Esther, my wife and I, have a grand-daughter named Zoe, the Greek word for “life”. She was born prematurely and weighed only one pound, seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide up her arm to her shoulder. The neonatologist who examined her told us that she had a 5 to 10 percent chance of living three days. When Esther and I scrubbed up for our first visit and saw Zoe in her isolette in the neonatal intensive care unit, she had two IV’s in her navel, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth.

To complicate matters, Zoe’s biological father had jumped ship the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me my instructions.

‘For the next several months, at least, you’re the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I would like you to rub her body and her legs and arms with the tip of your finger. While you’re caressing her, you should tell her over and over how much you love her, because she has to be able to connect your voice to your touch.’

Ruth was doing exactly the right thing on Zoe’s behalf (and of course, on my behalf as well), and without realizing it she was giving me one of the best possible descriptions of the work of a leader. At the core of becoming a leader is the need always to connect one’s voice and one’s touch.

Prologue p.1-2

Reference:
Leadership Jazz
Max De Pree