

Reflections on Leadership



Happy New Year

January 2019

“Happy New Year!” is the standard greeting that is exchanged in the first few days of January. We all wish the best for our friends and family in the months ahead – that they will experience happiness and good health. For some this will be a continuation of the prior year. For many, the New Year represents a fresh beginning – leaving behind a year of difficulty to embrace a more positive future.

The idea of happiness is deeply ingrained in the American point of view. When the Declaration of Independence refers to inalienable rights “endowed by our creator” there are three specific references – “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. Happiness is not guaranteed, but the right to pursue happiness is a basic right. What is happiness? There are many definitions to choose from, but a simple and straight definition by Webster captures it for me - “*a state of well-being and contentment: joy.*”

We all want to be happy. But for many the idea of happiness is elusive – even in among those with many of the world’s creature comforts. The concept of happiness is the subject of

John Leland’s new book – **Happiness is a Choice You Make, Lessons From a Year Among the Oldest Old**. A book based on extensive interviews from 6 persons 85 years and older would appear to be an unlikely place to look for happiness. In many respects the tone of the book was not exactly what the author expected when he began the interviews. In the face of extraordinary challenges that come with advanced age, Leland discovered that happiness was an unexpected surprise. He concludes that “*even as our various faculties decline, we still wield extraordinary influence over the quality of our lives.*”

The six persons that were interviewed were not selected as extraordinary specimens of healthy aging. In many respects their shared experiences would not point to happiness. Illness, isolation, and loss were part of the picture. One even experienced the Russian invasion of Lithuania and was put into a forced labor camp by the Nazis. But all six found a level of happiness “*not in their external circumstances, but in something they carried with them.*” This happiness was a source of wisdom:



- When you are old, you have to make yourself happy. Otherwise, you get older.
- You can go to a museum and think “I am confined to a wheelchair in a group of half deaf people. Or you can think, Mattise!”
- A mother’s perspective on aging to her daughter - “I was your age once, but you were never my age.”

The point of the book is that happiness is a frame of mind that is available to every person. “How to be happy? Here’s a start. Accept whatever kindness people offer you and repay with what you can... Don’t begrudge the people who need you; thank them for letting you help them.”

How does the idea of finding happiness connect with the subject of leadership? It is more critical to effective leadership than you might think. Unhappy people lack many of the essential qualities that leaders need. Patience, respect, genuine concern, and compassion have very shallow roots in an unhappy person’s life.



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It is possible for an unhappy person to be an effective leader in the short run. Keeping the people you work with at a distance emotionally, applying pressure, taking no excuses for less than perfect results, micromanagement, and constant criticism may produce results for a season, but not for long. There is a maxim that I believe to be true. People come to work for a good company. But, they usually stay or quit because of their immediate supervisor. No one wants to work for a humorless or an unhappy person.

Recently humor has been studied as a positive attribute in leadership when it closes the distance between team members and enhances the connectedness between the leader and followers. Other benefits like increasing resiliency, mitigating stress, and enhancing flexibility have been reported. But in my view, these positive benefits can only occur if the humor springs from a happy source. Humor that is gentle, respectful, and affirming that springs from a happy perspective can bring a team together and transform a work environment into something special. Humor that comes from unhappiness or a negative perspective is often marked by sarcasm and has a biting edge that, in its worst form, can ridicule or belittle others.

Consistently high performing teams are happy places. Not only do they

produce results, but along with the satisfaction of achievement comes a feeling that relationships matter, that those you work with care about you as a person. Happy people attract other happy people to work with them. This does not mean that a leader has to lower standards in order to be well liked. Respect and achievement are essential ingredients to every successful leader.



Some random thoughts on happiness:

- Focus on your inner life. Work on becoming a happier person and you will become a better leader. Start working on becoming a happier person now. People do not become more unhappy as they age. Unhappy young people become unhappy older people.
- Genuine happiness comes from within. Happiness cannot be borrowed from someone else or by following a magic formula.
- The pursuit of more does not always lead to a happy existence. It

has been said that happiness is not about getting what you want. It is more likely to be found in wanting what you have.

