance of personal mentoring relationships (as the one being mentored and perhaps as the one doing the mentoring). Use just one or two contexts to illustrate and then provide insights to how mentoring relationships potentially have meaning for the Lutheran Chaplain and/or Pastoral Counselor. Simple! Right? Until it is not ... or really never is!

Joshua had Moses. Paul likely had Gamaliel in his pre-conversion days and certainly had Barnabas as an encourager. Barnabas was also a guide to Mark, who may have experienced guidance from Peter. Paul also had what could be described as mentoring relationships with Timothy and Titus. Luther had Staupitz. Augustine had Ambrose and Monica. Who has mentored me and to whom might I have been a mentor?

What makes mentors — well — mentors? Do I even know what a mentor is? Is it like a spiritual advisor, director? Is this a teacher-disciple relationship? Is there a type of “wise woman” or “wise man” credential or identity to which one gravitates? Is it conscious, intentional, now it is happening or is there something more organic about it, observed more on reflection than at the time?

Also, how do I avoid just “walking down memory lane,” telling nostalgic stories about mentors; stories that may make me feel good but really do not connect to you as the reader and pastoral practitioner? I could easily slip into a pedantic recalling of experiences but to what benefit for you the reader or of me the storyteller?

Do not I have some ‘professional’ or even spiritual responsibility to observe and interpret my encounters as possibly transferable or at least marginally meaningful in some way to you?

Now that we are sufficiently in the weeds, let us see if I/we can get a sense of where we are as people who are formed and potentially provide formation.

A Flash of Insight!?

There is a field of research design called Grounded Theory. It is where a researcher, often a sociologist and/or psychologist, will encounter a context, say, “situations where people felt or are mentored.” The researcher has no preconceptions about what

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they will discover, no burning research questions, at least initially. But they will ask lots of people about mentoring and/or they will look at lots of mentoring contexts and see if there are elements that emerge as common features that identify what is going on. These findings then become a way of “grounding” what mentoring includes and why it may have significance to mentors and mentees.

My point is: without intending to, reflecting on my own mentoring situations (as mentee or mentor) I have had what you could identify as a ‘grounded theoretical discovery.’ I naturally started to think of people that I could say have had an impact on me as a person or on them. By impact I mean that I realize not only that such people are meaningful to me as a person, but I can specifically identify elements of formation (significance) that connects us to each other.

In this remembering of mentor persons and contexts, distinctive, insightful elements have become apparent. So far, these include a lot of people and situations to credit! Persons in each other’s presence are likely never insignificant but when intentional (by whatever social or spiritual contract) are full of potential (even powerful) significance; there is a “for-life-resource” that these relationships give; the fact that such relationships are not always a conscious but an intrinsic reality; while it may appear that mentoring is the encounter of likely two individuals with one another, the relationship exists within communities, in and by which discursive formation takes place. The assumption of the Divine (God with and for us!) means an encompassing of mentor and mentee and their discursive communities by that One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism even (or especially!) when not consciously promoted or recognized.

The assumption of the Divine (God with and for us!) means an encompassing of mentor and mentee and their discursive communities by that One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism even (or especially!) when not consciously promoted or recognized.

To illustrate in part, I provide below a few personal examples of these grounded discoveries.

Mentors I Claim

My grandpa was a European immigrant, largely self-educated and self-made. He was quiet and unassuming, but his presence in a room from the time of my first awarenesses until his death left me in awe of his person. He gave me the freedom to explore and discover on his farm, his engineers workshop, his life experiences, and the substance of his character. I have this insight now but then I intuitively knew that life lessons were embedded in concrete moments, when he said things like, “if you try to force something it will likely break,” or “a person put it together and with thought and care a person can take it apart and put it back together again.”

As a senior in high school, through a friend, I met a gentleman who was a pastor of a modest country church in the Christian Missionary Alliance. This man helped

me in my college and seminary years to stay in touch with the ‘calling’ to church service that I have had since I was a small child. When I was uncertain of where or how I should serve, he, without hesitation, helped me to identify what others could see and give thanks for, that my service was in the Lutheran church body to which I belonged then and now. Many personal one-on-one hours over the years with him have been foundational to serving pastorally, even up to the present.

As my wife and I were first married, we shared our first years of married life as part of an intentional Christian community in the university town where she was finishing her preparation for Christian service. The community consisted of a professor (also Lutheran Pastor), his family, students at the university as well as individuals who lived in that town. We were about a dozen people who met daily for prayer, scripture, and devotions. We shared our lives while living in a large house, learning to apply the life in Christ to ordinary everyday living. The Professor became a life-long friend and father in Christ. He was a theologian of the first order who helped me to value the Word of scripture in the contexts of everyday life with people. His joy and hope in Christ were and still are (though he is now in glory) a blessing.

