

Small Talk – September 29 2021
By Michael Small

When looking at the landscape of decision making – in Cass County and in the whole of the country – I sometimes wonder if we have lost our way, perhaps even our minds. Is there no common sense left? Yes, there is a whole lot of passion with too much screaming and bad behavior and too little listening – but there is little compassion. Have we simply become a bunch of “I’s” and lost the sense of “we?”

Just yesterday the newly reported cases of Covid-19 in Cass County were 57 with probable cases of 9 – that’s a potential of 66 new cases in a 24-hour period. Friends, that is frightening, not acceptable, and not necessary. I suspect most of the cases are of folks who have chosen not to be vaccinated. In Cass County only 50.3% have received one dose and only a mere 44.3% of the residences are fully vaccinated. That is less than half. Please, if you are not vaccinated, speak with your personal care physician, get your shots as soon as possible – for yourself, for your family, and for all of us. This week I will be getting my third shot – for you and for me. I would also suggest that we continue to mask while indoors, keep our distance, avoid large crowds, wash our hands frequently, and when an activity can be done outdoors – do it.

In times such as these I often turn to those who have gone before and those who have dealt with crisis – in helpful ways. One of those persons is President Abraham Lincoln. He once said, *“I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, and stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.”*

Winning is not inevitable nor is it always possible. More important is being true to self that is guided by light, informed by truth, science, knowledge, and understanding, shaped by love, blessed with compassion, and grounded in humility – these I think will always lead to the common good. In order for the common good to occur I may need to sacrifice and compromise. When standing with others I may discover a truer and brighter light or truth, I may need to expand self and understanding, I may need to change! This always happens in relationship. But this only happens when I risk saying my truth and reveal who I truly am. This will only happen with ears that hear, hearts that deeply feel, and when I am genuinely willing to listen. This will only happen when I am able to stand in the shoes of another with empathy.

I also understand there are always genuine disagreements. But even with disagreements may we seek to find common ground, shared truth, a vision for ways to walk together in this moment and into the future. Though, there may come a time when one must move on. Even Jesus, the one who was love, said to his disciples – “If anyone does not receive you or listen to what you have to say, leave that house or town and,

once outside it, shake its dust from your feet.” (Matthew 10:14) There is always a time to be present with another – and there may be a time to walk away.

For leadership in our communities, I would ask – become servant leadership, do the jobs you have been empowered to do. Stop thinking about political outcomes and think about people outcomes. Build up our communities and make them stronger. If we have learned anything during this pandemic it is that our health systems have not been adequate to meet the many challenges we have faced. We have neglected our essential workers and social structures that make for healthy communities. Let’s all be better.

Again, from President Lincoln, *“I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, and stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.”*

Be true!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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