- The people you choose to spend your time with have a profound impact on your outlook. If you want to be happy – seek out other happy people. Hang out with unhappy people and the negativity will rub off on you.
- Look for the good in other people and you are likely to find it. When you find something good, don't let it go unrecognized. Unspoken compliments have very little impact.
- We are not always the best judge of our general state of happiness. Many years ago I spoke to an 80 year old person whose life was best described as a litany of complaints. When I asked him why he was so unhappy, he remarked that he did not see himself as an unhappy person. In fact he had never been happier in his life. Find someone who cares enough about you to be honest and get some objective feedback.

Finally – It is a biblical truth that our outlook on life can be altered by what we choose to think about. The apostle Paul summed it up in Philippians 4:8 - ... *"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things."*

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2019!

Blessings,

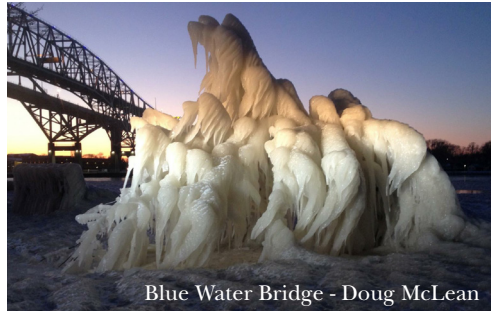
Reflections on Leadership



Finding a Portable Passion

February 2019

As I write this Reflection it is 4 degrees outside my home in Central Pennsylvania. In this frigid environment my thoughts return to my childhood in Port Huron, Michigan where these temperatures were more common. It is still cold there, but not as cold as I remember it to be as a child. The photo(right), taken by Doug McLean, is of an ice covered tree near the Blue Water Bridge that connects Port Huron with Sarnia, Canada. The wind swept ice covering has the appearance of a group of angels looking over the water toward the US, and ships passing on the St. Clair River.



to loosen the frozen coal to keep the fires burning. They were good, hard working men, whose bodies were eventually worn down by the rigors of physical labor. My Dad's expectations of work were relatively modest. We never talked about a job being fulfilling or making an impact. Even as I considered what course to follow in higher education or in life, finding your passion in work was not a subject discussed at our kitchen table. My recollection is that in spite of the hardships, he enjoyed the people he worked with and found the work to be rewarding. Later in life his passion and work merged in a call to ministry in small, country churches in the thumb area of Michigan.

These were the conditions that my Dad worked in as heavy equipment operator for Detroit Edison. When you are operating a bulldozer at the top of a coal pile 75 to 100 feet in the air right next to the St. Clair River, harsh conditions are a fact of life. Whenever the coal would freeze and stick to the walls of the bunkers that fed the coal into the plant, the work involved the use of sledge hammers



Find your passion. In the leadership classes that I teach to the Presbyterian Senior Living staff we often talk about the journey that led to where they are now. My journey with Presbyterian Senior Living is expressed in the Reflections on Leadership Book that is used as our text. Their personal stories are unique, inspiring, and filled with unexpected twists and turns. I hear of people who started out in life intending to go into a career in finance or graphic design who became nurses. Others talk about the influence of someone who noticed a particular talent and encouraged them to think bigger. Spurred by that timely encouragement, they ultimately found their life's calling and passion.

Unfortunately, finding your passion is not an easy task. In his viral [YouTube on millennials](#), Simon Sinek offers a bleak assessment of the unmet expectations of young people entering the workforce and how they will experience life. He believes that it is possible that an entire generation may go through life never really finding joy or deep fulfillment in work or in life. According to Sinek, the roots of this problem are rather complex. Parenting, technology, impatience, and environment all play a role in this unfortunate circumstance.

In his book, *Second Innocence*, John Izzo describes the feeling of being trapped, working part time in a post office at a job that he considered to

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be both tiring and irritating. While he was miserable and longed to do something important, his friend Joe Hughes seemed to find joy in the same work.

One day a customer came into the post office, and John absent mindedly inquired about how she was doing. She responded that her daughter was in the hospital, dying of cancer and she had to pay her rent by 5:00 pm or be evicted. The owners of her building would not take cash, so she was in the post office getting a money order so she could be with her dying daughter. Izzo continues:

Some 25 years later I cannot recall the specific words I said to her that day. I do know that for the first time in six months it occurred to me that I might actually have made a difference in the post office. After an exchange of kind and tender words she headed off, but at the door she stopped and turned around. Stepping back to my counter, putting her small, feeble hand on my young forearm, she looked deeply into my eyes: "Son, I just want to thank you. Thank you for being so kind. You do know that you made my day."

