I'm thinking, 'calm down, people. God is in control.' —Grocery store worker Bonita Brant on how she calms customers, p. 63

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Staring Down Disaster

P. 38
If you’re concerned about the growing secularism on public campuses, Union University offers a clear alternative. At Union, your faith will be cultivated, not belittled. Your commitment to Christ will be encouraged, not scorned.

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BATTLE-TESTED MEDICAL WORKERS
Doctors and nurses with experience in overwhelmed health systems are a big asset as U.S. hospitals experience shortages for the first time in modern memory

by Emily Belz
WORLD ON FIRE FOCUSES ON LITTLE-EXPLORED ELEMENTS OF THE WAR THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MILITARY STRATEGIES.
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“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF; THE WORLD AND THOSE WHO DWELL THEREIN.” —PSALM 24:1

HOW HAS LIFE CHANGED IN THE NATION’S CAPITAL THE LAST FEW WEEKS?

“Something invisible like the coronavirus doesn’t hit home until something concrete changes. For Washington, D.C., it was canceling the Cherry Blossom Festival in March, which usually draws 1.5 million people. Police cars blocked streets leading to the National Mall and Tidal Basin.”

—WORLD reporter Harvest Prude

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INFECTIOUS ANGER
JOHN KLOOSTERMAN ON FACEBOOK
This seems to have distracted attention from Hong Kong protesters. We can hope China will capitulate there just to focus on the new problem.

SHADOW GROUPS WITHIN SHADOW GROUPS
MARCH 14, P. 58—ROBERT WEIL ON FACEBOOK
It is sad to know of Iranian brothers and sisters in Christ who are being abused in this way. Thank you for this vital information that is not available elsewhere.

THE RIGHT FEMINISM
MARCH 14, P. 72—CHRISTINE BEST LISTER ON FACEBOOK
I’ve dug deeper into myself as a mother more than I ever did as a childless woman. My children’s honesty keeps me real. The ugly within me is just as powerful as the magnificent, and I saw neither fully without my children.

A SOCIALIST FUTURE?
MARCH 14, P. 10—EDDIE SETTLES/MEMPHIS, TENN.
Joel Belz nailed America’s biggest difficulty in avoiding a socialist future: public education. Believers should take on the responsibility of running for or helping to elect school boards committed to restoring integrity to the system. It’s a long play but the right play.

NO CHANGE ALLOWED
MARCH 14, P. 52—REXANN BASSLER ON WNG.ORG
Regarding “conversion therapy bans,” if someone wasn’t attracted to the same sex but wanted to be, would a therapist get in trouble for helping him get what he desired?

WEAK COUNTRIES WITH BIG BLUFFS
MARCH 14, P. 32—BOB CREMER ON WNG.ORG
George Friedman presumes that people faced with adversity will accept responsibility because they realize they are men. But in The Abolition of Man, C.S. Lewis points out that children raised without faith in God have little reason to become men when they grow up. When hard times come, they don’t feed their children after all.

BORDER BLOWBACK
MARCH 14, P. 40—JACKIE PARFET ON WNG.ORG
We who live on the border appreciate the work and dedication of Border Patrol agents and are often frustrated when the media portray them, instead of Congress, as the villains of this nation’s failing immigration policies.

MAGICAL THINKING ALL AROUND US
MARCH 14, P. 20—NEIL EVANS ON WNG.ORG
Dreaming is so much easier than planning and hard work, and when the dreams don’t work out, I can always say that I had good intentions.

PEANUT PROTECTION
MARCH 14, P. 67—SHARI SMITH ON FACEBOOK
I have a friend whose daughter was severely allergic to peanuts and is halfway through oral immunotherapy. She can now, for the first time in years, safely eat without worrying about cross-contamination.

CORRECTION
Doug Mathews is the FBI agent featured in the documentary series McMillions (“Stealing McMillions,” March 28, p. 27).
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Quarantine is not the same as isolation.

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Notes from the CEO Kevin Martin

Social distancing makes the heart grow fonder

Learning to do without transforms gratitude from vague to specific

One tiny way God has changed my heart during this coronavirus crisis: He’s used it to build up my sense of gratitude. Of course, that followed a too-long period of petty annoyance. I’ll take gratitude.

I have always been thankful, in a vague, nonverbal way, that we are able to deliver WORLD Magazine to you on schedule. My gratitude now is specific and spoken. It seems natural to write about—maybe it’s the only thing for me to write about—how our staff is dealing with the crisis. It is appropriate, though, to frame this in terms of specific, spoken gratitude.

So here goes: I’m thankful that none of our employees has contracted this coronavirus, or any other major seasonal illness, even though many of them continue their street-level reporting. We have asked for prayers for the safety of our reporters in the past. Those prayers, and our thanks that God answers them, seem even more real now than they did a month or so ago.

Our main office is in Buncombe County, N.C., and both the county and the state have versions of “stay-at-home” orders. I’m thankful that news media are considered essential, and thus exempt from those orders. I’m thankful that our printer in Wisconsin is considered an exempt essential service. I’m thankful that most construction work is also exempt, and that allows us to finish some minor work in our new office space while almost all of our people are out of the office.

Despite our exemption, I’m thankful that we’ve been able to perform most of our work from our homes. We have had two or three of our Member Services representatives in the office, because we can’t work with private personal information, like credit card numbers, from home.

I’m thankful that more than two decades ago we learned to put together all of our news content remotely. During all those years, remote work allowed us to hire reporters around the country and around the world. During this crisis, it allows us to do the same, with no loss of efficiency.

But the fact that our editorial team has been working remotely for many years doesn’t mean I’m not thankful for new technologies that have made this extreme remoteness more bearable. I’m thankful for virtual meetings in a way I never expected, and yet virtual meetings have made me appreciate in-person meetings so much more.

