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The following article is published by Rev Jim Halmarson (my husband) in his congregation's newsletter almost every year to remind his parishioners about the pastoral ministry he is prepared to give to them. It is reprinted with his permission. In my years as Assistant to the Bishop and Bishop of Saskatchewan Synod, I have been heartened whenever I hear that pastors are making regular and intentional visits in the parish. I know it's hard to find the folks at home. People don't always welcome an in-home visit nor have time to sit down and chat. But the key component in pastoral ministry – relationship building – requires being available to meet with individuals, couples or families at times of need and celebration. As the new program year of the church begins, consider making your pastor's job a little easier, and give your pastor a call...

“Give me a call sometime if you would like to talk,” I said to one of my parishioners. Her reply was one that I’ve heard many times during my 25+ years of ministry. “Oh, Pastor Jim, you have so many more important things to do than to talk with me!” That response and many like it have always surprised me. I entered the ministry because I felt called to serve people. I also genuinely like people and I am open to being with them in the length and breadth of their lives. Indeed, the greatest honour that a priest or pastor is given is the opportunity to share in peoples’ lives, both in good times and in bad. I realize that the priest or pastor is often seen as the ‘CEO’ of the parish, working in a multi-faceted position that includes administration, teaching, worship leadership & preaching, counseling, and more. True as that may be, the chief role of the pastor is to be a shepherd among the sheep ... to be with the people of God. For that reason, a pastor always has time for people, even if the people think that the pastor ‘has more important things to do’ than to be with them. So, when should you call the pastor?

When to call your pastor ...

- ... when you have a problem in your life and need someone to be your sounding-board.
- ... when you want to have your house blessed.
- ... when a loved one or a friend dies.
- ... when you need help.
- ... when you want to share something new and exciting in your life.
- ... when you are concerned about a family member, a friend, or a neighbour and want to talk with someone about that concern.
- ... when someone you know wishes to be baptized.
- ... when you have a theological question or a question about the Bible.
- ... when you need someone to go to coffee with you ... and everyone else is busy!
- ... when there is a need for a ‘mediator’ in one of your relationships.
- ... when you have a concern about the congregation or the parish.
- ... when you have a birthday, or anniversary, or other celebration.
- ... when you are struggling with your faith.
- ... when you want someone to pray with you or to pray for you.
- ... when you want to share a meal and conversation with someone.
- ... when you or a loved one are going into the hospital.

... when you need to hear words of encouragement, forgiveness or hope.
... when it's 2 a.m. and you REALLY need someone to talk to.
... when you've heard something in a sermon that you didn't understand or didn't like.
... whenever you feel the need!

No matter the time or circumstance, feel free to contact your pastor ... after all, he or she is called to be with and among you, in all times of life!

Grace and peace,
Bishop Cindy Halmarson