That night the sleep would not come. Her words kept ringing in my ears, "You made my day". For months I had seen my job at the post office as licking stamps and weighing things. Could it be that during that time that there had been a deeper calling? What would have happened if I had thought about my job as making people's days?

This experience was a revelation for Izzo, and he began to change his

behavior. He also understood why his friend Joe Hughes saw his work in a much more positive light. As fate would have it, Joe Hughes and John Izzo finished their work at the post office the same week. Izzo's departure was hardly noticed, but the customers threw a going away party for Joe Hughes. What was the difference? Izzo explains:

By then I knew why. For Joe the post office was a part of his ministry. He knew that wherever people gathered, whatever your job description said that you were supposed to be doing, you were there to make lives better – and it showed. The job in the post office was not too small for me. I was too small for the job.

In the context of a generation in search of finding their passion at work, I believe that there is another lesson here. John Izzo was disappointed in his job because he did not consider it to be in line with his passion. Joe Hughes brought his passion with him to work and turned his workplace into something special. Rather than look for the perfect job to satisfy his passion, Joe added the ingredient of passion into his daily work. John Izzo does not tell us what happened to Joe Hughes later in life. But I get the sense that no matter where Joe happened to work, he was able to find joy and fulfillment in work and in life.

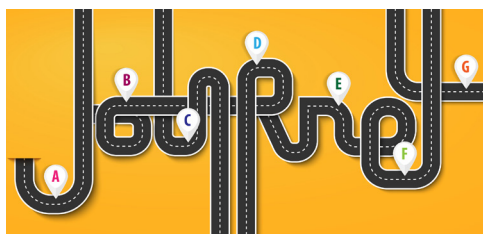
It is important to find work that is meaningful and worthy of our time and attention. But what we need beyond that is a passion that transcends a chosen occupation or specific workplace. We all need a passion that is portable. The Apostle Paul described this in his letter to the Colossians - "And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." The effectiveness of this



approach has been confirmed in my life experience. From my time as an orderly in a Sisters of Mercy Hospital, chauffer, Nurse, and all the position changes that followed in my 47 years with Presbyterian Senior Living, joy and fulfillment have been my constant companions. Not every day was perfect or free of hardship, but an underlying passion has sustained me through those dry periods.

What does this mean for those of us in leadership positions? First and foremost, as leaders we need to recognize that at the beginning of every day we have the opportunity to be John Izzo or Joe Hughes, and the people we work with know which choice we made by observing our behavior. Our greatest impact can be achieved by the way we model passion and enthusiasm in our day to day work. If you want to be an effective leader, bring your passion to work and freely share it with others.

Blessings,



Reflections on Leadership



Under Observation

March 2019

In my youth it was not uncommon for me to do something a few blocks from my home (like riding my bicycle in traffic) only to discover that someone had called my mom to report my misbehavior in a matter of minutes. Whenever I would ask her where she heard such an outlandish report, she would reply “A little bird told me.” I suspected that one of my sisters was an occasional “little bird”, but my Mom seemed to have a network of spies who were everywhere. This experience was common in a time of close knit communities where everyone knew each other and a shared parenting responsibility for children in the neighborhood was expected.

The idea that you could always be seen by someone who knew you has been reinforced from time to time throughout my life. On a street in Copenhagen or an airport in South Africa, I have run into people I knew.



well. In those times I heard the voice of my Mom “No matter where you are always behave as if someone you know is watching.” This was usually combined with the clean underwear advice - in case you are in an accident, you do not want the emergency personnel at the hospital to have a bad impression of you.

One of my favorite television programs from 2011 to 2016 was called “Person of Interest”. The story line involved a reclusive millionaire computer programmer who develops a machine that is able to observe human behavior by collecting information and using existing cameras embedded in computers, smart phones, and surveillance devices. This information was used to predict when crime is likely to occur so that steps could be taken to intervene. It combined a crime fighting theme with a science fiction overlay of artificial intelligence and

the ethics of a “Big Brother” that is always watching. The introduction to every episode was the chilling phrase “You’re being watched”. If you were inclined to the slightest bit of paranoia, it was a disturbing thought.