During this time of mandated distancing, our employees miss each other. Odd as it sounds, I’m thankful they do. Wouldn’t it be sad if we didn’t?

We’ve always said we’re “thankful” for all of these things, but somehow we’ve never been quite so thankful as we are right now. And for that, I’m thankful.

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“This is different”

Voices JOEL BELZ

We haven’t before faced the challenges we’ll see after the COVID-19 shutdown

Most components of our culture, of course, are radi-cally more complex.

That’s why folks tend to be unanimous when they say, “This is different.” And it’s why Americans—and especially Americans who are Christians—need to be preparing to spend all kinds of “This is different” energy in the extended recovery that looms on the horizon. That recovery involves our businesses, of course. But perhaps more importantly, it will involve our churches, our educational enterprises, our missions and benevolences, and hundreds of other fronts we’ve barely thought of.

Our churches will need to be rebuilt. Never in our nation’s history has the Church at large been compelled to put on a disappearing act first for several weeks, and now stretching into months. What makes us think that we’ll come through that aberration unscathed? It’s not primarily that millions of dollars’ worth of pews and buildings lie empty every week. More disturbing are reports from significant and once-healthy churches that only a fraction of members are now taking advantage of live-streaming worship, while tithes and offerings are slipping. Will our churches rediscover their true Biblical mission of making and training disciples?

Our schools will need emergency aid. The transition this spring for many Christian schools, colleges, and even seminaries—shutting down their campuses for the last half of the spring semester and taking their teaching faculties online—has been costly and unsettling. Thousands of Christian families will be reexamining their commitments at several levels. Don’t be surprised this fall if you hear of permanent closures by some schools.

We’ll all need to rethink what role leisure time and leisure dollars play in our scheme of things. If our institutions are likely to need extra fuel for their depleted tanks later this year, it’s all but certain that we’ll find ourselves close to needy families or individuals who are newly unemployed or otherwise stressed. Is this a unique opportunity for some of the rest of us to consider real-locating some of what we spent last year on our own travel, recreation, or other leisure or activity?

I’ve just about worn out the ? key on my little laptop. It’s not for me to propose specifics for WORLD readers and listeners—and my wife Carol Esther and I have to discuss a bit more what our part should be. But none of us dare fall back to what we did last year. The dev-astation is just too extensive.

Remember: “This is different!”

DON’T BE SURPRISED THIS FALL IF YOU HEAR OF PERMANENT CLOSURES BY SOME SCHOOLS.


“Nothing. Nothing at all. This is so totally different.”

And the response has been unanimous. Even a few of my oldest respondents—maybe in their 80s and 90s, and old enough to remember the Great Depression or World War II—join the chorus. “This is radically different,” they say. “This is profoundly different.”

What makes them think that?

Try this explanation. These folks are joined in their response because they sense how widespread, deep, and pervasive the destruction is. They sense—intuitively at first, but accurately nonetheless—the enormity of the rebuilding task when this is all over.

An artfully written essay called “I, Pencil” circulated many years ago highlighting the genius of the common office pencil. The writer skillfully showed how raw products like wood, graphite, rubber, tin, glue, and paint all found their ways from various continents to a common destination. There those components were assembled into a tool so simple and economical it was typically handed out as a freebie.

They did this with no overall master plan, task force, or huge governmental directive. But the historical development of something so simple as an office pencil still took several centuries. And if you obliterate the infrastructure necessary to bring all the physical components together, the recovery route even for simple species like pencils becomes daunting indeed.

Voices JOEL BELZ
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Liberties in tension
Emergency declarations test the limits of constitutional rights
by Sarah Erdős

As the United States continues to battle the coronavirus, hundreds of millions of Americans are under state orders to stay home. Every state and the federal government have declared an emergency, and enforcement efforts are escalating.

Four small towns in south Texas, for example, have announced police patrols and checkpoints. Edcouch city manager Victor De La Cruz said officers would cite those who cannot provide written documentation that they are an “essential employee.” In one instance Edcouch police escorted a citizen who was picking up prescriptions to ensure that he returned home immediately after the errand.
The nation’s state governors have issued over 760 executive orders pertaining to the coronavirus. Those orders, limiting citizens’ movements and ability to meet together and conduct business, raise a significant legal question: What are the constitutional limits of governmental powers during an emergency?

In Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee extended a stay-at-home order to May 4. Washington statute permits the governor to proclaim a state of emergency without consulting the Legislature for up to 30 days. During an emergency, he may impose a curfew, suspend state laws, and ban gatherings in open spaces provided the restrictions do not “conflict with the rights, under the First Amendment, of freedom of speech or of the people to peaceably assemble.”

“It’s very clear that state governors have, as a matter of federal constitutional law, extraordinarily broad authority,” said Joel Ard, an attorney based in Washington state. “It has always been understood that state governments have the authority to quarantine to protect public health.”

However, Tony McDonald, an attorney in Austin, Texas, is concerned about the long-term precedent the latest executive orders may set. He says that prohibitions on the suspension of laws—a common feature of many state constitutions—are at the core of our constitutional order: “Restrictions on the king’s power and authority to suspend laws were the very first element of the English Bill of Rights from the 1600s.”

U.S. officials are also eyeing surveillance techniques in the coronavirus fight. *The Washington Post* reported that Google, Facebook, and other tech companies are in talks with the federal government about sharing users’ anonymized, aggregated mobile phone location data with federal officials. Such information reveals to what extent Americans are abiding by stay-at-home orders.

Public restrictions are not new in the United States. During the 1918-20 influenza pandemic that killed half a million Americans, municipalities removed communal drinking cups in public spaces, closed dance halls and salons, and sometimes quarantined the households of the sick.

Nancy Bristow, author of *American Pandemic*, said officials during that time didn’t restrict the movement of healthy citizens. “But public gatherings and events were frequently prohibited, and many public spaces were closed, such as schools, bars, and restaurants.”

