

Turning Inward

20 March, 2020

During this time of 'shelter in place,' I wonder how many of us see the opportunities within the limitations.

Yes, of course I'm talking about catching up on chores and finally reading the recommended book. Those ideas go without saying or should, anyway. But I wonder how many of us are embracing the possibilities in terms of self-reinvention. I don't mean to be insensitive; as an employment advocate for persons living with disabilities, I am very aware of the struggles of folks whose jobs mean not only paying for rent and food but also their primary connection to community. I feel for these members of our family and I hope we all do everything we can to help ease their sense of loss and disconnection.

But even for those of us with stable finances and engaged friends and family, the coming days will present a challenge in terms of that simplest of questions – how shall I spend my time? I'd love to read your ideas and I'll try to share those that are helpful rather than hurtful (no political or social attack pieces, please).

For myself, I've been very aware of the activities of a couple of young women of my acquaintance. My younger daughter and her husband live on the other side of the continent and they have their jobs and each other and their horse-like dogs to keep them busy. And they keep in touch by daily posting to social media of pictures depicting how Great Danes adjust to quarantine. Those pictures and accompanying comments mean everything to Mary and me. They're not only the slice of life we live for but also a continuing statement of the importance of connection. 'We're still here and we value staying in touch.' It's a small but magical effort of reassurance.

Our older daughter lives within an hour's drive and just moved into her first house. So Mary has been over there frequently helping with move-related stuff. Other than Mary (at this point, whatever one has brewing is present in the other), Angela is being strict about maintaining her distance. It's hard being alone but Angela has the advantage of being awash in chores and potential artistic endeavors as she decides what goes where, whether to paint this or that, how she will use the third room, etc. And we will continue to stay 'present' for her, only in my case, at arm's length.

As for me, I have my job, of course. And setting up my woodworking shop and other sundry projects in that space. I will finally arrange my writing space and maybe even cull the shelves and read the books I'm been meaning to get to. But I'm also considering how to reframe my social life going forward. To be honest, I've never been much of a social gadfly, don't like parties and such. But I do crave the give and take, the communication of ideas and cares and even just news (lower case, not News – I get my fill of that without trying). Hence, this series of missives.

Here's the deal: I will try, every day or two, to post something here that I feel adds to the conversation in a positive way. Not Pollyannish, but also not more of the negative we can get in full measure from the trolls of the world. I hope and intend that doing this will bring a note of gladness to those of you who care to read what I share. And that you'll share your own thoughts.

We can't know how long this pandemic will last but we can structure our social lives in such a way that while it's with us and, I hope, beyond, we will remain caring and connected members of a community of thinkers.