

SERVING SENIORS Dr M. Louis Larson

'What can I do to serve the Lord?' It's a question often asked by seniors who still want to serve God.

Sunday School teaching and leadership positions may have been taken over by younger members of the congregation. Out of loving concern, they may say, 'You have worked hard in the church all your life. Now you need a rest'.

But those who are older may still long to serve the Lord in some way. Here are five avenues of service for which older folks are often better suited than the young.

CORDIALITY

Two elderly men had served the Lord in the church for many years. 'Surely there must be something we can still do', one said.

The other man hit on an idea. 'I have it!' he exclaimed. 'Let's stand at the front door of the church and greet folks as they come in and go out!'

'Hey, that's a good idea,' exclaimed the other. They did their job diligently.

People began saying, 'What a friendly church!' — and the two elderly men watched with satisfaction as attendance increased. They had created an important job for themselves.

COMFORT

Older, more mature persons are particularly well equipped to offer comfort. They have 'been through the mill'. They have seen good days and bad. They have experienced the comfort of the Lord on numerous occasions.

They have learned from experience just what to say to comfort a suffering or grieving person; and they've also learned what *not* to say! They have accumulated a great stock of Scriptures that can be helpful to others.

The Bible says, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God' (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The Lord not only comforts us himself but also works through his people to give comfort. If you cannot comfort a sorrowing, sick or worried friend in person or over the phone, you can send a card, letter or appropriate booklet and accomplish this wonderful ministry. Certainly your prayers will help.

COUNSEL

The way has been long, and you have had many problems along the road. But God has helped you in them all. You have learned from your mistakes. Although your physical vision may be dim, your spiritual vision has increased with age, and you can see many things invisible to impetuous youth.

If you are kindly and sympathetic, and show real concern for others, people will naturally bring their problems to you. Having the wisdom of age, you will hear their problems out, and then you can encourage them to depend on the Lord for his leading and aid.

And you can give examples of how he guided and helped you in your own life. Often just having a good listener is all a person needs to find potential solutions to his or her problem.

COOPERATION

At one church I attended I saw a wonderful example of cooperation, helpfulness and genuine Christian love on the part of older folks towards one another. Several older married couples would look in on elderly widows from time to time to see if they were all right or needed anything. They would stay to chat for a while or bring them to church.

The Christian kindness of those retired couples made it possible for the widows to stay in their own homes, close to good neighbors. And other people who observed such thoughtfulness were challenged to live more for Christ and be more concerned for others.

Many older people living alone would give anything to have someone come and ease their loneliness. Some in nursing homes never have anyone visit them. How they would look forward to

a regular visit from a caring person!

CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER

'Pray without ceasing' says 1 Thessalonians 5:17. This is something all Christians should do. But all too frequently young Christians are so burdened with their cares, problems, and labors that they forget to pray as they ought.

Yet prayer is much needed today! Our young people, our churches, our ministers and church leaders, our country, our world, and our missionaries are all in desperate need of prayer.

Who can pray better than Christians of mature years? They not only know the great need for prayer, but through experience they know how to pray.

People who need Christ may come to him because of your prayers. Missionaries may prosper in their ministries because you prayed. Christians living in dangerous places may be delivered from persecution, imprisonment or death because you prayed.

Your children and grandchildren may have better lives because you pray for them. Your church may be spared dissension and upheaval. Your country may be delivered from the hand of an enemy — because you prayed. You will also enjoy great peace in your heart because of your close communion with God.

Remember, Jesus promised his disciples, 'Whatsoever things you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them' (Mark 11:24).