Consumed with the war effort and not wanting to cause alarm, President Woodrow Wilson never publicly mentioned the pandemic, and Congress passed no legislation addressing it.

Today, a dirty secret of U.S. emergency powers is their longevity: Thirty-one national emergency declarations continue to be renewed annually, including declarations regarding the 1979 Iran hostage crisis and the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

But the courts would likely overrule an emergency order that restricts American liberties indefinitely, said Ard: “It almost certainly does have to be exercised in a way that’s rationally related to the problem they perceive and time-limited.”

Attorneys say that a growing number of lawsuits, including First Amendment suits in at least five states, could soon become a deluge.

McDonald is unsure they will meet success. “Courts have proven throughout history that they are unwilling to confront the executive in times of public emergency,” he said. “Is this situation unlawful? I’m not sure.”
The number of deaths from cancer in 2018, the second leading cause of death during that year. The number was virtually unchanged from 599,108 deaths in 2017.

The number of deaths from unintentional injuries in 2018, making accidents the third leading cause of death.

The number of deaths from chronic lower respiratory diseases in 2018, making these diseases the fourth leading cause of death. This category includes emphysema, asthma, and pulmonary hypertension.

The number of deaths from cerebrovascular diseases (or strokes) in 2018, making strokes the fifth leading cause of death.

The number of Americans who died from heart disease in 2018, making it the leading cause of death that year. Heart disease was the leading cause of death for both men and women but was more likely to kill men. Smokers, those who were obese, those who were over 55 years old, and those with a family history of heart disease were also at higher risk of dying from heart disease. The category most like COVID-19—influenza and pneumonia—killed 59,120 Americans and was the eighth leading cause of death. The tenth leading cause of death was suicide, with 48,344 deaths, up from 47,173 in 2017.

—All data are from the National Center for Health Statistics
Man knows not his time

Historic civil rights leader Joseph Lowery dies

JOSEPH E. LOWERY, activist and assistant to Martin Luther King Jr., died on March 27 at age 98. Lowery was born in Alabama and, after attending several colleges, was ordained as a Methodist minister. Not long after, he led his first protest, a successful, one-day boycott of segregated buses in Mobile, Ala. He then joined King in leading a similar boycott in Montgomery. He would be by King’s side from then until King’s assassination, marching in protests, facing death threats, and gaining a reputation for his strong speeches. Lowery led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for 20 years, helping win renewal of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. President Barack Obama would later acknowledge Lowery’s accomplishments by awarding him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

SEIZED

Federal agents in California seized nearly $30 million worth of drugs after uncovering a smuggling tunnel under the U.S.-Mexico border. The tunnel began in a warehouse in Tijuana, Mexico, and ended in another in San Diego. It was more than 2,000 feet long with a rail system, lighting, and ventilation shafts and an average depth of around 31 feet. San Diego authorities issued a statement citing a Drug Enforcement Administration estimate that the tunnel has been in use for several months. Authorities found 4,400 pounds of drugs inside the tunnel, including fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine.

EXPOSED

The chief executive at Zoom has apologized for the site’s security issues in a blog post and promised to address the concerns that have surfaced about the platform. Eric Yuan wrote that the company had an unexpected surge in Zoom users in the last weeks, from around 10 million daily users in December to more than 200 million in March. This, he said, revealed unexpected problems, including Zoombombing, where uninvited guests are able to join meetings by guessing the passwords or accessing insecure links. Other issues included a flaw that could leave webcams on Macs open to hijacking, a feature that allows hosts to track attendees, and unauthorized data sharing with Facebook. Yuan outlined a security plan and promised weekly updates on its progress.

UNEMPLOYED

A record 6.6 million Americans filed unemployment claims near the end of March. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to slam the U.S. economy as more states enforced stay-at-home orders closing nonessential businesses. Jobless claims between March 21 and March 28 more than doubled from the previous week’s record of 3.3 million, according to a government report. The economic rescue package signed by President Donald Trump expanded the pool of workers who are eligible for unemployment benefits to include independent contractors, “gig” workers, and self-employed individuals.
“It was like somebody was beating me like a piñata.”

CNN anchor CHRIS CUOMO on his COVID-19 symptoms.

“The wing business is totally in the gutter.”

STAN NEVA, owner of the Northwest Meat Co. in Chicago, which supplies meat to restaurants, hotels, and clubs, on not being able to sell chicken wings. Suppliers had stocked up for the since-canceled NCAA Tournament, and that stockpile, along with the closing of restaurants, has left the industry with an overabundance of unsold chicken wings.

“We don’t know if we will get this virus, but what I do know is that we get hungry three times a day.”

SHAKILA ASGHAR, who works in a towel factory in Karachi, Pakistan. She and others in the factory continue to work during the COVID-19 pandemic because they cannot afford food unless they do so.

“You know that Billy Joel line, ‘Hot funk, cool punk, even if it’s old junk, it’s still rock & roll to me’? I’m happy to represent the old-junk category.”

Singer-songwriter BILL WITHERS at his 2015 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Withers died at age 81 on March 30.

“We’re seeing increased sales in tops but not bottoms.”

DAN BARTLE, executive vice president of Walmart, on sales reflecting the importance of video conferencing—in which people are seen only from the waist up—during the coronavirus pandemic.
1 MORE MAC AND CHEESE, PLEASE

As food flies off the shelves of Canadian grocery stores, a nation turns its anxious eyes to one Canadian factory to keep the mac and cheese flowing. Kraft’s Montreal plant has transitioned to around-the-clock production to keep up with Canadian demand for Kraft macaroni and cheese boxes. Panic buying in March led to a 35 percent increase in demand nearly overnight. To meet that demand, the 960 employees at the Montreal facility have started taking on extra shifts to accommodate the extra hours of operation. “People are very proud,” plant manager Danielle Nguyen told CTV. “They feel they’re contributing to a noble cause, to serving the country.”