But how do I recount the realized many, now remembered, along with those who have slipped in and out of my life unobserved or nameless to conscious memory—my mom especially in her later years, a host of relatives, teachers, the aquatic director at the local YMCA, professors, friends, colleagues, mission execs who came along side as I was a new mission developer, supervisors, people in the community living out lives of example and emulation? They are all there! A host/cloud of witnesses! Credit is due to them all, for I do not exist as I am without them.

My mom especially in her later years, a host of relatives, teachers, the aquatic director at the local YMCA, professors, friends, colleagues, mission execs who came along side as I was a new mission developer, supervisors, people in the community living out lives of example and emulation? They are all there! A host/cloud of witnesses!

Mentees I Claim (Or who claim me)

Two experiences, similar in nature but divided by decades:

I had returned to graduate school to work on a doctorate in intercultural studies. The time period was just as people were learning about such things as email and a little-known tool used by educational institutions called “the internet.” I received a phone call from a person who I had not heard from in almost 20 years. Eric had been a youth of Hispanic background who was participant in the multi-cultural congregation that we served in New York City. The unexpected voice said, “Is this Pastor Whitsett? I do not know if you remember me ... “ I did remember, of course. Eric called to remind me of the times I would take him and others with him on a Saturday morning to fish off the Jamaica Bay Bridge. He said, “I called to let you

know that the time we spent together made a difference.” He was married, with a beautiful family and serving in ministry in a church of another denomination. I had no idea of the impact of being with him and of being present in his life for a handful of years. To God be the glory.

Similarly, while attending a college reunion, an individual attending, who I did not personally know, approached me. She was carrying a message from a mutual friend and person who I had gotten to know in another ministry setting, with whom our family and his had spent much time together in the gives and takes of life, in prayer, in scripture, in joys and sorrows. She said, “Paul speaks of you often. He credits you with bringing him to the life of faith and service that he has today.” I did not know. I did know that he and his family were of similar character to our family and certainly to me. Sometimes I would just ride along with him as he was running errands and we would talk about life, matters of the heart and faith, often with an honesty that one would not think possible.

I am beginning to think this mentoring thing can certainly be intentional but in practice is less conscious on the part of one or the other or both.

Lately, I find in so-called retirement years that there are people who show up and with whom ongoing conversation(s) occur around many topics, concerns, life-realities. Some appear to be implicitly mutual, others explicitly for the benefit of the other person. I am beginning to think this mentoring thing can certainly be intentional but in practice is less conscious on the part of one or the other or both.

An Aha Moment

What has been difficult to share in the examples given is that these relationships, whether as mentee or mentor, did not happen in isolation. There were often, if not always, supportive communities that were instrumental to the relationship. Sometimes they were church communities or the community of extended family. Sometimes they were the host communities that supported me or the others over a lifetime, not seen but nevertheless “the shoulders on which we were standing” in the mentoring relationship. These communities of people were and are the webs and even the woven fabric of what makes persons grounded and functional especially as mentoring resources to one another.

My sense is that this relationship that we may formally describe as mentoring, is more descriptive of something that is meant to be organic and intrinsic but like all things also needs intentionally and even structure to assure that I am/we are in the presence of another with purpose. It strikes me that care-giving relationships like chaplains, pastoral counselors, help to establish the opportunity for such formation.

Understandably, you and I may think of these care-giving relationships as short-lived and transitory, barely retaining them in our memories. And yet, potential and power exists to the extent that people will say, “You helped me. You make a difference.

My journey is what it is in a good sense, for the time, the moment, the lifetime that we have shared together.” In addition, as we learned early in our own clinical training, we always carry ourselves with us into the caregiving, perhaps mentoring relationship. Ourselves includes the communities, the people with whom we may relate in discourse (both verbal and non-verbally), in faith, in labor, in the living as ‘neighbor’ with one another. There is a learning, a shaping that happens, which we may not sense as there but nevertheless comes from such communities, like Barnabas with Paul and Mark with both Barnabas and Peter all the way down to you and me. And then of course (though easy to diminish) is the overlay of God’s grace at work in Christ through people who, like us, are to be shaped and to shape each other’s lives.

