Thriving through Turmoil

A personal perspective

Unite-CPHVA Annual Professional Conference

Judith Gillespie CBE 6 November 2025 Bristol

First things first……








A sincere “thank you” to all of you!

Caveats and Disclaimers

- Personal experience - please treat with appropriate sensitivity
- Chief Officer for over 10 years from 2003-2014, and experience after PSNI
- Impossible to cover all of the complexities and challenges
- Focus on Personal Resilience
- Common themes
- Time for questions at the end





unite
the UNION

Looking back……

In May 1958 Independent TD Frank Sherwin
made the extremely helpful suggestion that….
“Whilst recruits should not be actually horse-faced,
they should not be too good looking.
They should just be plain women
and not targets for marriage.”

Source: Oireachtas.ie

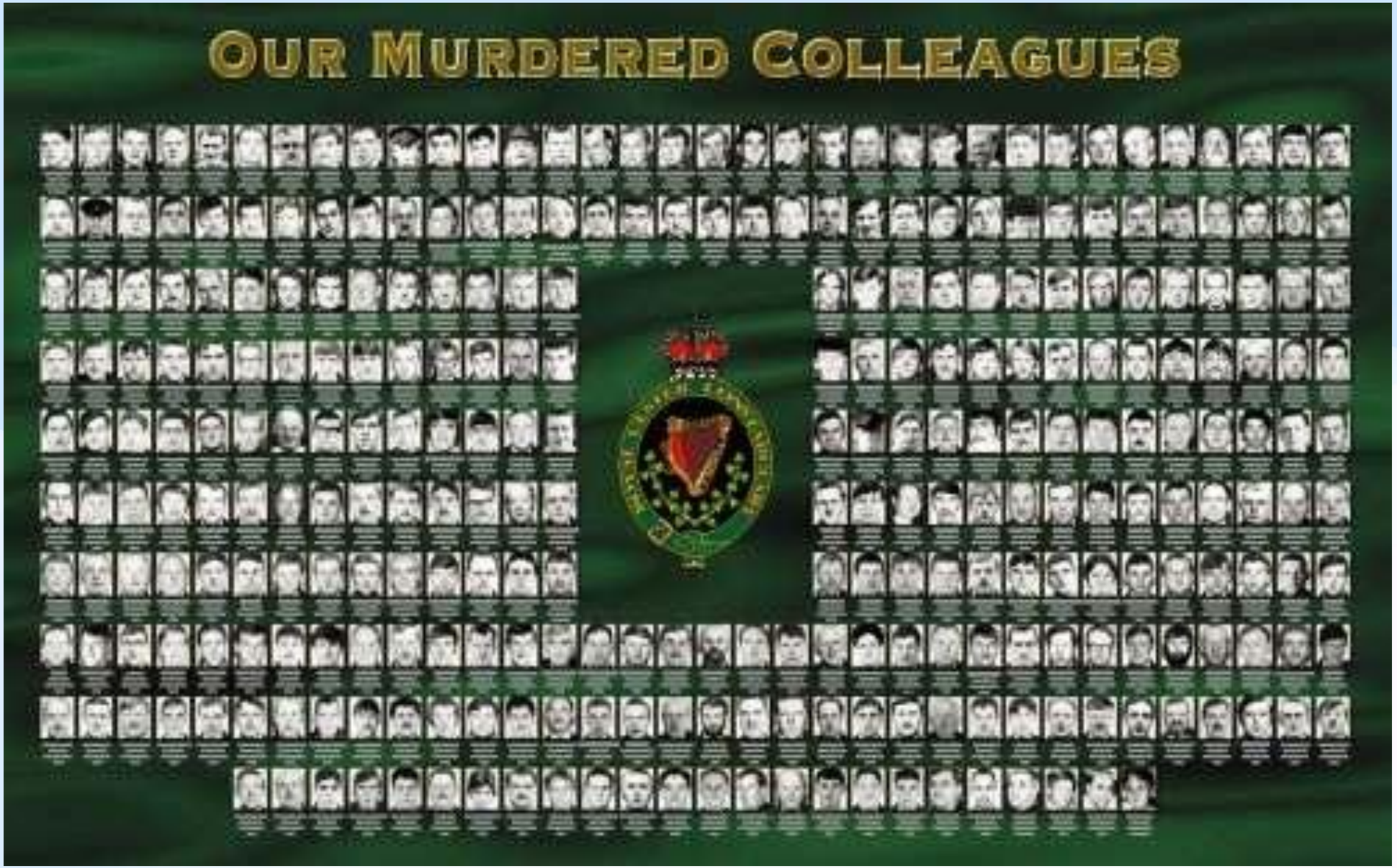
Context

More than 3,500 people were killed in Northern Ireland during ‘The Troubles’ 1968-1998

