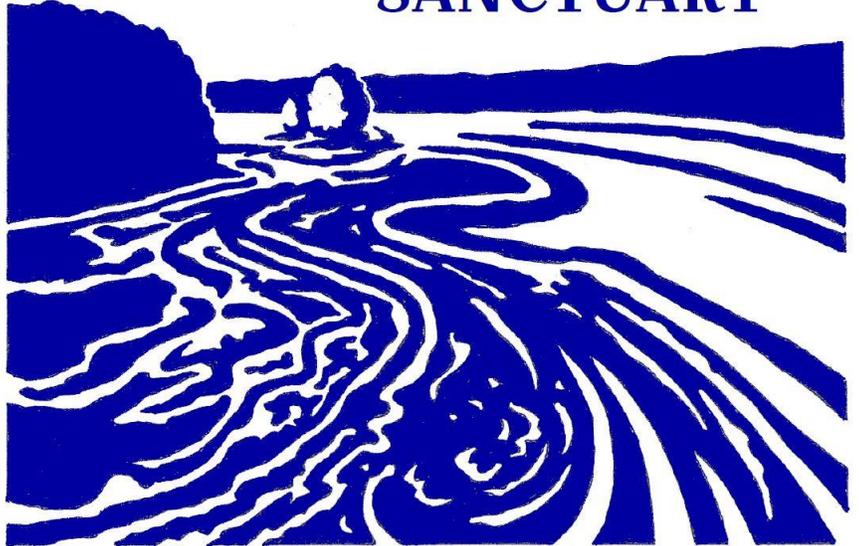


Ebb and Flow

*Reversing Falls
Sanctuary
Newsletter
Special Edition
In a Time of
Pandemic
March, 2020*

REVERSING FALLS SANCTUARY



Programing at Reversing Falls Sanctuary Postponed Indefinitely

My mother was a worrier. If she had nothing to worry about, she would find something. In contrast, my father refused to worry until there was clearly something to worry about. And then he decided what he could do about it — if there was something that could be done.

Our families, our communities, our country, and the people of the world, clearly have something to worry about. Folks in the RFS community are asking, “What can we do about it?” We are getting a lot of good advice from medical sources, and there is no point in repeating that here.



The question rather is about what we as individuals or as the RFS community can do that others are not doing or cannot do.

In this newsletter I am not going to answer that question. Rather, I am going to include some materials and some ideas that may comfort, inspire, or amuse. But above all, I’m going to invite members of the community to share reflections, resources, ideas, concerns, needs, etc.

Anne Ferrara has forwarded a poem by Lynn Ungar.

Pandemic

*What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath —
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.*

*And when your body has become still,
reach out with all your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)*

When I was a grad student, I worked in the back reaches of the Northwestern University Library. My workstation was next to that of an elderly woman [at least I thought she was elderly]. The woman had a granddaughter who was an undergrad at Northwestern. She arrived one day at her grandmother's side all excited about a movie she had seen the previous evening. She insisted her grandmother should see it and proceeded to tell her about it. Her grandmother kept interrupting, asking, "Was it pleasant?" At last, the young woman said that the movie was not pleasant, but that it was very important to see it. Her grandmother said, "I don't go to movies unless they are pleasant." In my old age, I have come to appreciate her point of view.

But, for the young in heart among us, I'm going to list some suggestions for ways to entertain ourselves in self isolation that may not be pleasant. But I'll also make some suggestions that are pleasant. Readers are invited to add to either list.

*Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely that has become clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.*

*Promise this world your love —
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.*



Daksha sent a link to movies about plagues. I've compiled a list of some books about plagues. And I know there must be many I have missed. Judy Robbins sent a link yesterday to a Youtube of a concert in a square in Vienna where a crowd gathered as an orchestra formed to play Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." From there I saw links to a similar event in Spain where the orchestra played Ravel's Bolero. Exchanging these sorts of links would lift my spirits and perhaps yours as well.

Movies About Plagues

Contagion	12 Monkeys	Pontypool
93 Days	It Comes at Night	Night of the Living Dead
The Resident Evil Series	28 Days Later	BPM
We Were Here		How to Survive a Plague

The two listed at the bottom are documentaries.

One might rather watch Monty Python or Charlie Chaplin or I Love Lucy.