I am drawn to thinking about this program on a fairly regular basis through events on the news. Real and alleged crimes are now verified or proven to be false through technology that tracks movement through traffic cameras and at commercial establishments like gas stations to identify where people are at various times and observe who they are with and what they are doing at the time. While not anything as comprehensive or coordinated as the “Person of Interest” theme, it is a stark reminder that we are in a different age, where whatever we do may be observed by outside sources.

Against this backdrop, it is clear to me that leadership at all levels has

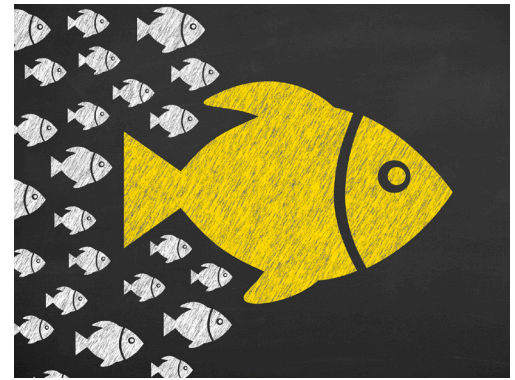


always been under a microscope. The powerful impact of behavior is illustrated in a quote that is attributed to St. Augustine - "Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary use words." This has been misinterpreted as suggesting that words are unnecessary, but that is not the point. Words are the primary means of communication between individuals from all walks of life. What is absolutely true is that the impact of a leader's spoken message is dependent on the behavior that precedes and surrounds it. Inconsistency between message and behavior is the Achilles heel of leadership. How a leader behaves when under stress is the witness that confirms or contradicts the testimony of a leader's words.

What is a bit different today is that leaders are not just under the microscope – they are also constantly observed through a wide angle lens.

Nearly everyone we come in contact with today has a phone that has the capacity to take photographs and video. Sometimes the video content is discovered later to have been manipulated to reach an incorrect conclusion, but the widespread ability to record and instantly distribute information is a relatively new development in human history.

Social media provides a platform to self-disclose or forward information that can be sent around the world and retained permanently for future review by future generations. I think of every e mail or social media post as being like a tattoo – nearly permanent and painful to completely erase. In this wide open environment, less is more. The quote "It is better to remain silent at the risk of being thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt" still applies today, especially if updated to "tweet and



remove all doubt." Many leaders have suffered the consequences of the self-inflicted wound – saying something that should never have been said at a time when silence was the wise course of action.

So what are the lessons for leadership in an increasingly transparent world? For me it boils down to three things I learned from my Mom at an early age:

- Always do the right thing.
- Always behave as if someone is watching.
- Always tell the truth and you will not have to worry about keeping your story straight.

Being under observation is a reality of leadership. The best way to be successful when under both the microscope and wide angle lens is to act with integrity at all times. In the words of the great theologian and scholar C.S Lewis - "Integrity is the doing the right thing even when no one is watching."

Blessings,



Reflections on Leadership



Faith Based, Mission Driven

April 2019

As a teenager I began working as an orderly on a medical surgical floor in a Sister's of Mercy Hospital in Port Huron Michigan. At that time I knew nothing about the corporate structure of organizations and the difference between working in a for profit or not-for-profit environment. All I knew is that I enjoyed my work and got great satisfaction in being able to help people. The time spent in this entry level position shaped my outlook on life, and led to my decision to become a Registered Nurse, which ultimately took me to Presbyterian Senior Living and a career that has lasted for over 45 years.

It did not take me long to figure out that the hospital was different from the other places I had worked. It was a time in history when the Sisters of Mercy could be found in positions throughout the hospital, and by their very dress, communicated the idea that this was a spiritual environment. My Catholic friends seemed to have a fear of the Sisters that I did not share, though after hearing the stories of life in Catholic school, I was inclined to give the Sisters a wide berth whenever possible. The

morning and evening prayers offered by the priest that echoed in the hallways and hospital rooms imparted a sense of peace and comfort to patients and staff alike. Being a Presbyterian made no difference to anyone. I felt that I belonged in this place.