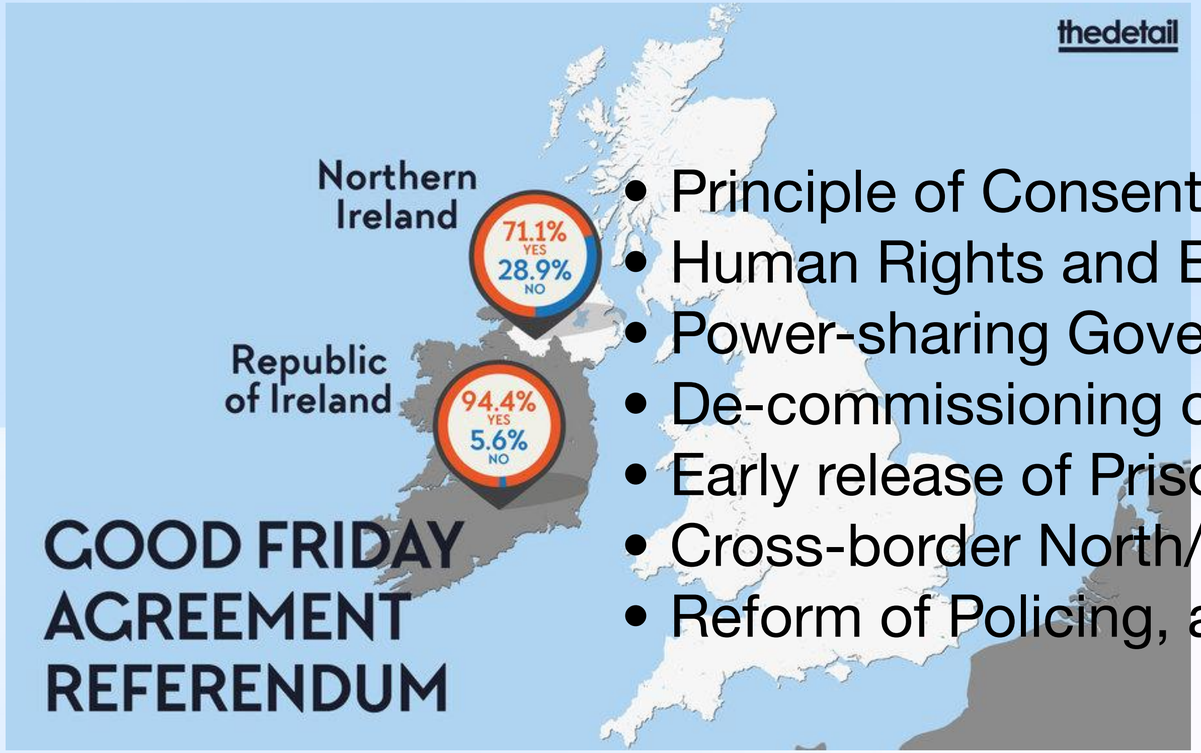
This equates approximately to:

Scotland: 11,500
Wales: 6,700
England: 121,000

Context



Context - Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement 1998



- Principle of Consent regarding Northern Ireland's constitutional status
- Human Rights and Equality of Opportunity safeguards
- Power-sharing Government with joint First and deputy First Minister
- De-commissioning of weapons
- Early release of Prisoners convicted of violence
- Cross-border North/South and GB East/West co-operation
- Reform of Policing, and accountability/oversight mechanisms

"The most complex and dramatic changes ever attempted in modern policing history"
Tom Constantine, First Oversight Commissioner

The power of Trust



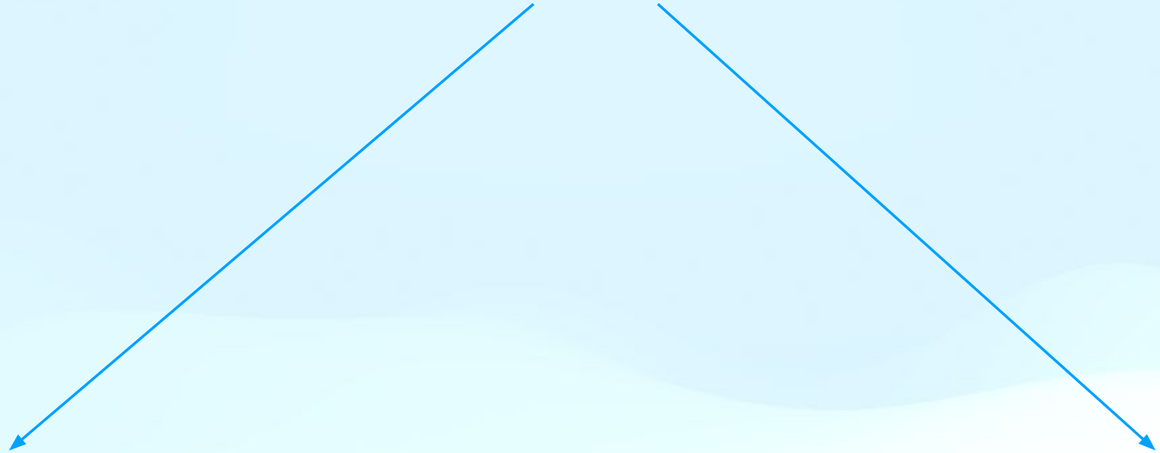
“It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and five minutes to lose it” Warren Buffett