Finally, take a moment (or more) and reflect. Who are those who have been or are active in your formation as a person? What specifically do you credit to them in word, example, or force of personhood? Though we may think of discourse as about words spoken, heard, or read, how is the presence and example of your personal encounters just as, if not more, informing and forming than words that may be used? How are the communities to which others or you may be connected helping you to be formed and are a forming source by which you also may be a mentor? In all these reflections, in what ways does a “Divine overlay” fill with grace the character of the mentoring received and given? Much joy to you as you reflect!



Mark Whitsett, over the course of 45 years, has served in parish ministry as a bi-lingual-multicultural pastor in New York City; in parish ministry in the Midwest; on the adjunct faculty (theology and religious studies) of Concordia University Wisconsin; as Director of Pastoral Care at Cedar Lake serving people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; now “retired.” He currently serves as President of the Kentuckiana Federation of Lutheran Churches, as Visitation Pastor of a Lutheran congregation in Louisville, KY and is a member of the editorial board for Caring Connections. Mark also rejoices to share in ministry with Margy, his Deaconess/Chaplain wife of 49 years.

The Mess & Mystery of Mentorship

Nathan Spaulding

“Jesus didn’t say, ‘Blessed are those who care for the poor.’ He said, ‘Blessed are we where we are poor, where we are broken.’ It is there that God loves us deeply and pulls us into deeper communion with God’s Heart.”

– Henri Nouwen

The Mess

When I ponder or practice mentorship, I cannot help but remember Henri Nouwen, the faithful companion and spiritual caregiver, who embodied virtues such as humility, friendship, and long-suffering, three attributes essential to the dance of mentorship. As I meditate on the quote above and apply it to our current conversation surrounding mentorship, I hear my beloved Henri gently yet firmly, in his Dutch sort of way, inviting me to consider the following:

- I am blessed where I am broken and poor.
- God loves me — deeply — in my brokenness and in my poverty.
- God communes with me in my brokenness and poverty in such a way that I am drawn deeper into God’s Heart within and through these very real and wounded places of pain in my heart and life.

Mentorship is messy. One reason for its messiness is that while I desperately need mentorship, to be mentored in the ancient way of life, love, and light, alas, I do not always desire to receive this mentorship (in fact, I often flee it fiercely). Another reason for its messiness, and this, I believe, is implicit in the first: people are messy. People are squirmy. Humans are broken and poor, but we often trundle along through our daily routines, comically unaware of our brokenness and poverty. But if Nouwen is onto something, and I trust that he is, Jesus is inviting us, His dear ones, to, one, be honest and vulnerable about our great need, our brokenness and our poverty, and, furthermore, dare to receive and rest in the news that Jesus not only knows our great need but knowingly dwells within us, embracing us and holding fast to us in our woundedness, and draws our thirsty and weary hearts deeper into the Ocean that is the Love of His Father through the delight of His Spirit. Perhaps Nouwen is tenderly reminding us that if we remain unaware of our brokenness and poverty, we may remain unaware of the blessing, too. But to be open to our brokenness and poverty, to guide it into friendship with Jesus, is to be open and receptive to the fulfilling and nourishing blessing that is ours in the one, who, to

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the end beyond, bears witness to the wonder that the poor are blessed and loved, that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, to the ones who cry: “I have a great need; please help me.”

As a hospice and palliative care chaplain in Northeast Wisconsin, I sort of wander through the wilderness (to borrow a non-aquatic metaphor) of help and need. Folks do not typically call me when life is sunny and smooth. They reach out with a trembling hand when the proverbial snot is hitting the fan. These beloved sojourners in my care are facing the darkness and disturbance of death. And as they near that vast and mysterious beyond, in my experience their simple and deeply human desire is to receive divine comfort that they are not alone, not forgotten nor forsaken, but forgiven and held and loved and seen by God even as they stammer and stagger through their final breaths. They call the chaplain primarily because their hearts have become awakened to their great need. In the brokenness and poverty of death, hearts are humbled and tenderized, moved to reach out for the blessing of God. And how does God receive and respond to those who call out to God for help in their great need?

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I was once summoned to visit an elderly veteran who was being assaulted by fear as he neared the end of his earthly journey. He had done hurtful things in the war. Hurtful things had been done to him. He had borne witness to hurtful things committed outside of his control. As family members led me to kneel beside his bedside, to hold his hand, to speak gently to his spirit, even as he shook his head side-to-side, stuttering, “I’m so afraid, I’m so afraid, I’m so afraid,” Jesus led us, really, in our collective need, because none of us had a clue what to do, to hold his head in our hands, to place our hands upon his heart, to sing hymns of faithfulness, to recall blood-soaked vows of forgiveness, healing, and grace, and to look compassionately into his eyes, his weary, war-torn, waning eyes, to sit with him in his fear, to embrace him and hold him there and to speak perfect love to his terror: “Jesus is with you here. Jesus forgives you there. Jesus will embrace you and welcome you with mercy then. Jesus holds you and loves you deeply now.”