Slowly I began to understand what it meant to work in a faith based, mission driven, not-for-profit environment. Working in a front line service role the difference was relatively simple to describe. I was expected to bring my whole self to work – body, mind, and spirit. In addition to learning the skills necessary to do my job and working hard to complete my daily assignments, I could pray with someone who was in pain. Extending kindness to everyone was an expectation, not an extra effort. Furthermore, the people I worked with shared values that guided our relationships with each other. I was told that I possessed the very hands and feet of Jesus to serve others in need. In many ways such standards were impossible to live up to every moment of every day. But I believe that aspiring to live up to these expectations made me a better person.

Later, in my business law classes as an undergraduate I learned about the difference between a for-profit and not-for-profit enterprise. For-profit businesses existed for the financial benefit of the owners of the company. Profit is the goal, and businesses pay state, and federal taxes on the



profits of the business. Not-for-profit organizations had a mission to benefit the greater good of the community. It did not pay taxes, and could not use the resources of the organization for purposes outside of its stated mission. I also discovered that not-for-profit organizations can and should make a profit to fulfill current obligations and provide a solid foundation to continue to serve in the future. None of this was as personally inspiring as working as an orderly in a hospital or as a nurse or director of nursing for Presbyterian Homes, but it did help me to understand the underlying difference between organizational types that sustained the culture of care and compassion.

As I was given more leadership responsibilities at Presbyterian Homes, I gained an appreciation of the role of volunteer board members who made sure that the organization fulfilled its mission of serving seniors. Board members were the keepers of the flame, making it possible for the staff to sustain this atmosphere of care and concern to generation after generation of older persons.



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At the heart of the faith based, mission driven, not-for-profit story is a clearly articulated and inspiring mission. For Presbyterian Senior Living the mission is defined as follows:

Guided by the life and teachings of Jesus, the mission of Presbyterian Senior Living is to provide compassionate, vibrant and supportive communities and services to promote wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

PSL also articulates the values that describe how the mission is to be carried out every day:

1. **Inclusive** – Reach out to include all persons in the communities in which we serve, as recipients of service, employees, and volunteers.
2. **Transparency / Integrity** – Adhere to the highest standards of transparency, honesty and impartiality to assure the public trust in the organization and its mission.
3. **Quality** – Promote successful aging and enhance the quality of life of those we serve through the provision of exceptional services, innovation, maximizing the options available to seniors, and empowering them to choose the services that best meet their needs.
4. **Stewardship** – Be good stewards of the resources available to the organization with the goal of achieving the greatest good to the greatest number of seniors in the most cost effective manner possible, and to focus on environmentally sustainable practices in every aspect of PSL's ministry.

5. **People** – Provide PSL staff and volunteers with a supportive, rewarding and challenging environment that gives opportunity for a satisfying experience in the service of others.

6. **Community Benefit** – In addition to providing subsidized care to those with limited financial resources, offering support to local people, clubs, schools, churches and social service agencies, and governmental entities to strengthen the fabric of the communities we service.



In a few short months I will conclude my time of service as CEO of Presbyterian Senior Living. In this period I am naturally drawn to looking back and looking forward – appreciating the journey to this point, and contemplating what comes next for a faith based, mission driven, not-for-profit organization like PSL. I believe that there are a number of questions that all not-for-profit organizations need to ask as they look to the future:

- **Mission Drift** - Are we continuing to adhere to the founding vision of the organization - including a clear expression of the faith underpinnings and the reason why it exists?

- **Values in action** - How effective are we in making sure the values of the organization are operationalized to reach everyone we serve?
- **Charitable Intent** - In what ways are we reaching out to serve those with few resources? There is nothing wrong with serving the affluent with kindness and compassion. But that work is not enough. In the words of the great Presbyterian preacher (and Kirkland Village resident) Elam Davies – we are called to serve “the least, the last and the lost.”
- **Capacity** - How do we intend to grow to serve more people? Complacency is the most dangerous threat to the successful organization. The needs of the larger community call us to respond.
- **Preserving the mission** - What are we doing to strengthen the organization to continue to serve in a changing environment? This includes staff and future leadership development, maintaining financial strength, and making strategic investments.
- **Innovation** - What steps are we taking now to remain relevant in a changing world? Innovation is needed if we intend to lead instead of simply following others.