Books About Plague

Giovanni Boccaccio, <i>The Decameron</i>	Samuel Pepys, <i>The Diary of Samuel Pepys</i>
Daniel Defoe, <i>A Journal of the Plague Year</i>	Albert Camus, <i>The Plague</i>
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i>	

The stories in the Decameron, which are quite bawdy, as I remember, are occasioned by the plague. I don't remember if they address it directly or even indirectly. In browsing Amazon entries for Defoe, I found this quote from *The Journal* . . . which I enter here exactly as it appeared there. It is a sentence without the beginning or the ending, but whose context is easy to surmise. It is a fitting word of caution.

*. . . in hopes of releasing them, brought the distemper with them, and infected the whole house, and all or most of them died, not of the **plague**, as really upon them before, but of the **plague** that those People brought them who should ha' been . . .*

The setting for Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale" is the plague. In the story three gentlemen set out to end the plague by killing death. An old man tells them they can find death under a certain tree. Under the tree, they find a fortune in gold. While two guard the gold, the third goes into the village to buy drinks with which to celebrate. While he is gone, the other two decide to kill him and divide the gold between the two of them. Their partner in crime has purchased poison to add to their drinks so all the gold will be his. He returns, they kill him, drink what he has brought them, and die. Death was waiting for them under the tree.

In little more than a week, money from the government to deal with the pandemic has gone from 3 billion to 8 billion to 50 billion to one trillion dollars. That is a very tempting pot of gold.

There are books about plagues, of course, or which have chapters about plague. One of particular relevance for our times, even beyond consideration of pandemics, is *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* by Barbara W. Tuchman.

“Hope Will Not Be Canceled”

An email received this morning from Moms’ Clean Airforce is headlined “Hope will not be canceled.” The author lists things that are not canceled.

Listening

Compassion

Community

High Standards of Behavior

Sharing

Generosity



Under generosity the author suggests:

- Offering to do grocery or drug store deliveries.
[The Bucks Harbor Market is looking for delivery volunteers. Does the school need volunteers to deliver to children?]
- Paying forward someone’s grocery or drug store delivery.
[What might we do to support Tinder Hearth?]
- Pay a needy person’s fuel bill, grocery bill, etc.
[Is there a tab at the Market that a customer is unable to pay?]
- Be attentive to anyone struggling to get food.
- Be thankful for what we have.

Daksha suggested we might set up a phone tree to check in with folks. It struck me that we might each set up our own branch on that tree to call neighbors, friends, or those we know to be isolated. Gail has already done that, and I am working on mine. I’m guessing that formally or informally many of you are doing the same.

If someone would like to tackle an RFS phone tree, I can send you our RFS e-list. With more than 400 listings, and many of those on it apt to be unknown to anyone of us trying to set up a phone tree, the task is formidable.

What other ideas have you had?

There is a Celtic Affirmation I appreciate which expresses well my own perspective on worry. I'm sure the affirmation speaks to the temperament I have inherited from my father. It is also a reflection of my experience and of my faith. Reversing Falls Sanctuary is a multi-faith community. What resources from other faiths or philosophical traditions can we share with each other while we are absent one from another? It is found in *Celtic Daily Prayer* from the Northumbria Community.

Lord, You Have Always Given

Lord, you have always given
bread for the coming day;
and though I am poor,
today I believe.

Lord, you have always given
strength for the coming day;
and though I am weak,
today I believe.

Lord you have always given
peace for the coming day;
and though of anxious heart,
today I believe.

Lord, you have always kept me
safe in trials;
and now, tried as I am,
today I believe.

Lord, you have always marked
the road for the coming day;
and though it may be hidden,
today I believe.

Lord, you have always lightened
this darkness of mine;
and though the night is here,
today I believe.

Lord, you have always spoken
when time was ripe;
and though you be silent now,
today I believe.



An author writing for the Washington Post suggests some more movies:

After Hours, Life in a Day, Mr. Nobody, Nebraska,
The Last Black Man in San Francisco

How about *Ground Hog Day*? It might start to feel that way.

And another article suggests things to do:

Exercise, Phone friends, Mindfulness, Volunteering [Do something for others]

And play music, dance, sing together or alone. Write cards and letters.

Play board games. Gail and I plan to play a lot of cribbage.



Kathleen Caldwell forwards this from the Morgan Bay Zendo:
May all of us as a species use this opportunity to wake up to our shared humanity, our shared vulnerability, and to nourish our compassion and tolerance, and not our fear and discrimination.

From Plum Village in France

[Earth Day flags made by children at Brooksville Elementary School]

The Role of Science

Science can inform public policy IF government officials access the relevant expertise and understand its significance.