As family members and I stared into the womb of brokenness and poverty and as a loving presence held each of us in the kind of simple, stable way that only love can do, I was reminded, really, by my ordained mentors surrounding me in that moment, that weightier themes such as salvation and isolation of life and death of celebration, grief, joy and sorrow, of grace and guilt, of hatred and love. These do not consist in us humans knowing what we ought to know but in being known, quite profoundly, by One who knows us better than we know ourselves. Nor do they consist in us humans clinging to what we ought to cling to but in being embraced, held, and stabilized, truly, by One who draws us into the depths of His Love even in our letting

go and losing grip. Nor do they consist in us humans giving everything there is to give or loving all there is to love or serving everywhere in need of service, but rather in gazing upon and receiving, again and again, the gift, the love, and the divine servant whose union with us in our alienation is what makes us whole.

The Mystery

- God communes with me in my brokenness and poverty in such a way that I am drawn deeper into God's Heart within and through these very real and wounded places of pain in my heart and life.

As Nouwen and other mystics, poets, and holy wanderers would express, the unutterable mystery concerning mentorship within the triune, perichoretic relationship of humility, friendship, and long-suffering is that God comes to us, gives us God's friendship, and patiently perseveres with us through the warp and woof of life *inside* of our brokenness and poverty, to the end that we are effectually and relationally healed and made whole by the indwelling Jesus who by grace through His faithfulness takes our wounds into His body and gives us His life for our healing. Through baths of belonging, meals of mercy, promises of pardon & peace, and the consolation of being gathered within a cherished family, united by a love stronger than death, we receive the blessing and benefit of Jesus as His indwelling presence folds us deeper into the loving heart of His Father even as His indwelling presence meets us in our brokenness and poverty, healing us from the inside out, divinizing us into the image of the one who truly permeates our cells, His Word is true. He makes all things new.

I am not sure if Nouwen was familiar with the Lutheran Confessions but if he heard or read this quote, I am sure he would be most interested and intrigued, especially as it relates to God's indwelling presence within our brokenness and poverty. The Formula of Concord states:

"You must place this existence of Christ, which constitutes him as one person with God, far, far beyond things created, as far as God transcends them; and, on the other hand, place it [this existence of Christ, His very presence] as deep in and as near to all created things as God is in them."

Athanasius would say that God assumes the entirety of the human experience to heal the entirety of the human experience. Echoing Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Luther, and Nouwen too, would be mentored and molded by this good news for the broken and poor, those all-too-afraid to perhaps even embrace the faithfulness of Jesus: that God in Christ is truly present to us and with us where we

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hurt the most, and it is His indwelling, inexhaustible presence that heals our wounds, makes us whole, and empowers us to be His broken body and poured out blood for the sake of others. As we are continually mentored by the beloved people in our spiritual care and keeping, as we are mentored and molded by the mystery of being included in the divine light, love, and life, and as we look to our mentors, communing and communicating with us in a wide variety of contexts and circles of support, I am confident that we will learn to rest in the indwelling love of God, reminding one another that it is OK to be broken and poor, as we daily receive the life-giving, healing relationship that Jesus has freely established with us inside of our darkness and desperation. On his deathbed, John Wesley reminded his dearest friends: “The best news of all is God is with us.” In life, in death, in brokenness, in poverty, in contentment and in need, to the bottom of our bones, God is with us. And so, we engage and participate lovingly in the lives of those in our care and keeping.

“God is mercy in mercy in mercy.” – Thomas Merton

“The Word became human and made His home among us.” – John



Nathan is a son, brother, husband, father, and friend of semi-active contemplatives, living in Green Bay, WI with his wife and newborn son, learning what it means to practice virtues such as humility, friendship, and long-suffering. When he is not visiting the sick and dying as a community chaplain, Nathan enjoys cuddling & snuggling with his wife, enjoying the outdoors in a multitude of ways, and long stroller walks with his son to the local coffee shop or brewery. If you asked Nate's wife where his treasure is, she would laugh and respond, "Books."

“Mentor” as Defined by Noah Webster

John Schumacher

IN OUR LIBRARY WE HAVE an exceptionally large, old dictionary, the *Webster’s New International Dictionary*, copyright 1913. I would love to find it a new home, preferably one with a climate-controlled environment, to slow the book’s deterioration. However, as many of us are now learning, no one, not even libraries or Half Price Books, wants the books we have accumulated over our years of ministry. So, I keep our *Webster’s* and once-in-a-while make an interesting discovery on the ways in which English has changed over the past century.