2 SHIRT WASTE Toilet paper shortages due to coronavirus fears have led Redding, Calif., residents to a substandard alternative. According to city officials, residents of the city caused a sewage backup by using scraps of T-shirts as toilet paper substitutes and flushing them down the toilet. The city contracted with COR Wastewater Management to clear the blockage on March 18. “If you use anything other than toilet paper, bag it,” an official said on the city’s official Twitter channel. “Don’t flush it.”

3 ROLLING ON THE RIVER At the end of a very slow-speed chase, West Virginia officers were finally able to nab their man. Deputies with the Cabell County Sheriff’s Department began a search for a suspect from Culloden, W.Va., on March 24 after receiving a complaint about domestic violence. When deputies initially approached the man, the suspect bolted into his car and drove to the banks of the Ohio River. From there, the man abandoned the vehicle, swam to the middle of the river, and climbed aboard a floating log. Deputies watching from the shore tracked the man as he floated down the river, but eventually managed to drag him to shore.

4 BEEFED-UP TRAFFIC Drivers in Chesapeake, Va., ran into an unusual traffic jam on March 24. Virginia State Police say a very large cow escaped a trailer on I-64, causing drivers to slam on their brakes to avoid hitting the animal. Motorists tried to guide the cow off the freeway, but she traveled down the roadway for a mile. The loose cow backed up traffic on both sides of the highway for miles as onlookers slowed to catch a glimpse. Eventually officers with the Chesapeake Police Department as well as other state officials helped draw the animal off the interstate and into custody.

5 OLD-SCHOOL PROBLEM-SOLVING The engineering solution for freeing a stuck Mars spacecraft was banging itself repeatedly with its own shovel. In March, NASA revealed its InSight robotic lander, which touched down on
the red planet in November 2018, had become stuck. The problem: The robot’s drilling module was caught in the Martian soil. The solution, as formulated by NASA engineers: banging the robot’s scoop against the part that was stuck. On March 13, NASA officials announced the idea had worked. They had freed the module, and the lander was back on track with its mission.

FACEBOOK FOLLIES Amid a lockdown in Italy, priests throughout the country performed Mass via social media. But one priest in Salerno made a mistake: He left the video filters activated. Parishioners watching priest Paolo Longo via Facebook saw what appeared to be some questionable wardrobe choices to go with his vestments. The Facebook video filters that were inadvertently left on made it appear that Longo was wearing, at one point, a metallic helmet, and later a wizard’s hat. His parishioners didn’t seem to mind, with many of them thanking him for giving them a laugh during the coronavirus lockdown.

DELIVERY FROM DEBT Nearly 45,000 families received a bright yellow envelope in the mail beginning in late February. The letters inside bore incredibly good news. Working with the nonprofit RIP Medical Debt, Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, had raised enough money to pay off $46.5 million in medical debts. “Churches are at our best when we are a blessing to real people in our communities,” Senior Pastor Brian Tome told Fox News. The church began its fundraising drive in November. The New York–based charity that the church partnered with is able to clear $100 of medical debt for every dollar donated.

GETTING THE VIP TREATMENT A Japanese airport has rolled out the red carpet for dogs. Osaka’s Itami Airport unveiled a fenced yard near the terminal so passengers with dogs can take the animals on a rest stop before boarding a flight. The zone has a shower for rinsing the animals off and water bowls. The area also has a pole, giving the dogs an opportunity to empty their bladders before getting on a plane. According to the company that operates the Itami Airport, the pole has a drain and a flush.

“IF YOU USE ANYTHING OTHER THAN TOILET PAPER, BAG IT. DON’T FLUSH IT.”
Everybody sing!
The loss of congregational singing highlights its value

What do you miss most about church during enforced isolation? It might be the socializing, or the preaching, or the excellent Sunday school series that was interrupted.

I miss the singing.
Congregational singing is the main thing online services can’t replace. We can—and must—join in fervent prayer with our brothers and sisters. We can listen to excellent preaching on Sermon Audio. We can even attend a virtual Sunday school if the teacher has enough tech savvy. But there’s no substitute for congregational singing. Large families with robust pipes might have a go at it, but older folks with our shy, shaky voices are likely to fall silent and let the song leader onscreen warble alone.

Last month, inspiring videos of quarantined Italians serenading each other from their balconies made the rounds. Given the COVID-19 death rate in that part of the world, such a response seemed brave and touching. Viva Italy! How fitting for such a musical culture to respond like that!

But a funny thing happened. The galloping availability of music has made the general public less musically literate. A YouTube video called “Why Is Modern Music so Awful?” shows in detail how ubiquity bred mediocrity in the pop-music scene. And, some would say, in the church-music scene.

I grew up in a denomination that made a doctrinal issue of a cappella singing. The doctrine was flawed, but the result—given a large-enough congregation—could be stirring. Not only did we hear each other’s voices; we heard our harmonies. My husband, by contrast, grew up in a nonmusical family and never attended an orchestra concert. In his 30s he discovered Bach and Mozart and his own sturdy baritone voice. Smitten, he took a year off between jobs to study music and voice at a state university, making our family’s life richer for it.

Few young fathers can do that, but the “I’m just not musical” excuse won’t wash. Everyone—except perhaps the tone-deaf few—is musical. You may never have played an instrument, but you possess one, created by God Himself. The human voice travels easily and doesn’t need much maintenance. Which do you think God would rather hear: the worship band, or the voices He made? Could one song per worship service, for instance, be sung without instruments? And could one evening service per quarter be devoted, not just to singing, but learning to sing better? In harmony?

