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SOWING SEEDS

As I have mentioned in previous articles and as many of you know from discussions through the years, one of my favorite hobbies is vegetable gardening. I have a plot in my back yard approximately 5,000 square feet in size, and this year I have okra, green beans, all varieties of tomatoes, four types of peppers, cucumbers, yellow squash, zucchini, sunflowers, and sweet corn. With all the rain we have had, this has been a wonderful growing season. It should be corn shucking and silking time when this message is distributed.

For the first time, I was able to introduce my 2-year-old grandson, Ellison, to the joys of gardening early this spring. In addition to my large garden, I have two 4 feet by 8 feet raised grow boxes in which I start early crops. Attached is a picture of Ellison and me sowing multiple varieties of lettuce seed and radishes in early spring. He was quite careful to make sure he sprinkled the seeds exactly where I pointed. Throughout the spring and early summer, we have gone to the grow boxes regularly to see how the lettuce and radishes were growing. It was great to see the excitement in his eyes each time he inspected what his seeds had grown to be.

As lawyers, we have the regular opportunity to sow seeds. We do a remarkably good job caring for and supporting our fellow lawyers through organizations such as the lawyers assistance program. But the seeds that I am thinking about that we may not often sow are for the well being of our profession, our care and concern for one another in the day to day practice, and how our treatment of and connection to one another serve as an example to the public. It is important to empathize and meaningfully connect with other human beings, even when our positions differ. If we try to understand the other person's story and what motivates them to believe what they believe rather than trying to prove a point and show why the other person is wrong, we have a better chance of reaching common ground that may lead to a satisfactory resolution. To be effective however, we must listen more and speak less to better understand and identify common ground to best serve our clients to reach reconciliation. Maybe, just maybe, we can in the process serve as an example to the public at large and connect with them by serving to illustrate a different and more productive means to settling disputes.

The individual need for connection, the rule of law in making or breaking that connection and the need to hear out both sides will be a primary emphasis Ashby Pate will share as our keynote speaker for the KBA Annual Supreme Court Dinner on September 5 at the Crowne Plaza Knoxville beginning at 6:00 p.m. Ashby Pate, whose accomplishments are many, will share with us his story to help us better understand the importance for the individual need for connection in all areas of our lives. Ashby will remind us that the law's highest calling is not to disconnect but to reconcile, both with respect to our clients and fellow colleagues as well as to better understand and hopefully remove the great divides within our country.

One of Ashby's most recent accomplishments was serving as co-counsel in the prosecution of Alabama's Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore for judicial ethics violations in 2016 by his direction to county Probate Court Clerks not to issue marriage certificates to same-sex couples that ended with the permanent suspension of Chief

Justice Moore for the remainder of his term, effectively barring him from ever serving on the Court again due to the age limitations in Alabama. Coincidentally, Doug Jones, a former prosecutor and our keynote speaker for the 2016 KBA Annual Supreme Court Dinner, defeated Roy Moore in a special and highly contested election for the United States Senate seat in December of 2017. I hope that you will come to the Annual Supreme Court Dinner and listen to this meaningful story of professional and personal connection that is so vitally meaningful in our lives and that you will come away with a new or enhanced perspective on the importance of healthy connections within our lives.

September also has another exciting program on September 25 from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. at the Foundry led by our guest speaker, Vicki Clark, who will speak on the topic of "Diversity and Inclusion: A Call to Action: From Awareness to Commitment." Vicki's presentation and the exercise that will follow will naturally tie into the theme of Ashby Pate's keynote speech on the need for connectivity in our lives. We will be encouraged and even challenged to try to identify concrete ways to take our discussions and considerations of the topics of diversity and inclusion to actual commitment to action. Vicki will help us identify ways we can easily and concretely meet our objectives to continue the efforts of our bar association and our bar community to attract and retain people of diverse backgrounds through direct action and inclusion in our bar association, legal community and the community at large. I hope you will attend Vicki Clark's presentation and the law student reception on September 25. I promise you won't be disappointed.

We plant seeds each day intentionally or not. I encourage you to join with me to find new ways to plant seeds of concern, collegiality, and reconciliation as we live our lives as lawyers and all the other roles we play daily. And I wish for you the joy that I experienced helping Ellison sow his lettuce and radish seeds in the early spring in whatever way you find pleasing. It will do your heart good.