Case-in-point is the definition offered for the word “mentor”:

1. Greek Mythology. A friend to whom Odysseus, when setting out for Troy, intrusted [19th century usage] the care of his house and the education of Telemachus.
2. Hence, a wise and faithful counselor or monitor.

The world (and English language) has changed. Rarely does an internet word search begin with a reference to Greek mythology.

The phrase “care of his house” brought to mind my first mentors in pastoral ministry, Pastors Len Peterson and Randy Webb, who welcomed a cohort of first year LSTC seminarians to serve their initial field work assignment at the ELCA congregation on the southwest side of Chicago to which both pastors had been recently called. They invited us to share in the care of their “house” — and its people — as we learned to lead worship, preach, teach, do parish visitation, and test out pastoral identity in the midst of the gathered community. Unlike Odysseus, they remained nearby to counsel and monitor as we tested our wings.

Peterson and Webb each had their own skills, experiences, and perspectives on ministry, but together as a mentoring team, they offered us four gifts. First, they regarded us with respect and trust. They took seriously the life experience we brought to this first professional ministry field placement and trusted us to fill the roles and responsibilities of the pastoral office. They sent us out to visit parishioners in their homes.

Peterson and Webb each had their own skills, experiences, and perspectives on ministry, but together as a mentoring team, they offered us four gifts.

The second gift they offered was transparency. Working as co-pastors, Peterson and Webb certainly had opportunities for conflict as they worked to build their relationship and ministry model. They did not hide conflict from the seminarians and allowed us to see how they worked toward resolution. When the Congregation Council

met to consider a proposal the pastors supported to offer resettlement assistance to a Vietnamese refugee family, Peterson and Webb provided us front row seats to see the dynamics at work in congregational decision-making and allowed us to process with them our shared disappointment when the proposal was defeated in a close vote. Their gift of transparency freed us to share our own questions, disappointments, and moments of inadequacy. The relationship felt open and honest.

The third gift Peterson and Webb offered was a sense of humor. Together, they were two of the funniest guys to ever don albs and stoles. Their children's sermons using Sesame Street puppets and their vocal imitations of Cookie Monster, and Burt and Ernie received Five Star reviews by kids and adults alike. And of course, because they served an Augustana-heritage congregation and because Len was a good Swede, they had an endless supply of Sven and Ole and Lena jokes. For seminarians who were working on pastoral identity and who took themselves too seriously, Peterson and Webb were liberators. Goofy things do happen in ministry because clergy certainly can be goofy (a solid clinical term) and because we work with people who have the capacity for doing goofy things. It was good to be able to sit together to talk and laugh with peers about these ministry experiences. We can hear Jesus' sense of humor in the Gospel texts, even if it is buried under centuries of pious interpretation. With Len and Randy, we laughed.

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The fourth gift evolved over the two years of the mentoring relationship and beyond it. Len and Randy offered the gift of friendship, and I was able to respond in kind. I will never forget that Len and his family invited my spouse and me to their home on Christmas Eve when they learned we were more than eight hundred miles from our nearest family members. I will never forget that Randy and his family drove more than eight hundred miles to my hometown in Pennsylvania so Randy could preach the homily at my ordination. This offered, and received, friendship marked the transition from mentor/mentee to colleagues. Peterson and Webb had been responsible educators for the sake of our professional education, wise and faithful counselors for the sake of our pastoral formation, and careful monitors for the sake of "their house" and its people. But the relationship was ultimately expressed as friendship.

Twenty-five years later I was asked to serve as the Manager of Spiritual Care and Healing Arts for the hospice to which I had been called. There was a clear mentoring responsibility in the position as I grew the department and welcomed pastoral care interns and residents and integrative therapy interns into the program. There was also a mentoring role in my relationship with the staff with whom I had a supervisory responsibility. For most of the staff I hired, this was their first hospice experience. The mundane issues of electronic medical records, productivity, and staff scheduling

were important, but clearly had to take second place in supervisory meetings to the experience of being present to those living with loss and experiencing the approaching end of life. I mentored staff in hospice care.

I believe in my supervisory and mentoring relationships, I channeled Peterson and Webb. I began the relationship with trust and respect. I regarded the people I hired or invited into residency/internship as competent professionals who were appropriately credentialed or in the process of being credentialed in their discipline. I trusted them to do their work well and rarely was I disappointed. More often than not staff exceeded my expectations.