God Sings! is the title of hymn-writer Douglas Bond’s latest book. God does sing, and the universe joins in. The reference in Job 38:7 about morning stars singing together for joy is not just a metaphor; musical frequencies occur in space. Yet the “music of the spheres” is merely accompaniment to our voices raised in praise. Rather than leaving it to the worship team or choir, every Christian is commanded to sing. Perhaps, when we’re together again, we could become a bit more intentional about it.
Memorize more Scripture

Search for Verses in the App Store or text Verses to 31996. Available on iOS & Android. Free to download.
Graduation is a time of celebration and accomplishment. For the Class of 2020, it is also a time of uncertainty as communities postpone and cancel commencement exercises. Yet, even when things do not go as planned, we have the comfort and assurance that God’s Promises still hold true.

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A STIFF UPPER LIP

*World on Fire* is just what we need to watch in a crisis—almost

by Megan Basham
If there’s one thing that frustrates me in this time when we could all use some good storytelling, it’s how little of what some call “binge-worthy” is edifying to the mind or soul.

Yes, I’m looking at you Tiger King.

Stories of petty, wretched people going to war over what: Who’s less of a hypocrite as they feed their egos by collecting big cats as trophies? Cackling over what’s essentially a long-form Jerry Springer show with a true-crime narrative superimposed?

Sure, it’s addictive. So is meth. And if you cringed your way through what is, reportedly, the most popular show in the country right now, you won’t need any more evidence that neither is good for you.

What this moment really calls for is some grand tale of stiff upper lips and resilient spirits.

So it would seem like the perfect time for PBS Masterpiece to swoop in with a sprawling, ambitious wartime drama like World on Fire, which premiered April 5.

We’ve had no shortage of stories set in World War II in the last few years. But World on Fire is different in how often it follows storylines away from battlefields and political leaders. These are the people whose lives change when leaders on the front lines make big decisions.

Sean Bean has made a career out of playing noble leaders like Boromir in Lord of the Rings. But he’s wonderful here as a working-class pacifist whose mind World War I shattered. His two young adult children love him, but they don’t respect him. His daughter, especially, feels he’s wrong to want Britain to stay out of the conflict. With the luxury of hindsight, we know she’s right. But we also understand why her father is committed to peace at all costs.

The show also focuses on little-explored elements of the war that have nothing to do with military strategies.

An American journalist in Berlin, played by Helen Hunt, reports on troop movements and battles. But she also starts investigating a story about Nazis euthanizing German children with Down syndrome and other disorders. Her friendship with the parents of a girl with epilepsy brings a little-seen level of nuance to the German people. Plenty of the locals Nancy meets are evil. But others are scared and desperate, keeping quiet in the face of atrocities in the hopes of protecting their families.

The plot can veer to the soapy at times. Coincidences build upon coincidences as major characters cross one another’s paths in unlikely ways. And, of course, it wouldn’t be a British show if it didn’t include some tough old battle-ax in the mode of Downton Abbey’s Violet Crawley dropping wry witticisms like the Luftwaffe drops bombs.

But for all the melodrama, compared to many other streaming, cable, or even broadcast series, there isn’t much skin or sex to speak of. For example, when an unmarried girl conceives a baby with her soldier boyfriend, the act is implied, not shown. But Christian viewers will want to be aware that even with restraint elsewhere, viewers do see one unmarried couple lounging and kissing in bed on several occasions. The couple consists of two men. And while the violence is relatively low for a war-time drama, there’s considerably more language than past PBS productions.

It’s a shame, because without these drawbacks, World on Fire would be just what the doctor ordered for home entertainment right now.
Death row drama

Clemency offers little hope

by Bob Brown

“I’m alone, and nobody can fix it.” So prison warden Bernadine Williams describes carrying out executions. But she could be speaking for every character in Clemency, a film from writer/director Chinonye Chukwu. Loneliness and despair escort all on the walk toward death, Chukwu seems to say.

The film follows Williams (Alfre Woodard) as she prepares for the lethal injection of Anthony Woods (Aldis Hodge). Years running death row have taken their toll. Williams spends many nights at a bar, and her husband (the always excellent Wendell Pierce) threatens separation. Adding to her unease are doubts that Woods is guilty.

Clemency (rated R for some disturbing material and eight expletives) won the 2019 Sundance Grand Jury Prize for drama. Chukwu seems uninterested in moving the needle in the debate on capital punishment. In Clemency, life is as bleak as the dark hues that swallow the scenes in the prison, bar, and Williams’ home. Chukwu’s characters can only offer weak platitudes. Even the priest doesn’t see the Light: He quotes Romans 8:38-39 but omits “which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.” Despair in life and death will prevail unless we believe that God sent His Son to fix it.

COMPETITIVE CALLINGS

Five documentaries offer diverse sports experiences

by Sharon Dierberger

SINCE COVID-19 HAS SIDELINED professional, amateur, and kids’ sporting events, some fans are wondering how to get their competitive sports fix. Only so many times can you rewatch game six of the 2011 World Series when the Cardinals beat the Rangers 10-9 in 11 innings. (If you like baseball, the excitement and competitive thrill that game generates make it worth watching.)

The five documentaries listed below may have escaped notice when originally released. Each is very different from the next and immerses the viewer in a unique sports culture. Each has caveats, so take note.

Undefeated (Amazon Prime, Netflix, 2011, PG-13 for language): Bill Courtney volunteers to coach the football team at Manassas High School in North Memphis, a run-down, poor section of the city. The documentary follows Courtney and his team from the first day of practice in 2009 to the last game of the year. Courtney grew up without a father, is now a family man, and considers his players as family. His goal is to get Manassas to the playoffs for the first time ever, and in the process instill character in his mostly fatherless players by teaching teamwork, hard work, and doing the right thing. Sometimes hard to watch because of the gritty reality, and sometimes touching, the film includes church scenes, prayer, and a few surprises near the end.

