

NOTES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Volume Eighteen, Number Six (August 2017)

"What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how."

(W. Wordsworth, from "The Prelude")

NOTES FROM READERS

>>What you think<<

I trust that your summer has been relaxing and renewing. Lots of excitement here in Minneapolis as we officially changed our name from Augsburg College to Augsburg University on September 1. For a good overview of the change, visit www.augsburg.edu/university/. The process to make the change unfolded on many levels – think of how many places an institution's name appears in its almost 150 years of existence! In the end, though, it was about affirming the truths of what we had become – a new kind of student-centered, urban university, small to our students and big for the world. You can imagine the bang-up business our bookstore is doing – out with the old gear and in with the new!

Occasionally, I (or my colleagues) refer to items from previous issues of Notes. If you have not been a subscriber previously, and wish to review our conversations, past issues of Notes are available on-line at www.jgacounsel.com. I thank my friends at Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates for their many years of abiding support for our reflective practice.

REFLECT ON THIS

>>The fierce urgency of now<<

I issued the following statement to our campus community after the tragic and deeply troubling violence in Charlottesville.

“Events in our country and around the world during the past several months have reminded us that the specter of fear and prejudice and bigotry are very much present in our common lives. Whether it is violence in the name of white supremacy, rhetoric demonizing immigrants and refugees, policies discriminating against those of various sexual and gender identities, or the general rancor and polarization in our political discourse – all of this illustrates the need for citizens to come together with courage and resolve to fight back, to stand with love against hate and prejudice, to seek opportunities for genuine conversation and common purpose.

The Augsburg community is by no means immune from the dynamics of this volatile social situation. At the same time, however, dedicated and principled work over the past decade by faculty, staff and students has positioned Augsburg to be a model for how a community can navigate the throes of shifting demographics, progressive social mores and the polarizing fear and anxiety that characterize our public lives. In fact, it is precisely because of Augsburg's faith, academic and civic traditions that we are poised to show a way forward in the 21st century.

And now is the time for us to lead. As inspiration for the work we must pursue as a community, I have returned to the wise words of Martin Luther King, Jr., who, in his 1963 speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, said “(W)e are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.” Now is the time for urgent reflection and action.

King’s words were prescient:

“...our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change. The large house in which we live demands that we transform the world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood (sic). Together we must learn to live as (siblings) or together we will be forced to perish as fools.”

In particular, I am struck by Dr. King’s insistence that “...we are challenged to work all over the world with unshakeable determination to wipe out the last vestiges of racism.” Here, fifty years later, we must return to this very challenge, to what King called the need to celebrate our “world house,” comprising black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – to which we might add, liberal and conservative, urban and rural, straight and gay and more.

The Augsburg community is a microcosm of “the world house.” It is our rare and compelling call to live as a people united by ecumenical loyalties, called to illustrate for all to see how love for one another, what Dr. King called “the supreme unifying principle” claimed by all great world religions, might be the path forward in a world torn to its very core by the forces of hatred, prejudice and violence. The time is now.”

>>The etiquette of democracy<<

The following piece appeared in one of the first issues of these Notes, almost 20 years ago. And here it is again, because it is more relevant and important than ever. I used Carter’s rules in my orientation workshop for our residence life staff this summer – a reminder that life on a college (or university!) campus is not simply preparation for real life, it is real life (*ala* John Dewey).

“Yale law professor, Stephen L. Carter, whose work I mention often in Notes, is writing a series of books on what he calls the “elements of good character that are...”pre-political,” by which I mean that we should all struggle to exemplify them, whatever our philosophical or partisan differences.” The first in the series is “Integrity” (Basic Books, 1996), which I discussed in the last issue of Notes. The second is “Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy” (Basic Books, 1998). The book is fascinating, especially in the midst of this political season, as it challenges us to think about how the call to be civil may force us to change the ways in which we organize political systems and processes.

My primary interest in the book is the rules for the etiquette of democracy that Carter proposes. In particular, I believe that there are important parallels between these good manners of society and the character of the organizations we all inhabit. Under the rubric of “The People We Can Be”, Carter posits the following rules (among others) for a civil society:

- (1) Our duty to be civil toward others does not depend on whether we like them or not.
- (2) Civility requires that we sacrifice for strangers, not just for people we happen to know.
- (3) Civility has two parts: generosity, even when it is costly, and trust, even when there is risk.

- (4) Civility creates not merely a negative duty not to do harm, but an affirmative duty to do good.
- (5) We must come into the presence of our fellow humans with a sense of awe and gratitude.
- (6) Civility requires that we listen to others with knowledge of the possibility that they are right and we are wrong.
- (7) Civility requires that we express ourselves in ways that demonstrate our respect for others.
- (8) Civility requires resistance to the dominance of social life by the values of the marketplace.
- (9) Civility allows criticism of others, and sometimes even requires it, but the criticism should always be civil.

There are other rules, but I think you start to get the sense of how these manners for democracy also offer helpful guidelines for our lives in organizations. Think especially about rules (3), (5), and (9)—there you have the foundations for a healthy and humane common enterprise.