I strove to be transparent in my relationship with those I mentored. Not only did I accompany them on their visits to observe their work, but I also participated in patient and family visits with them so they could observe my pastoral practice. We shared “good visits” as well as visits which left us wondering what had just happened – and we processed the experience together. Staff saw my joy, my sadness, and my tears. I also sought to be transparent in sharing my understanding of the organization’s dynamics, though occasionally I shielded them from decisions made by senior management. (Upper-level direction sometimes changes before it has a chance to impact line staff.)

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And like Peterson and Webb and my peers twenty-five years prior, the Spiritual Care and Healing Arts staff laughed. One complaint I heard from other managers who occupied offices adjacent to our staff meeting room was that my staff “laughed too much.” I mentored bright and creative people – chaplains, therapists, and musicians. It was inevitable that there would be some goofiness bubbling up among us. One healthy response to aging and physical decline is laughter. As Frederick Buechner observed in *Whistling in the Dark*,

“Eight-year-olds like eighty-year-olds have lots of things they’d love to do but can’t because their bodies aren’t up to it, so they learn to play instead. Eighty-year-olds might do well to take notice. They can play at being eighty-year-olds for instance. Stiff knees and hearing aids, memory loss and poor eyesight, are no fun, but there are those who marvelously survive them by somehow managing to see them as, among other things, and in spite of all, a little funny.”

We who lived day by day confronted with our patient’s mortality, and our own, learned to laugh.

Finally, mentoring relationships evolved and grew into friendships. Together, we shared births, marriages, and deaths. Every year in July the staff would gather at our house for a cook-out. Mid-January every year when my spouse and I hosted an “Epiphany party,” my staff’s names were on the top of the guest list. And even now, almost a decade into retirement, those relationships continue.

Mentoring, as I first learned it in the context of parish ministry, is about respect for and trust in those who would present themselves to be mentored. It is about transparency and vulnerability which allows the student to learn through the mentor's positive and negative examples. Reciprocally, it invites the student into transparency and vulnerability for the sake of their learning. Mentoring encourages the student to be human and fully present — to laugh and cry in response to the work they are called to do. The mentor is more than a wise and faithful counselor. The mentor is also the host who invites the student into ministry, into a specific ministry discipline, and even into the possibility of mutual respect, collegiality, and friendship.



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Mentors in My Formation

Diane Greve

AS A WOMAN COMING INTO MY OWN in the early 70's, I can think of two male pastors and several women who knowingly or not became mentors and role models in my formation.

While I was still living on the farm where I grew up surrounded by women who were mothers, homemakers and farmwives, several female relatives visited who were living in other states. One great aunt lived in Chicago and worked for a wealthy family. Another lived in California and was a mother and a nurse. They planted a seed for me to be more than a farmwife. And my semi-retired LCMS pastor supported my desire to be in professional churchwork. Although he wanted me to consider being a Christian day schoolteacher, I turned that idea down. He came back with the possibility of becoming a deaconess. He showed an interest in my faith development and professional formation.

During my deaconess internship year, my supervisor was Ken Siess. I was young and had a lot to learn about chaplaincy and ministry in general. He was a seasoned chaplain/counselor/CPE educator who taught part time at Concordia Seminary, St Louis. He taught pastoral care and part time at the hospital where I was assigned. This was during the unsettled time at the seminary that led to Seminex. Consequently, he was not as available to me as I would have liked. I had to ask, sometimes plead, for what I needed from him. I trusted him with my faith struggles. Sometimes I felt abandoned. I told him that. Because of these tussles, we developed mutual appreciation. He also introduced me to Clinical Pastoral Education. I took my first unit during my internship. When I applied for a residency after college, I was accepted because the supervisor knew Ken. Sometimes it is who you know!

After I left the internship, his life moved on and so did mine. Twenty years later, I was working at the Lutheran Deaconess Association when he asked about a deaconess who might be interested and qualified to become a CPE supervisor. He was now at the University Hospital in Minneapolis and wanted to train a Lutheran woman to be a CPE supervisor. I gave this a lot of thought and most of the deaconesses did not have the required 4 units of CPE as a prerequisite. I was qualified! And my life was ready for a change. He invited me to apply.

During this, my 2nd year of residency, we kept firm boundaries. He was my CPE supervisor. Yet he encouraged and befriended me. He knew I was a single mother

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doing this on very little money and he found grants and employment for me. He introduced me to influential people.