Alex Viera: A Story of Surviving (Netflix, 2019, TV-14): A subtitled film about a Uruguayan soccer player beloved by his homeland and Colombian soccer teams, it personifies universal themes of perseverance, overcoming adversity, and forgiveness. Alex Viera worked his way up from being the always-last-picked in youth soccer to premier professional goalkeeper. When shot in his driveway by a
thief, he struggles to overcome effects of the paralyzing bullets. Much of this one-hour documentary of reenactments, game footage, and interviews centers on his supportive family and friends and their belief in the resilient young man. His commitment to make good from the hurt done to him is uplifting. Read the subtitles quickly—they’re gone in a flash.

_Sherpa_ (Amazon Prime, 2015, NR, language, including several F-bombs): This film originally planned to explore the life of the Sherpas, an ethnic group that became well known after 1953’s summiting of Mount Everest by a Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay, and Sir Edmund Hillary. Today, many Sherpas make their living as Everest’s premiere mountain guides. During filming, an early morning avalanche killed 16 hikers, including two Sherpas. The beautifully photographed documentary explores the treacherous life of the Sherpas, then after the avalanche it veers off to display tensions between the Western expeditions, the Nepalese government, and the Sherpas, who make very little on the climbs, yet risk their lives. The question of the moral justification for continuing to climb—while knowing the deadly potential—is never answered. One Sherpa remarks: “We will go on pretending it’s safe.” Steeped in Tibetan Buddhism, the film exposes Nepal’s need for the gospel.

_Touch the Wall_ (Amazon Prime, 2014, NR, brief language) follows the intersecting paths of swimmers Missy Franklin and Kara Lynn Joyce, beginning almost two years before the 2012 London Olympics. Franklin is trying to make the Olympic team for the first time; Joyce is attempting to stay on it and compete in her third Olympics. At the start of the documentary, Franklin is 14 years old and Joyce is 26, but they become best friends training together under the same coach, one who’s interested in teaching life lessons, not just strokes. Franklin’s supportive parents and Jesuit high school contrast markedly with Joyce’s adult independence and eventual move-in with her boyfriend, but their encouragement of one another never wanes despite head-to-head competition. The depiction of dedication and discipline, and constant practice and travel, gives viewers a glimpse of the commitment needed to succeed. Franklin’s winning personality, optimism, and genuine smile fill many frames.

_Loopers: The Caddie’s Long Walk_ (Amazon Prime, 2019, PG, occasional, suggestive rude humor): Even non-golfers will enjoy this Bill Murray–narrated, entertaining take on how caddying has leaped from being considered golf’s “show up, keep up, shut up” profession historically, to today’s highly paid, invaluable asset of top golfers. Highlighting beautiful courses around the world and professional golfing legends and caddies, the documentary emphasizes the other-oriented nature of caddying that requires rigorous knowledge of the course, the clubs, the game, and the golfer. And it explores how good caddies pave the fairway to success and develop deep, lasting relationships with golfers. Learn the difference between a links course and a parkland course, what the caddy code of conduct entails, and how much money is available for caddy scholarships. Plus, savor the sweet Scottish brogues.
Pastime to the Pros

Julian Fellowes’ talent for period dramas shines in The English Game

by Marty VanDriel

With most professional sports on hiatus, many of us are watching replays of classic basketball, football, and baseball games. In The English Game, writer and producer Julian Fellowes takes viewers even further back into sports history: to the years soccer changed from a gentleman’s pastime to a sport professionals play and the common man cheers.

The show’s premise might not intrigue most American viewers. But many will remember that Fellowes (of Downton Abbey fame) has a gift for drawing audiences to characters from another time and place, masterfully bringing alive their hopes, dreams, and fears. And he has done so in this six-part Netflix series as well.

In 1880s England, graduates of upper-class public schools like Eton College and Charterhouse School—whose teams won the national Football Association (FA) Cup most years—dominated soccer. These players had enough leisure time to practice together, while working-class amateurs labored long days: They had little time to hone their skills. This changed when some mill owners who sponsored teams hired talented players as nominal employees, bolstering their local clubs’ forces.

Arthur Kinnaird, one of those “Old Etonians” and a banker’s son, loves the sport with passion matched by his skill. He and his teammates have won the FA Cup multiple times, and they form most of the FA Board, charged with enforcing rules. These regulations forbid any professional athlete from participating in the annual tournament, and rumors circulate that the northern mill towns in Lancashire are paying their star players.

Fergus Suter has fled his abusive, alcoholic father in Glasgow to play soccer for mill club Darwen. He and best friend Jimmy Love make an immediate impact, and the team’s fortunes turn. But Suter needs more money so his mother and sisters can join him in Lancashire. Neighboring town Blackburn tempts him with an offer for more pay.

Meanwhile, Kinnaird and his wife, Alma, have lost their first baby and are sick with grief. They visit Darwen on business, as Kinnaird works on financing for the mills in a difficult time of labor unrest. Alma finds new purpose supporting the local shelter for unwed mothers. The Kinnairds grow to appreciate their countrymen’s tough lives and the joy they get from their local soccer clubs.

This clash between the old guard of aristocratic teams from London and the newer, rougher clubs of the mill towns plays out through all six episodes. But the human stories of suffering, sin, and struggle intertwine and captivate. While mostly suitable for families, the series does have some profane language that mars an otherwise entertaining effort.

As the world hunkers down during the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet has become the world’s entertainment workhorse.

Actor John Krasinski, known for his role in The Office, debuted an uplifting YouTube series called Some Good News. On his kickoff program, he played a video montage of people cheering healthcare workers and showcased an elderly man singing “Amazing Grace” through a window with his bedridden, Alzheimer’s-stricken wife.

Musicians are also finding creative outlets. Andrew Lloyd Webber posted himself playing “All I Ask of You” from Phantom of the Opera per his Twitter follower requests.