When we actually look at the data describing the corona virus confirmed cases and deaths in the United States, it becomes obvious that three weeks ago we were missing 95% of the actual cases; two weeks ago we were missing 90%; and last week we were missing two thirds.

For Maine, whose first reported case was just a week ago, we were complacent about the ongoing community spread of the virus in Maine because neither our public officials nor the media were aware of 1) the significance of the vast under-reporting of

cases, and 2) the property of exponential functions (characterized by doubling times — in the case of the corona virus deaths in the US — about four and a half days) and the great benefit of responding early.

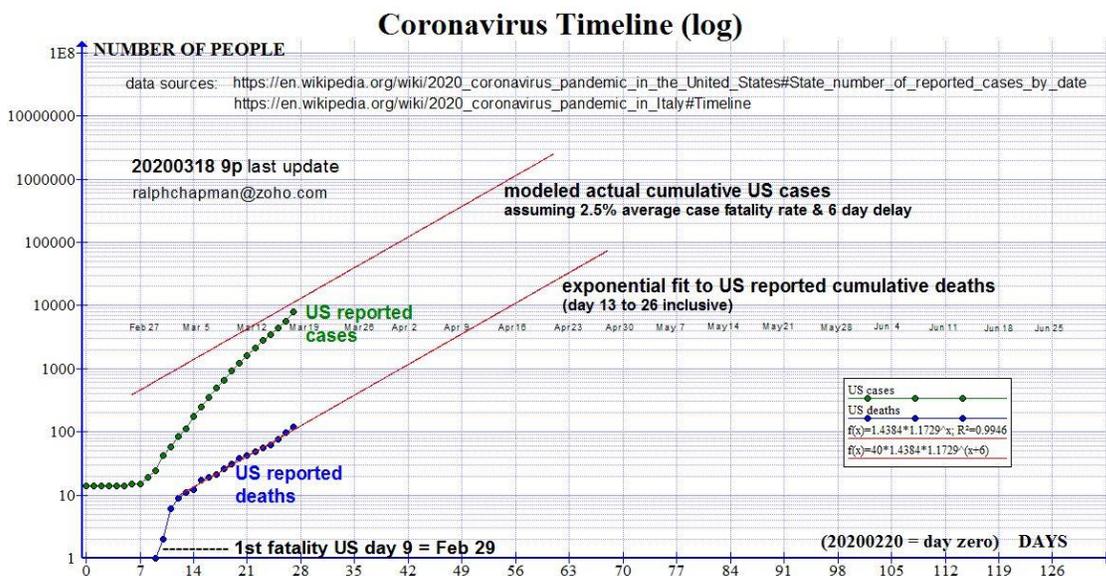
Fortunately for us, at least one public official, the Superintendent of the MDI school system, was educated by two scientists who communicated that the virus “almost certainly” had been circulating in Maine for the preceding two-plus weeks prior to the first known case and recommended the schools be shut. Shortly thereafter, other school systems, and now all the schools in Maine, are shut.

At the national level, government officials in both Great Britain and the US were given an early copy last weekend of a paper published last Monday from the Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team which showed consequences from modeling results of applying various interventions in the fight against the virus. Both governments quickly changed their stance on dealing with the crisis. While it would have been better for the government officials to have learned earlier from those with expertise, it can also be said that it would have been worse had they not yet learned.

Understandably, it is difficult for many of us to grasp the magnitude of the problems associated with the pandemic, but science (though evolving with continuously updated information) is clear that the epidemic in the US will peak in the June to July timeframe and last at least until the September to November timeframe. Unlike threats to our lives with which we are familiar such as fatal automobile accidents or influenza, each of which kills tens of thousands in the US each year, this virus is expected to be about one hundred times worse, killing a couple million.

I remain available to discuss the data analysis of this pandemic with those interested.

Ralph Chapman, 469-9990 or ralphchapman@zoho.com



Please send your thoughts, ideas and suggestions. I'll put out a supplement edition again next week. Perhaps the newsletter can function as a RFS community forum.

Photo credits: Gail Vencill, daffodils; Pat Wheeler, creator and photographer of the art figures as well as the photo of the Reversing Falls; Anne Ferrara, Celtic Cross; Daksha Baumann, Earth Day Flags

Information – garyvencill@gmail.com, 469-7850, www.reversingfalls.org

p.s. A “pardonor” [as in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*] was someone authorized by the church to sell indulgences.