TRUST - The jewel in your crown

Ipsos Mori Veracity Index October 2024 - public trust in professions to tell the truth

- 11% Politicians generally
- 15% Government Ministers
- 27% Journalists
- 37% Estate Agents
- 50% TV News Readers
- 56% Civil Servants
- 60% Man/woman in street
- 62% Police
- 63% Clergy/Priests
- 79% Scientists
- 85% Teachers
- 88% Doctors
- 94% Nurses

TRUST



“It is people not strategies that bring about change
and it is relationships not systems that make it work”

Changing Health and Social Care Expert Report 2016

Edmond Locard’s Forensic Principle: “Every contact leaves a trace”

Edmund Locard’s Forensic Principle 1920

Every contact leaves a trace….

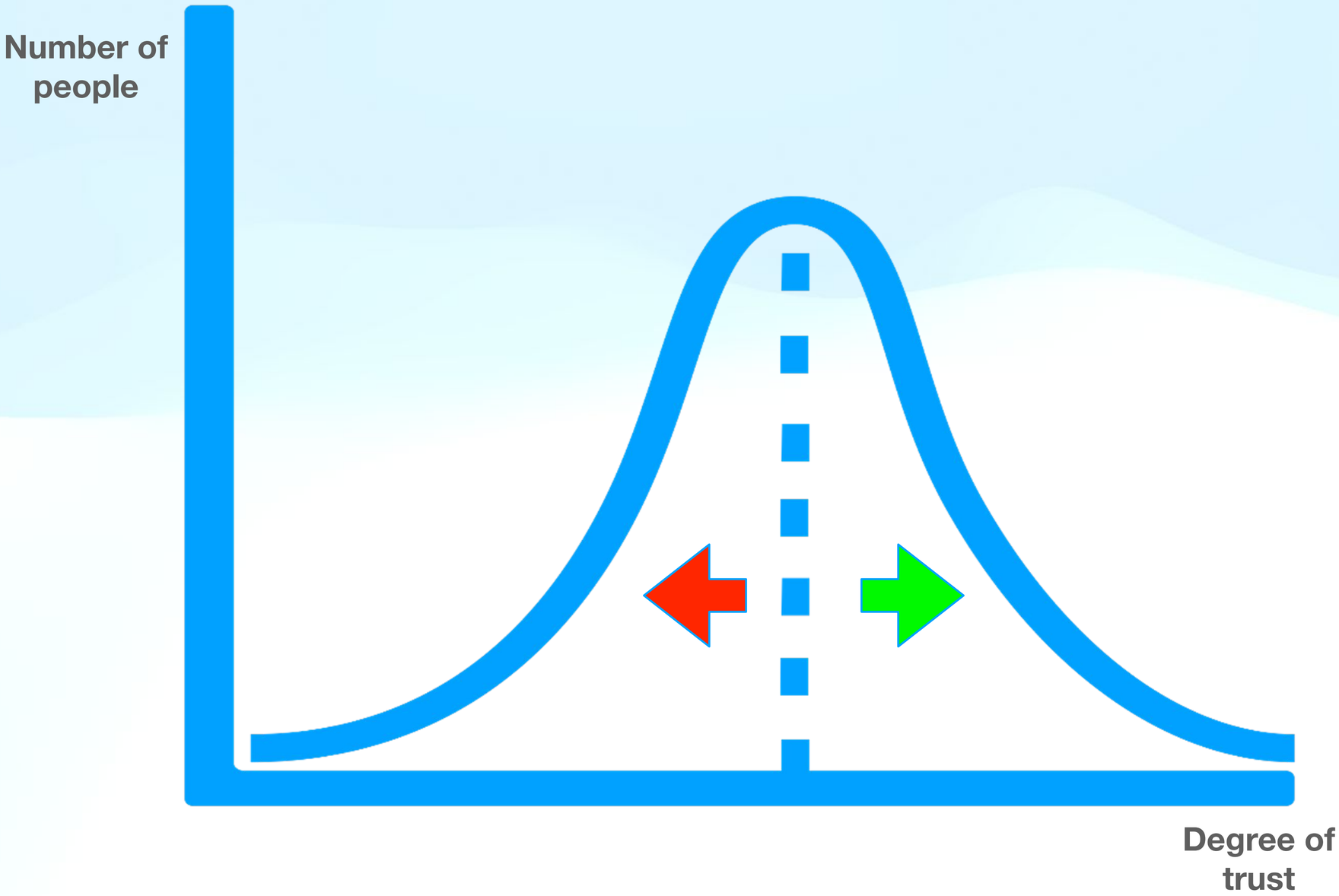








Building trust, one encounter at a time



An important question…..



V

V is for Vision





“Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others”
Jonathan Swift

Building Trust in the Vision





“The battle against terrorism is more likely to be won by calm professionalism within the existing framework of civil liberties”
Professor Richard English