A lot has changed from my first days as an orderly 50 years ago. But the satisfaction that comes from working in a faith based, mission driven, not-for-profit organization will continue as long as we are faithful to that sacred call to serve.

Blessings,

Reflections on Leadership



About Time

May 2019

As might be expected, I have been thinking a lot about the passage of time lately. The recollection of my 47 year career with Presbyterian Senior Living is rich with detail. When my memory fails me as I try to remember the name of someone I met last week, I can still recite the names and room numbers of the first residents of the nursing center that was my initial assignment as a nurse for Presbyterian Homes. This past week I met a 100+ year old PSL resident who I had originally known as a neighbor in Mount Joy back in 1971. The passage of time had not dimmed our shared recollections of the neighborhood and my frequent visits to their pharmacy on Main Street.

As a child I remember time passing very slowly. A casual phrase from my mom, “wait for a while” was like being sentenced to an eternal waiting room. The feeling of getting out of school for the summer as a youth carried a sense of freedom like no other – mostly because the summer months stretched before us like an endless road. There were a few exceptions to the slower time of childhood. “Wait till your father comes home” seemed to speed up the clock substantially.



Cecil Runyan, my 80+ year old business mentor from nursing school days had an understanding of the perception of the passage of time. “Young man, if you want to experience a short winter - borrow money that you have to repay in the springtime.”

Time is an interesting thing. We may not know how many days we will live on this earth, but we are all given the same number of hours in each day. I have read a number of books on the life of Teddy Roosevelt, and the record of his relatively short life is nothing



less than astonishing. In addition to being the youngest US president at age 42, he served as a New York State Assemblyman, New York City Police Commissioner, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of New York, and fought in the Spanish American War. As an author of more than 40 books, he is regarded as the most well-read US President, reading at least 3 books every day in English, German, French, Italian and Latin. A noted naturalist, he was the driving force behind the National Parks that remain an enduring legacy to this very day. He also was the winner of the Nobel peace Prize in 1906. His face is one of 4 American presidents featured on Mt. Rushmore. This highly abbreviated list of his accomplishments in 60 years of life would suggest that

he had access to more than 24 hours in a day. But we all get the same time allotment at the beginning of each day. Some people just seem to get more accomplished in their 24 hours than others.

Time is a constant that can only be appreciated when measured against a fixed target. The sun moves at the same speed across the sky throughout the day. But we only gain an appreciation of the rate of speed at sunrise or sunset, when we can observe the movement of the sun against the horizon. When people gather at the edge of a body of water at the close of the day to watch the sun go down the speed of time slipping away is crystal clear.

Faithfulness over time is something that I have always greatly admired. This month I am privileged to present a 55 year service pin to John Bumbaugh, a member of the maintenance staff at Quincy Village. According to our files, John had perfect attendance for 45 consecutive years. Both are records for Presbyterian Senior Living. Being humble to the core, John does not brag about such accomplishments. He once told me that he did not feel like coming in every day in that 45 year stretch, but he felt that he was needed at work and that the residents depended on him. John is one of PSL’s many heroes who make the PSL mission come alive every day.

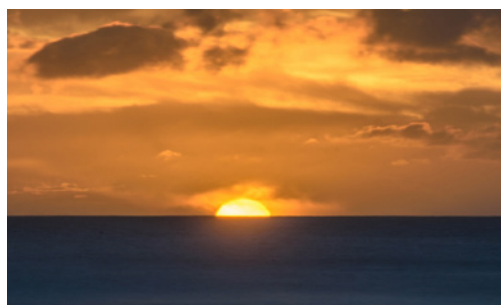
There is a spiritual aspect to time and how we choose to spend it. In verse 12

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of the 90th Psalm we read “*Lord teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*”. There is great wisdom in knowing that time is not a limitless commodity. How we choose to spend the time available to us can be an overly casual decision if we think of time as being unlimited. The truth is that every day we spend the hours we have been given by our Maker. Acknowledging this reality will help us to make wise choices about how we spend each minute.

