

Devotion for Week of July 17, 2022

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We have been looking at several passages in Luke related to Jesus trying to teach his disciples. This coming Sunday we will look at his commissioning of them to go out and spread the word. I am reminded that first we must be taught what we need to know before we set out to do good work. In both of my graduate degree studies, internships were required. For my Masters of Social Work, I was required to serve a year in an internship in the field of expertise I was majoring in – in my case, in social work policy and administration. This helped me when I moved from clinical child welfare work after graduation into training center administration at a School of Social Work, and later, work as a social programs consultant for a health care systems company, where I have worked for over 40 years.

Similarly, I was required to complete 400 hours of contextual education and 400 hours of ministerial internship for my Masters of Divinity degree. I worked in a pastoral counseling center, focused on services to senior adults, and then served my ministerial internship in a Presbyterian Church in Durbanville, South Africa. It was in South Africa that I really learned to preach – not in my preaching class at the seminary. Having to prepare a sermon and liturgy every week, and then reviewing my performance with my supervising pastor were the catalysts for my call to pastoral ministry. I learned a great deal from this very wise pastor, Dr. Peter Langerman, and I still practice his preaching mantra, which he taught me in Afrikaans: “wandellin in die woord.” This means “wandering in the word.” Peter told me about his practice of first reading through the scripture for the weekly sermon, and then sitting with it a little while. Then he would draft his sermon, and let that sit for a while. By the end of the week, he had his sermon finalized after a two step process of letting the ideas from the scripture germinate and grow in meaning. I have followed this process ever since, and I find that “wandering in the word” lets me reflect on various meanings of the text and ponder what the text says to me this time. I may preach on a text more than once, but each time it seems to speak to me differently.

I find that “wandellin in die woord” helps me center my thoughts, makes me open to new ideas, and enables me to bring a word to you that has meaning to me. I invite you as you read your Bible or follow the scripture on Sunday mornings, to “wandel” a little in that word, and see where God leads you in understanding.

Jeanne