V is for Voices







Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying "I will try again tomorrow"
Mary Anne Radmacher

V is for Values





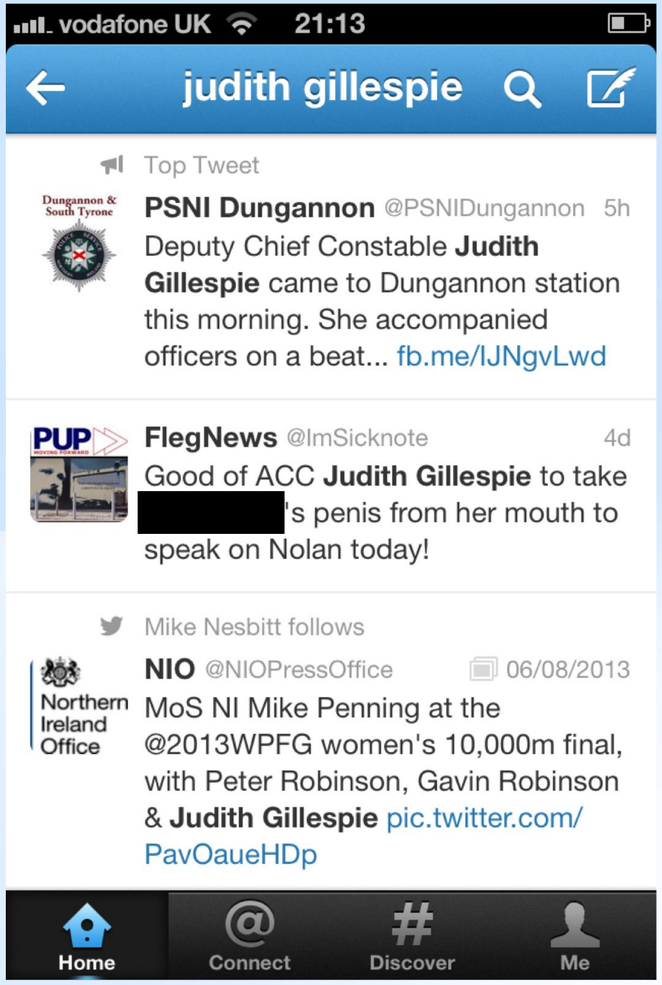
“Always be a first-rate version of yourself,
and not a second-rate version of someone else”
Judy Garland

V is for Visibility



“It turns out that trust is in fact earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection.” Brené Brown

V is for Vitality (18+ warning!)







"Don't confuse having a career with having a life" Hillary Clinton

To sum up……

Thriving as a leader through turbulent times involves building trust by:-

- Inspiring the **Vision**, the reason ‘why’
- Giving staff a **Voice**, and using your own
- Living your **Values** every day in your actions
- **Visibility**, presence and empathy
- Maintaining your own **Vitality** and relentless optimism

If you told me……..



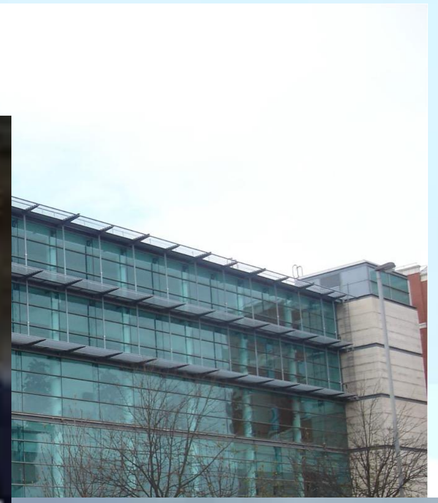














“Isn’t it funny how day by day nothing changes,
but when you look back everything is different”
C.S. Lewis



Thank you for listening