Leaders make more timely decisions when they are aware of the precious nature of time. Procrastination or excessively slow decision making is the mortal enemy of those who are charged with leading organizations. My favorite quote from Earnest Hemmingway’s classic book “*The Sun Also Rises*” illustrates this point. “*How did you go bankrupt? In two ways, gradually, then suddenly.*” The gradually part is usually marked by inaction and the passage of time. Leaders who are slow to recognize gradual changes in their environment risk being suddenly overtaken by events. Choosing the right time to do something is critical to success. The ancient Greek poet Hesiod observed that “*for right timing is in all things the most important factor*”. Waiting too long or jumping the gun can be disastrous.

In the third chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes we read familiar words that convey a powerful message about how there is an appropriate time for things to happen in various seasons of life.



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

*a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.*

As I looked through the various events referenced in the above verses, I would add - A time to hold fast, a time to change, a time to begin, a time to retire.

Having a perspective on the value of each moment and the use of time is connected to finding meaning in life. In his book “*When, The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*”, Daniel Pink has observed that “*The challenge of the human condition is to bring the past, present, and future together. We need to integrate our perspectives on time into a coherent whole, one that helps us to comprehend who we are and why we are here.*” I think that Pink is right. We all know people who have been trapped in the past, controlled by present circumstances (sometimes called the tyranny of the urgent), or preoccupied with dreams of future possibilities. When we bring the past, present and future together in a balanced perspective life can take on new meaning.



A few final thoughts on the use of time -

- Give time to those around you who are less fortunate – being generous is the natural response to the realization that everything you have is a gift from God.
- Invest time in building relationships – the future dividends will be immensely satisfying.
- Savor the time you have been given – time should be thoroughly enjoyed and never be wasted.

Next month’s issue of Reflections on Leadership will be my final one as CEO of Presbyterian Senior Living. It has been my privilege to share these musings on leadership and life. After nearly 14 years I am still surprised and encouraged to know that there are people inside and outside of the PSL family who read this monthly column and find these thoughts to be useful in their leadership journey.

Blessings,



Reflections on Leadership



Salt and Light

June 2019

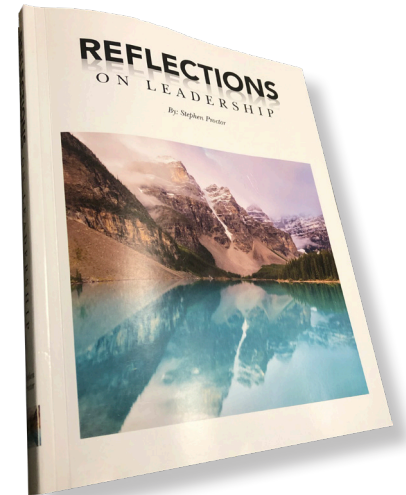
This Reflection on Leadership is my final message as CEO of Presbyterian Senior Living. It has been a wonderful journey, filled with unexpected twists and turns. To say that the last 47 years has exceeded my expectations is an understatement of the highest order. At the top of the list of those who have contributed to this successful journey is my wife, Rhonda. Her commitment to PSL's mission has been equal to mine, and the impact of her unqualified support in our 48 year marriage cannot be measured. Because of her support, the next chapter of our life together is filled with great promise.

In the 14 years I have been writing this monthly newsletter and the 24 years I have been privileged to be CEO, I have had the opportunity to address a wide range of topics on Leadership and life in general. This message will be a bit different, as it will represent my last thoughts in my leadership role with PSL.



In the process of thinking about what to write, I reviewed the words of wisdom of other leaders in history that have served as reference points for future generations. Washington's farewell warning about the dangers of foreign entanglements came to mind a prominent example. I recently read Jean Edward Smith's biography – "Eisenhower in War and Peace". As a general Eisenhower's leadership included the D Day invasion of Normandy and the defeat of Nazi Germany. As a President he provided a steady hand at the beginning of the Cold War era, the construction of the interstate highway system, and the enforcement of the Supreme Court decision by sending the 82nd Airborne to Little Rock, Arkansas to confront the ugly face of segregated schools. His 79 percent approval rating in 1955 was a testimony to his ability to transcend partisan politics of his day. Instead of this litany of achievements, Eisenhower's reference to the dangerous influence of the military-industrial complex has been an enduring message for future generations. While I do not claim to have the degree of stature or wisdom of the great leaders of the past, the desire to say something of value is similar.

