

# Pastor to Publisher

By Susan Meny

Sitting in the Italian restaurant amid the clang and bustle of its lunch rush, it struck an odd note with me—even above the cacophony. Here was a pastor devouring my meager manuscript with more fervor than he did his now tepid lasagna. Why would he have so much passion in encouraging me to get my ten-year-old story published? He peered up at me over the last lines on the page as he inquired, “Do you have more?”

**This was my early introduction to Mike Simpson**, whom I knew as the Pastor of First Christian Church. Mike was a longtime friend of the Shepherd’s Center, whose mission is **successful aging**. And, as it would turn out, he was also the Editor/Owner of *Second Wind Publishing*, a Winston-Salem book press. Yep, you guessed it — Second Wind and second half of life are no accident. One of Mike’s passions is publishing the older writer.

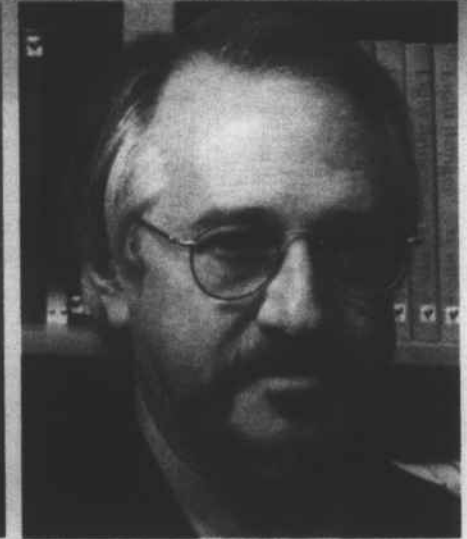
For several years, we worked together to produce the Shepherd’s Center’s lifelong learning program for older adults in the county, *Adventures in Learning*. Mike provided local authors for the program, spoke on Writing for Publication, offered his church for a venue and the church bus for trips. He was a joy to work with given our mutual desire to engage and enrich older adults.

One day, Mike discovered he was very sick. He had been diagnosed with cancer, eventually undergoing several surgeries. He was lucky to be a pastor, I thought. Mike’s congregation and indeed just about everyone who knew Mike, which is no small number, grew solemn and began their versions of praying for him and sending him positivity. It seemed to bring healing to him in more ways than the obvious. By that I mean, Mike’s very much alive and on the planet in full force today. This is not his obituary. Moreover, Mike’s not the same guy today, as he was when first I met him.

Two years after his surgeries, Mike once again found himself at the mic at *Adventures in Learning*. I asked him to talk about the personal side of Mike Simpson. His eyes sparkled with that same excited energy they had when he peeked out at me over my manuscript in that noisy restaurant and asked me if I had more stories.



Mike Simpson leads discussion



Mike Simpson

“  
*Creativity is not benign, he warns.  
 It must be expressed.  
 Write, if you are a writer.  
 Sing, if you are a singer.  
 Dance, if you are a dancer.*”  
*This is your calling. This is your joy.*

Mike, you see, is now a pastor-turned-publisher. He speaks to participants about following your passions; listening to your inner muse; getting in touch with what truly inspires you and embracing that. He embodies what he’s saying, and his audience is attuned. If you have stories in you, he says, get them out there. Creativity is not benign, he warns. It must be expressed. Write, if you are a writer. Sing, if you are a singer. Dance, if you are a dancer. This is your calling. This is your joy. This is your inner sonar/radar/guidance system. Listen to your muse!

Remembering back to that presentation at *Adventures in Learning*, I smiled at his charisma as the audience clapped for him. Still, I thought to myself, this is more than a talk about following your inner muse. This is about

personal transformation. Someone has had an epiphany!

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