

People with a telephone number

Beloved person,

What is of deep value to you? What is real for you? What are you prepared to stand up and fight for if it is attacked? Or what leaves you deeply confused if it is removed from consideration for no reason? These sorts of questions touch on the existential. That is to say: they are questions that are about human existence. They are questions about you. About who you are, about who you want to be, about what makes you happy, about what you give meaning to or what you believe to be truly important. Perhaps you have had clear answers to these questions for a long time and that gives you something strong to hold onto. Even when storms enter your personal life or if, as now, there are examples of hardening every day. In the Christmas Dedication this poem spoke of this:

*Amidst hatred I found within myself
an invincible love.
Amidst tears, I discovered within myself
an invincible smile.
In the midst of the chaos, I found within myself
an invincible calm.
I realised, through it all.
that in the middle of winter, I found within myself
an invincible summer.
And that makes me happy.
Because it means that no matter how hard the world
pushes against me,
there is in myself something stronger, something better,
pushing back.¹*

You also surely know that, in this same way, you are searching for the 'stronger and better' in yourself. Because what was self-evident has changed. That can be about changes in your health, in relationships, due to financial problems, due to violence or bullying or because of tensions that gnaw away at you. Life roars past you and so those existential questions stand in a new light. You want to 'push back' and have faith and belief, but how do you do that?

There are people around you with a telephone number who would like to support you in this. Regardless of age or situation. They are your pastors and pastoral carers. They travel alongside you for a time in order to discover together what is of true value for you. In our hectic and economically focussed society it is far from self-evident that people are prepared to offer each other spiritual care, because we don't have the time or the words to share our vulnerabilities. The first of the four brochures that have been created to deepen and strengthen spiritual care, begins with a sentence from Exodus 3:5:

Take off your shoes, because you are standing on holy ground.

This is a metaphor for the realisation that you first discard those things that are no longer functional. Because in the space between you and me in a discussion or a Sunday service, I leave my 'shoes' behind. If we make room for silence, for symbolism, for eye to eye, for laughing and crying, for contact of the soul, then we do that shoeless. And if then, that which is truly of deep value appears, and something special happens for which there really are no words. You can be truly yourself and the other gets to do that too. Because I don't want to be your listening judgement, but the space in your story.² We dare to enter the domain of the unspeakable and to search there how we can reconcile with everyday life.

That requires reciprocal willingness and vulnerability to be able to approach each other. With an appointment as pastoral carer we make an agreement that, from out of that attitude, the person dedicates themselves with heart and soul to inspire, conduct discussions and to be close by. That agreement also includes the promise of support. On March 8 we will have a national conference based on this, for all pastoral carers. On this day the pastoral carers will receive the new vision on spiritual care: *Care for soul and spirit: inspiration and nearness in a changing world*, the first brochure *The pastoral carer as representative of the sacred* and the new *Guide for Liturgy and Sunday services*.

We feel it is an honour that we may present these beautiful documents so we can get to work together. In this way we can also take a new step together, so we can crystallize the great story of love.³



Attention for our baptism promise

With a warm-hearted greeting, gladly your sister,
Nanda Ziere

¹ Albert Camus, *Retour a Tipasa* (1952)

² Woordschittering, Instagram post last January 6

³ The title of the new multiple year vision is: *Bringing the great story of love, together*