Minister and Elder Roles

Here are some metaphors for how we see ministering and eldering roles. They may not speak for everyone, but they are based on our experience. Made by Johanna Jackson and JT Dorr-Bremme. For more information, visit forwardinfaithfulness.org

Minister as receiver
receive content, and channel it
like a fire hose
may be hard to control the flow

Minister as filter
plankton-eater. a whale on the bottom
of the ocean. take in lots of extra
water.

Minister as translator
hearing a series of words
or receiving pictures
and putting the feelings of them into
human words

Minister as megaphone
broadcasting that which we need to
hear. . . and sometimes the voice is
hoarse or off-key

Minister as listener
spending time listening is
important.

For some, there might be extra content coming in that does not need to be shared.

Discretion is important. In early stages, a minister may be learning what is necessary to share, and learning how to hold the rest.

Doing this work comes with the risk of speaking too much, (too much megaphone), or overhearing (spiritually).

Elder as rock
solidity
strength

Elder as anchor
depth
slow breath
a calm voice

Elder as tether
leash to pull on
knows where the line ends

Elder as guardrail
protection
boundaries
like the bumpers in the bowling lane

Elder as tent poles
holds the frame
holding the space, a structure

Elder as buffer
a shield from the wind. "Open the
window, and block the wind."

An elder holds the bigger picture. Not details.

An elder can exist without a minister, in our experience, without distress.

But a minister unchecked usually needs some guidance, some guardrail, to rely on.

intuition + love + space = empowerment

In our experience, ministers may often be doing what feels like the "first part" of the work. They are taking in content and sifting through it. They are listening for what is right to say. Elders may be doing the "second part" of the work. They are deeply digesting the summary. An elder holds the bigger picture, and the process..