Dolly Parton launched “Goodnight With Dolly,” a 10-week YouTube series of Parton reading children’s books from her Imagination Library project. Parton’s vision is to “provide comfort and reassurance to coping kids and families during the shelter-in-place mandates.”

—from wng.org’s Muse, a weekly roundup of arts and culture
Thinkers who
forgot God

Their ideas built sad foundations
by Marvin Olasky

“MEN HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD: that’s why all this has happened.” Elderly Russians in the last century, asked why so much had gone so wrong in their country, gave that summary. Alexander Solzhenitsyn called it the most “precise and pithy” explanation.

But who helped them to forget? We could talk about the omnipresence of sin, or we could cite two of the 19th century’s geniuses, Karl Marx and Charles Darwin. Going back further, we could look at the teaching of two Germans, Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel, or two English speakers, Francis Bacon and David Hume. Since, as Mark Twain said, life is too short to learn German, let’s stick here to Bacon (1561-1626) and Hume (1711-1776).

Francis Bacon by David Innes (P&R, 2019) shows how the son of a deeply devoted Calvinist mother and a politician father was unimpressed by medieval inventions such as gunpowder, spectacles, and stirrups: “They were ad hoc and came by accident, driven by practical necessity.” Bacon emphasized the scientific method and “showed the way to a steady and ever swelling flow of inventions.”

Bacon’s ideal community lacked a church, but a resident had no need of shepherding because he was naturally “civil” and believed in science: “Beyond this he neither knows anything nor can do anything.” Religious beliefs and ethical claims are merely personal opinions. Innes explains well how Bacon’s faith in the rule of materialistic science caught on: Darwin said he “worked upon the true principles of Baconian induction.”

James Anderson’s David Hume (2019) is also part of P&R’s Great Thinkers series. Hume, born in Edinburgh in 1711, turned Biblical history upside down by claiming the earliest form of religion was a crude polytheism. He objected to accounts of miracles, such as the resurrection of Jesus. Hume died in August 1776, one month after America declared independence, and left behind his declarations of independence from Biblical truth.

Anderson shows clearly how Hume took Bacon’s emphasis on experimentation and observation and applied it not to the natural sciences but to human nature and all fields of study. Revelation cannot be adequate reason for action: Experience rules. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill applied Hume and developed utilitarianism: Anderson points out that abortionists justify their work by contending that an unwanted pregnancy creates unhappiness. Followers of Hume scoff at talk of life after death because it cannot be verified. (Of course the absence of an afterlife also cannot be verified.)

Anderson critiques Hume’s contention that “our intellectual faculties—specifically, reason and experience—are competent in themselves to make judgments about what is true and right. ... Moral norms become entirely subjective and contingent.” In Edinburgh last year I saw two statues about the length of a football field from each other: One of Hume, one of John Knox. Although American colleges typically started out in Knox’s corner, most now embrace Hume’s naturalistic worldview. For now.

Baseball fans should take a peek at Ballparks: A Journey Through the Fields of the Past, Present, and Future (Chartwell Books, 2018). The title by including “future” overpromises, but author Eric Enders does an excellent job on present and past, including big photos of quirky ballparks and documentation of the bad multipurpose stadia that reigned from the 1960s to the 1990s.
The Fifth Avenue Story Society by Rachel Hauck: Five seemingly random people receive an anonymous invitation to a story society in a New York library: a widower yearning to write his love story, a cosmetics heiress who recently broke off her engagement, an executive assistant frustrated by her stalled career, a divorced dad unable to see his children, and a college professor struggling with grief while facing a huge deadline. Who invited them? What are they supposed to do? They agree to meet weekly, and as friendships grow, the regular gatherings provide catharsis for each of them. The author never explains why the five ended up together, but uses sporadic appearances by the mysterious librarian to allude to supernatural forces at work. The character-driven plot weaves their stories together into a happily-ever-after conclusion.

Chasing the White Lion by James R. Hannibal: Chasing the White Lion blends 007 with The Hunger Games. CIA agent Talia Inger again teams with an elite group of masterminds—assembled in Hannibal’s previous novel, The Gryphon Heist—led by a repentant former assassin-turned-Christian. This time they infiltrate “The Jungle,” the first ever crowdsourced crime syndicate. Using their specialized skills, they con their way up the crime chain amid an increasingly unsavory group of criminals, to gain access to a diabolical billionaire known as the White Lion. They believe he is linked to the kidnapping of 32 schoolchildren from Thailand. The high-tech hijinks and high-stakes maneuvering keep tension high, and at times hard to follow. But the humor, genuine affection, and newfound faith among these likable team members provide a welcome balance to this taut thriller.

More Than We Remember by Christina Suzann Nelson: This story centers on three women whose lives converge after a fatal car accident: the wife of the man charged with DUI, a police officer trying to keep her life together after her firefighter husband’s life-altering accident, and a therapist who quit her job after a young patient commits suicide. Each of them carries weighty burdens. They juggle family matters and cling to threadbare faith, but pride, insecurity, and anger prevent them from fully trusting in God’s provision. The plot realistically portrays some of life’s burdens by dealing with hard subjects like dementia, substance abuse, and death. In the end, though, the heavy drama gives way to a sliver of hope.

Daughter of Cana by Angela Hunt: Daughter of Cana is inspired by the miracle told in John 2. Hired to oversee a wedding, Tasmin grows concerned when the wine supply runs low. When the water from the cistern-filled jars suddenly becomes high-quality wine, she assumes the guest named Yeshua somehow tricked her. Meanwhile, her twin brother Thomas is drawn to the mysterious Yeshua and decides to follow him when he leaves Cana. Tasmin, determined to bring her brother back home to the family business, teams with Yeshua’s brother Jude to track them down. Everywhere they go, they hear stories about Yeshua’s miracles and his growing group of followers. They begin to wonder: Could Yeshua—a simple carpenter—be the long-awaited King who would rescue them from the Romans? Or would he serve an even greater purpose?
Passover and Easter are brothers, as are Jews and Christians, as are (metaphorically) national talk show host Michael Medved and I. We both grew up in Jewish homes and had immigrant grandparents who grew to love America. He became an Orthodox Jew, I became a Christian, and we’ve both written books praising this sweet land of liberty.