Carter is savvy to point out that there are those who criticize civility, claiming that there are professions for which incivility is a requirement. His main point in critiquing this position is that, though we may have evidence for the acceptance of such uncivil work, we must never allow ourselves to forget that such evidence raises serious questions about the character of our common work. Surely we all experience the disheartening and disabling power of incivility in our lives—no wonder it is sometimes difficult to imagine the abundance and wonder of negotiating our lives together.”

PRACTICE THIS

>>My leadership user’s manual<<

In the June issue of Notes, I commended to your attention an interesting idea about how to create a leadership user’s manual for yourself (Google “leadership user’s manual” for lots of articles and examples). We used the leadership user’s manual as an exercise at my leadership team retreat this summer (each member drafted his/her manual and then shared it with others) and found it very helpful in our continuing work together.

Here is mine – I’m sure you will recognize some of its themes.

MY LEADERSHIP USER’S MANUAL

- I believe in democracy as a way of life, and value those who share a commitment to the work we do together.
- I believe in faith as action, not dogma.
- I am an institutional person and I am committed to renewing faith in how we do things together in institutions.
- I am a reflective practitioner, tying thinking and acting together in my daily work. I believe we don’t have the luxury to see those activities as separate.
- I am full of hope.
- I am committed to helping people grow and mature in their work in ways that fit with their needs and aspirations.
- I talk fast but don’t waste words.

- I value adult behavior – and expect those who work for me to act like adults with each other. For example, don't come to me to solve a problem that you need to work out with one of your colleagues.
- I hire people who I believe are qualified to do a job. I then expect them to do that job and will count on them to let me know if they need my help in any fashion. Otherwise I may not show much interest unless something goes wrong or you bring something to my attention.
- I love people who do their homework before coming to me with an idea, proposal or problem.
- I am critically loyal to the people who work for me – and count on critical loyalty in return.
- I have a very synthetic brain – I take in a lot of information from various sources – summarize and synthesize – and often am ready to make a decision fairly quickly.
- I dislike surprises in our work. Tell me if something is going wrong. I believe in forgiveness.
- I lose patience and don't pay attention when I believe my time is being wasted – but don't be fooled by what may appear to be my being distracted because you may be surprised by how much I am listening.
- I am an introvert by nature, asked to do an extrovert's job – that means I need to summon energy to do the public parts of my role. I may need time to renew that energy after a particularly public period.

>>Called to serve: a vision of philanthropic leadership and work<<

I had the privilege earlier this summer to make a presentation to the Minnesota Planned Giving Council. Instead of talking about all the tools of the planned giving trade – folks in that room knew much more about that topic than me – I challenged the good professionals gathered there to reflect on what their work means for themselves, their organizations and the world. I asked them to consider four questions – questions that I believe all reflective practitioners might consider. Here they are:

Reflection #1: "What do you listen for and/or to?" This is the question that asks us to consider where we might find our calling. For some, it is a matter of faith. For others, it could be a moral compass, a North Star. For all of us, it is the challenge to listen in the midst of our noisy lives

Reflection #2: "A word or concept or value that centers you" This question seeks to move us from the false belief that we can find balance among the competing claims of our lives and instead asks us to name our center, the hub around which our lives are organized. Here begins our efforts to live a centered life.

Reflection #3: "How do you think about your call to philanthropic leadership?" We then pivot from the personal sense of call and centeredness to what that means for the work of philanthropic leadership. Here, Bob Payton's wonderful "philanthropic autobiography" exercise is a starting point for linking the arc of our lives to the work we do as professionals in philanthropy.

Reflection #4: "What is your philanthropic leadership curriculum?" And finally, we explore how we might continue to learn and grow in our philanthropic leadership. Your "curriculum" might include readings, classes, group gatherings, reflective practice even (!), but the point is to be intentional in

your lifelong pursuit of experiences and wisdom that can fuel your ever more important work on behalf of the inspiring causes we serve.

PAY ATTENTION TO THIS

>>Resources for your reflective practice<<

I was honored to be quoted in a new volume, *Knowledge for Social Change: Bacon, Dewey, and the Revolutionary Transformation of Research Universities in the Twenty-First Century*, penned by a cast of fine characters, including Lee Benson and Ira Harkavy (Temple University Press, 2017).

In the continuing cascade of Luther books in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, I recently read *The Forgotten Luther: Reclaiming the Social-Economic Dimension of the Reformation*, edited by Carter Lindberg and Paul Wee (Lutheran University Press, 2016). In particular, Lindberg's essay on "Luther and the Common Chest," which gets at a 16th century idea for philanthropic work, is well worth the read.

I just received Bill Bishop's *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Pulling Us Apart* (Mariner Books, 2009), which the Minnesota private college presidents are reading together this fall to explore its relevance to our current contexts. I'll report on what we find.

>>Hospitality<<

At the beginning of this new academic year – as Augsburg is greeting its most diverse entering class in history – I am once again focused on hospitality and these wise, moving words from the late Father Henri Nouwen.

Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.

It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.

It is not to lead our neighbor into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment.

It is not an educated intimidation of good books, good stories, and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find root and bear ample fruit.

It is not a method of making our God and our way into the criteria of happiness, but the opening of an opportunity for others to find their God and their way.

The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness—not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations.

(Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, New York: Doubleday, 1975.)

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>>Topics for upcoming issues<<

- Citizenship and work
- Semper Reformanda
- Luther and the Common Chest

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