After he retired and his wife had serious health concerns, I visited them. When I was ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry, I asked him to put the stole on me. When I learned that he wanted me to read a scripture lesson at his funeral, I was so honored.

What makes a mentor? The women early in my life were role models that allowed me to imagine a future with wider horizons. But I would say that Ken was a mentor. This relationship evolved. Initially we were assigned to work together. That was how we met. And he saw potential in me that he helped to uncover. He could imagine me becoming more than I could envision. He could see possibility in me. He showed interest in me. He was human and had his flaws, and I did not pattern my life after his. He allowed me to be who I was gifted to be. He did not try to shape me in his image. Having known him for 50 years, he was my encourager and cheerleader and spiritual friend. He was my mentor.



Diane Greve is a retired ACPE educator, an LDA deaconess and a retired ELCA Word and Sacrament minister. She lives in Minneapolis alongside the Mississippi River, near her two adult children and 5 grandchildren. For several years, she has been the ELCA co-editor of Caring Connections.

Longer-term Effects of Being a Mentee and a Mentor

Bruce Hartung

THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF ALLIANCES in the relationship world, all based on the purpose of the relationship. There are therapeutic alliances, learning alliance, spiritual direction alliances, supervisory alliances, companion alliance, friendship alliances and the like, just to name a few. What about a mentor alliance? Would it have a specific meaning, since this is not a word I have used to describe relationships I have had over the years?

Here is a “mentor” definition from dictionary.com: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mentor>

“Even your mentor might not have known that the word mentor comes from a proper name—though a fictional one. In the *Odyssey*, Mentor is a loyal adviser of Odysseus entrusted with the care and education of his son Telemachus. The first records of mentor used in English as a noun referring to an advisor come from the 1700s. Mentor wasn’t popularly used as a verb until the 1900s. (Similar to most mentor-mentee relationships, mentees are much younger—the first records of it come from the 1960s.)

The word mentor is most commonly used in professional and academic contexts. In academia, a mentor is usually a teacher, especially a professor, and their mentee is typically a student. A mentor may act as a model for the mentee’s career and help them decide which path to pursue. The same thing goes for professional mentor-mentee relationships, in which the mentor is usually a boss or a person who holds a more senior position. Because mentors draw on their experience to mentor mentees, mentors are usually older. In all cases, the two words imply a close relationship based on the mentee’s respect for the mentor’s wisdom and experience and the mentor’s recognition of the mentee’s dedication and potential.”

In my “professional” life I have been a pastoral therapist, a counselor supervisor, a spiritual director (of sorts), a classroom (university and seminary) teacher, an advocate for church worker health and wellness, a director of two different counseling centers, an officer of a major pastoral counseling association, a ministerial formation Dean and a coach. These are varying roles with, at times, diverse goals, and a number of relationships in these contexts and roles would fit the above definition of mentor, including my current, mostly teleconference, ongoing

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conversations with a number (14–20 per week these days) of current pastors. I will accept the definition in its most global form. But, as I look at all these contextually diverse relationships, past and present, there are many common threads, personal challenges, and learnings. This article will address a few of them.

Relationships happen because the Spirit brings people together.

While I sometimes wondered why it was that a particular person came my way, in most cases I found the Holy Spirit was up to something. This deeper emotional and spiritual belief became something of a fundamental core understanding that led me to be more respectful of people as God's person

redeemed by Jesus, and that coming together could be fruitful and growthful for both of us, and that the wholistic development of us as people and followers of Jesus was key. It meant that my client or student or colleague or staff member or mentee, sent by the Spirit, was also my teacher and that I had much to learn from and about them and always more to learn about myself. Each encounter was an opportunity even though it might also be challenge; the development of the relationship under the guidance of the Spirit was central; each one of us was loved by a gracious God and worthy of respect and love because of Jesus and despite our mutual imperfections and missteps.

I often wondered, and still do, how it was that people showed up at the very right time, to guide, lead, support and walk with me.

I could never have learned this on my own without myself being a mentee. I had a number of people who mentored me, and from whom I could finally, and with much difficulty, believe that they had my best interests truly in their heart and, at their core, loved and respected me. I often wondered, and still do, how it was that people showed up at the very right time, to guide, lead, support and walk with me. I have come to believe that relationship opportunities and growth do not happen accidentally or by chance, but they happen because the Spirit brings people together.

At the beginning, the other person is my primary teacher in the relationship, and I am the primary learner. As the relationship grows we become mutual learners and teachers.

