

**Small Talk – October 1 2021**  
**By Michael Small**

Routines are good as long as they allow for the opening of the spontaneous surprise. Friday morning is a time for getting up early, changing the bed, doing some laundry, and working on the Sunday sermon. This morning I woke with pleasure to cloudy skies and rainfall that totaled up to 1.20 inches of rain with more to come.

I would say that over the past month my typical routines have expanded and been interrupted – yes, mostly with pleasant surprise. New neighbors who are up every weekend – what a delight. And more than that, a month ago I picked up a puppy (a mix of Lhasa Apso, Yorkie, Poodle, born on June 26 2021). Her name is Crouton.

It is no surprise that my routine has changed. Get up and walk the dog. Feed the dog. Walk the dog again. And then watch the dog chase her tail until she drops, falls asleep, and lays at my feet like a big white puff ball. This routine is repeated throughout the day. And yes, it is an adventure that will bring many twists and turns. Already have faced the challenges of deer ticks.

A dog who weighs just over five pounds brings tons of joy and challenge into ones life. And it is true, the love of a dog for a human is direct and unconditional – it is simple and amazing. Rarely is she out of sight – going a fair distance on her own, but always looking back, making sure I am with her.

As I write this, another surprise, I am listening to the latest deluxe album “Cheek to Cheek” released by Lady Gaga (35-years-old) and Tony Bennett (95-years-old) through Amazon Prime. They are singing many Cole Porter and Irving Berlin songs. It was, I think, 1995, when with family and friends I was privileged to hear Tony Bennett, with a stand-up bass player, and piano player, instruments and people were all in white, at the Minnesota State Fair Grandstand – and Tony was old then. I sat next to Dean Thomas who crooned and sang along with Tony all through the concert. What a great evening.

In 2016 Tony Bennett was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Apparently preparing for and recording this newest album had to be carefully done and well thought out and done with respect and patience. While singing and doing duet's the full spirit and presence of Tony's voice and personality came through with splendorous tones. Thanks to Lady Gaga for her patience, presence, and ability to sing jazz with a legend in his own time.

I think almost every family has experienced the “long-goodbye” with a loved one. It is so difficult to watch and experience the decline of mental and physical capacities of those we love. I appreciate that Tony Bennett and his family have been public about his

condition – and with the help of family and friends Tony has been able to have moments when he has been his old self at the age of 95.

And what a joy it is to have two talented musical persons, with sixty years between them, collaborate and make beautiful music together. There is hope when we work with each other – when we sing with each other we are in melodious harmony .

Come to think, it is a little bit like 73-year-old man walking along with a small, yet precious four-month-old puppy. Tall and small together. Quite a sight.

Let's be about routine, challenges, and surprises on this rainy and good day with the colors of fall all around!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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