In a recent Reflection I provided a personal testimony of the journey from an orderly in a Sister's of Mercy Hospital and Registered Nurse at PSL's first nursing facility to the years as an Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer and CEO. From my perspective, the call to serve is the important part of the message and the list of subsequent



achievements less so. The facts of that story have been told before, and can be found in the Reflections on Leadership Book. Thoughts on the need to change, stewardship, humility and Servant Leadership, integrity, trust, generosity, and a host of other leadership virtues have been topics of earlier Reflections, and singling one out may seem to diminish the value of the others.

What occurred to me as an appropriate message at this point in PSL's history was to ponder a bit on the words of Jesus in Matthew 5: 13-16 to be salt and light. ***"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and be trampled on by people. You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in Heaven."***

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These words appear just after the Beatitudes – a series of startling statements of a new order to life – Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted. The references to being the salt of the earth and the light of the world are not related to our personal individuality or chosen path. It is anchored in something that is much more substantial. Our good deeds are to bring honor to God, not to elevate ourselves in the eyes of the world.

Why is the call to be salt and light an important consideration for leaders and our colleagues in ministry at PSL? First of all, people of every generation want to make a difference in the world. The definition of a life of significance may vary greatly, and there may be more or less patience in how long it may take to “make an impact”, but the desire is the same. Being called to be salt and light in a bland and dark world is a noble calling, and contains the key to the hearts of those we work with every day.

Secondly, we live in a world where there is intense pressure to fit within societal expectations. This can lead to poor decisions by individuals and organizations who, out of a desire to be accepted or to obtain an immediate advantage, are willing to sacrifice an important value or purpose.

There are plenty of examples in history of making a wrong choice by sacrificing

something of great value for a short term goal. In the Old Testament narrative, Isaac’s son, Esau chose to satisfy his hunger at the cost of his birthright. This was a knowing choice – a bargain with his brother – “I am about to die. What use is a birthright to me?” So Esau exchanged his birthright for some lentil stew. As a nurse who has observed what it means to be at the point of death from starvation, it is clear that Esau was not on death’s door. Hungry, faint from lack of food – maybe. But not dying. History shows that his choice was rash, and life changing.

The birthright of not-for-profit senior care providers like PSL is our faith based roots. There are many ways to articulate this thought. PSL has chosen to express it by keeping a name that is associated with our Christian heritage and a mission statement that includes the phrase “Guided by the life and teachings of Jesus”. The words that describe the identity of a not-for-profit ministry is often wrongly described as being less inclusive or exclusionary rather than an authentic expression of who we are and why we exist to serve others. The pressure to become “less salty” or a more muted beacon of light can take many subtle forms.

Choosing to soften or conceal the identity of a faith based organization as part of an effort to increase market share can be a powerful temptation. What if a potential staff member or customer decides to go somewhere else because the term faith, Christian, or Jesus does not resonate with them? We need to be competitive - “No



margin, No mission”. If we go out of business, we cannot serve anyone.

But if success in the business environment is at the price of the organization’s founding purpose, and values, then the price is too high. There is an equally truthful corollary to “No margin, No Mission”. “No mission, No point.” In the biblical example in Matthew chapter 5, the line has been crossed from being savory salt to just plain dirt.

Harkening back to founding values is not a call to inaction or planned obsolescence. Those who naturally resist change are often quick to cling to a tactic and call it an essential part of the mission. Holding to a founding purpose and being salt and light in a constantly changing world can be messy business. It takes wisdom and strength of conviction to navigate these waters, even in the face of significant headwinds.

As I retire from active service I am moving from the playing field into the cheering section as PSL’s number one fan. From the Board of Trustees and directors that govern the organization to the staff whose kindness and compassion is the lifeblood of the work of serving seniors, we have a remarkable team that brings the mission to life every day. The key to the long term success of this historic ministry is found in the words of Jesus. *“Let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in Heaven.”*

Blessings,