It is an axiom that listening is the beginning of a relationship. Listening is a means by which I walk with someone else, and with that walking together I could offer some guidance and assistance as well as understanding and empathy. Listening is a function; learning about the other person and where they are “at” is the goal. While this is an axiom, I have found it hard to implement. I really do like to know stuff, even good stuff out of my own experience, and I like to share that. What I came to learn was that this was, partially it least, a way to stroke my own narcissism i.e., I knew

more than the other person did and I will demonstrate that, whether or not it actually fit where the person actually was or what they needed from me.

I have come to use “walking together” as a phrase and “mutual learning and growing together” as a goal. In short, as I become a better learner I have been able to be, I hope, a better mentor, companion, and colleague. This is consistent with a parallel learning that in order to be good leader I need to have learned how to be a good follower. These were not easy lessons, and ones that I am still learning.

Whether it be “therapist,” “pastor,” “professor,” “mentor” or whatever is the title, it is only actually so when the other person opens up their world and their lives to invite me in.

A title may be achieved by academic might and practical competence and may be organizationally granted upon that achievement. But the true conferring of the title only comes when another opens their lives and heart to another and essentially says, “you are my” I thought that when I became a “vicar” (intern in the LCMS) things would be such that people would immediately allow me to influence them. I was disappointed but thought that when I became a “pastor” that would happen. I was disappointed but thought that when I became a “pastoral counselor ” with a Ph.D. that would happen. I was disappointed, but I thought when I became licensed as a “psychologist” that would happen. I was disappointed. I could go on. But the lesson was clear: the achievement of the title was a worthy thing, but for it to have personal relevance to others it needs to be granted by the other. It needs a relationship to be enacted, and that is ultimately in the hands of the other person.

Thus, my task came to be to offer the opportunity for a relationship and to behave in ways consistent with that offer. I needed to work on and somewhat through my disappointment when people essentially refused the offer, and I needed to understand that what I was offering may very well not be what was needed. Like everything else, I could not learn that by myself; it needed to be lived through relationships with others that the Spirit sent. I do still wish this were not so, but the only way it could not so be if everyone did what I wanted them to do. I learned that I did not like to be dependent on another person for whether or not a deeper relationship is established. But the reality is that it takes two of us to tango.

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Walking with people in a mentoring kind of relationship will raise difficult personal challenges that need to be recognized and faced.

Personal work about oneself is a requirement along the way. This is, I think, a requirement that never ceases. Walking with others will expose us to feelings and

ideas that may be new or may trigger us back into older experiences. In my life walk, I have found it to be true as it continues into my older age. Here are two examples that have caused me to move into deeper reflection:

Ambition. As relationships deepened, I discovered that I could become invested in/had an ambition for a particular achievement of the other person. At some level this could be seen as and actually was a respect for the person's promise and potential. But too strongly it became my desire for him/her and could overrule my capacity to listen to where the person actually was. For a talented person to want to become a pastor is, for instance, a wonderful thing, but when my desiring that makes it hard to deeply walk alongside the person when questioning their pastoral direction and clouds my capacity for us to talk together, it is a problem. That problem is mine not theirs! The question for myself is, "what is going on in me that my desires for the person to proceed in the direction I wish are overriding my capacity to genuinely accompany?"

Envy. At its core, education and personal development means that it is quite possible that the "student" or the "mentee" will become better at or more successful in the task or vocation than will the "mentor." In fact, this is what should happen since the mentee has the benefit of the mentor plus others. What happens internally when it is likely that the seminarian will become a better preacher than I or counselor than I or get a position at a way higher wage than I, or achieve an office I really wished to have? Sometimes I looked wistfully at the opportunities the younger folk were having, being happy for them but also envious of them. I did not like this feeling in myself and sought to repress it. But it was soon clear to me that that was not a helpful response. This realization brought a return to a personal consultation process to trace some of my unfulfilled ambition and work to deal with my envious self.

And so:

I am incredibly grateful for the mentors, teachers, guides, and colleagues who have influenced me. I did not pop out of my mother's womb with these thoughts written above. I think some of those who have influenced me would be able to see parts of themselves in this article. I hope so. I also hope the article is a bit stimulating and if there is any desire to discuss it I am open to do that.



Bruce Hartung is a father to two, a grandfather to five, and a husband to one. He is a retired pastoral counselor (Diplomate, AAPC) and clinical psychologist. He is currently serving as one of the two co-editors of Caring Connections, a member of the Board of the Concordia Music Conservatory, the President of the Maryland Continuing Care Residents Association, and a member of the Leadership Team of the Wellspring Center for Leadership and Wellness. He also maintains active electronic conversational meetings with a number of parish and specialized pastoral care pastors.