

My Faithful Counselor

By Richard M. Romney

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*When it came to service,
Larry never saw age as a barrier.*

When my family moved back to the town where I grew up, we found a community in transition. Once known as a place for young families, the neighborhood was now the home of many widows and widowers, parents whose children had grown up and moved away, and a small but growing number of young families who were moving in when homes became available.

Because of the shifting population, ward boundaries were reorganized. Parts of three wards were combined into one ward, and I was called as bishop. I had a few days to think about counselors. The first name came quickly and the Spirit confirmed it. But I wasn't immediately sure who the other counselor should be.

I considered several younger men in the new ward, but I didn't know them well. It seemed to me that we needed them more in the Young Men organization.

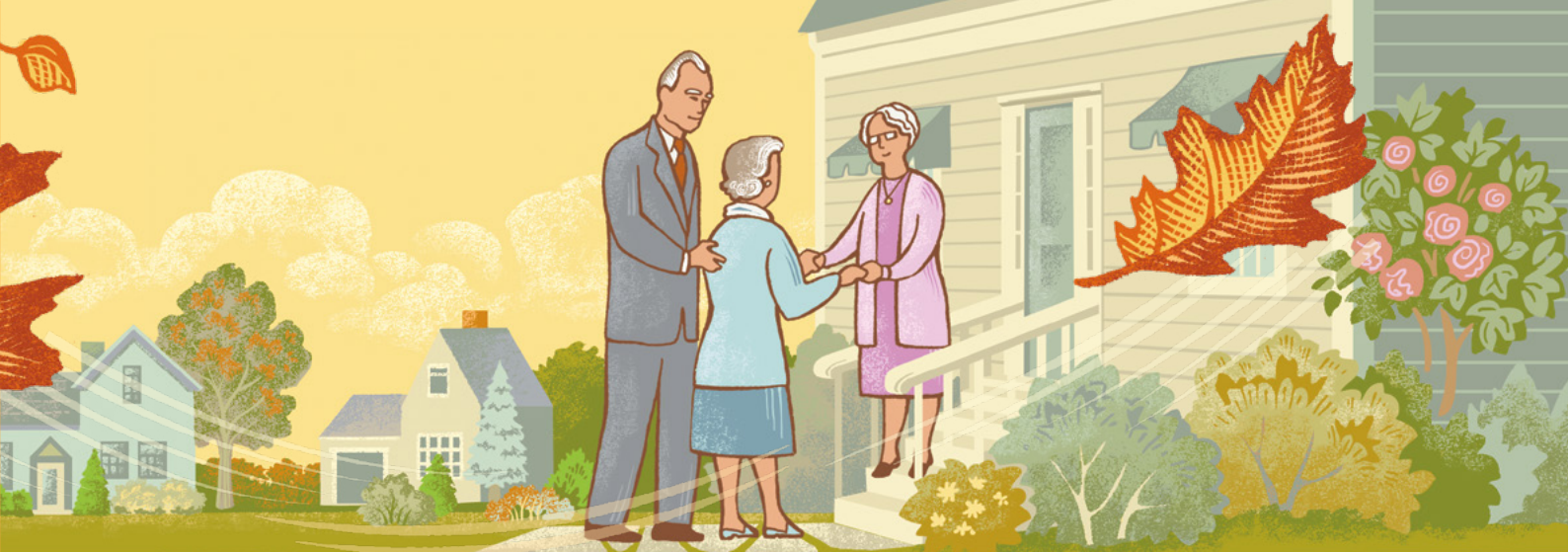
I knew an older man, Larry Morgan, who had lived in the neighborhood for a long time. In fact, he had been a youth leader when I was a teenager. Now he was 76. I felt prompted to talk with him. "Maybe he'll help me become better acquainted with some of the people I don't know," I thought.

He was standing in the driveway when I arrived at his home, and without a word spoken, I knew Larry was to be the other counselor. I visited with him for a few minutes; then I returned home and called the stake president. That Sunday the bishopric was sustained, with Larry as second counselor.

Larry was soft-spoken and deliberate in his manner, but when he spoke, people listened. He also had unwavering faith in the Lord. I soon learned to trust his counsel.



Larry and Elizabeth Morgan



“We’ll Visit Them”

Home teachers (known today as ministering brothers) did a great job visiting the widows and widowers and letting the bishopric know how they were doing. Today, much of the responsibility for their welfare would rest with the elders quorum and the Relief Society. But at the time, I felt a duty to visit them, too. So I made an effort to call on one or two a week. At that rate it would take nearly a year to visit all of them. With a young family that also needed my time, I felt stretched thin.

I talked about this in bishopric meeting, and Larry had an idea.

“Why don’t my wife and I help out?” he said. “We have all day to visit. Rely on the home teachers, but let Elizabeth and me go to see those who need a little extra attention. We’ll let them know you’re thinking of them.”

After that, my faithful counselor and his wife made many visits and cheered up many souls. They lightened my load considerably.

“How Old Is the Prophet?”

At one time, our ward needed a Gospel Doctrine teacher in Sunday School. As a bishopric we prayed and reviewed several names with the Sunday School president. But we didn’t feel a confirmation about what to do. Once again, Larry had an idea. “What about Ila Gibb?” Ila was in her 70s, but we all felt impressed that she would be a good teacher. The Sunday School president agreed.

Sister Gibb laughed when Larry and I extended the calling. “I’m old,” she said. “Just leave me on the shelf.”

When Larry replied, “Sister Gibb, how old . . .,” I thought he was going to hold himself up as an example. But he didn’t. He said with kindness, “How old is the prophet?” At this time, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) had just become the President of the Church at age 84.

“I see where you’re headed,” Ila replied. “I guess we’re never too old to serve.” And for the next three years, she served as a marvelous Gospel Doctrine teacher.

I’m 69 years old now, and I often think of Larry and the faith he showed to accept the calling to serve as a counselor in the bishopric at age 76. As I think about his service, I am inspired to think that there is still a lot I can do—and that many of us in our 60s, 70s, and 80s can do—to continue building the kingdom of God. ■