We also agree that God acts providentially in history, but I tend to emphasize more that we don’t know why some things happen. In Michael’s new book, *God’s Hand on America: Divine Providence in the Modern Era*, he tells of how William Seward in 1867 pushed hard for the United States to purchase Alaska, while others mocked him and called it “Seward’s icebox.” We talked about Seward and then moved on to others: Here are edited excerpts.

Let’s discuss some of the remarkable deliverances you describe. William Seward, Abraham Lincoln’s Secretary of State, broke his jaw in a carriage accident nine days before the night of Lincoln’s assassination. Seward was in bed and almost helpless when Lewis Powell,
an accomplice of John Wilkes Booth, came to murder him.

What delivered him was the contraption the doctors had set up—a device made of metal plates that covered his throat and set his jaw in place. Powell brought the knife down at least four times against Seward’s throat, but it kept hitting the metal plate. If Seward had not survived, America would not have acquired Alaska from Russia in 1867, and in 1962 the Soviet Union would have had missiles not just in Cuba but in Juneau.

So that metal plate Seward had because of the accident was part of God’s providence—but if Seward hadn’t had that accident, he might have been better able to defend himself. He might even have gone with his wife to Ford’s Theatre with Abraham and Mary Lincoln and saved Lincoln’s life. We know that God does act providentially, but couldn’t that carriage accident have been curse rather than blessing-in-disguise?

It’s beyond what we really know, but not what we can infer. I also learned that Seward believed America should acquire any property that it could. He was behind the Guano Islands Act, an 1856 law that gave the United States claim to any island with bird droppings on them that could be used for fertilizer if that island wasn’t claimed by anyone else. Seward, in the midst of his negotiations for Alaska, filed the papers to give America title to Midway Atoll.

In 1942 the battle near that island was the turning point in the war with Japan.

Does this mean that without Seward taking that step America would not have won the war in the Pacific? I’m not arguing that, but there’s something extraordinarily haunting in the providential deliverance of Secretary Seward, at a very grim time when the president of the United States had been lost.

You also write about Theodore Roosevelt escaping death during the Spanish-American War, and then escaping assassination in 1912 when a folded-up speech and an eyeglasses case slowed up a bullet aimed at his heart.

Roosevelt was a prime target as he led his regiment on horseback during the so-called Battle of San Juan Hill, but he went untouched: Eyewitnesses to the battle believed there was something supernatural about that. Later, the United States at the beginning of World War I had a military the size of Portugal’s. Without the pressure to grow the Army that Roosevelt provided, it is unlikely that we would have had the same results we did in World War I.

It is amazing that in 1912 he spoke for an hour with a bullet in him, but the election overall was a disaster. The Republican Party, split between Taft and Roosevelt, allowed Woodrow Wilson to be elected. He was an awful president, and it seems to me the U.S. entry into World War I was a mistake. After the assassination attempt, was Roosevelt’s continuing to run a blessing or a curse?

I’m also very skeptical about the idea that America did the right thing by entering the war, but there was no doubt in Roosevelt’s mind that we had to do that. He maintained that belief even though his youngest son, Quentin, was killed in the war.

I do like your profiles, and we’re agreed that it would have been a disaster had Henry Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt’s vice president during the early 1940s, become president in 1945.

In 1944 Henry Wallace was vice president. Roosevelt did not know the extent to which Wallace had been deeply involved with the extreme left, including the Communist Party, and with a cult. The Democratic convention featured a rousing demonstration on behalf of Wallace. Florida Sen. Claude Pepper was rushing to the podium to place Wallace’s name in nomination, but seconds before he reached the podium the convention chairman gaveled an adjournment for the day—and the next day Harry Truman gained the nomination.

Wallace would have gained the nomination in that burst of excitement.

Pepper tried to speak through his microphone, but it had been turned off. All of this had to do with behind-the-scenes manipulation by some political bosses, but it was not only important to some of these political bosses: It was important to the boss of the universe. It was very important in the cosmic scheme of things that Stalinism not be the wave of the future. Truman made all the difference in setting up the structures that allowed us to win the Cold War, and in recognizing the state of Israel 12 minutes after it was proclaimed.

Didn’t Wallace later realize some of his errors?
Wallace ran as a basically pro-Stalinist fringe candidate in 1948, against Truman. The story of that campaign is remarkable and horrifying, but later he acknowledged that he had been wrong about Stalin, and seemed to acknowledge that it was good Truman replaced him as vice president. It was a great providential blessing that the churchgoing and hymn-singing Baptist boy from Missouri became president rather than the guru-following New Ager from Iowa.

Amen on that. It’s amazing that 75 years have gone by since Truman approved the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I’m not aware of any other time in human history that a massively effective new weapon hasn’t been used for such a long time. That to me is a great sign of God’s mercy.

I think it is. I do ask: Why would God, Who has special protection for America, allow Abraham Lincoln to be shot in 1865? I keep coming back to Lincoln’s sense of himself as a humble instrument of God’s purposes. I see Lincoln was sent for the purpose of preserving the Union and ending slavery, both of which he accomplished literally days before his killing. It’s utterly extraordinary, and seems to be God wanting to call attention to His own purposes, that the surrender at Appomattox by Robert E. Lee was on Palm Sunday, and Lincoln is killed on Good Friday.

You also write about Martin Luther King Jr.

In his final speech, 19 hours before he was killed, King reflected in detail about how close he came to dying with an assassin’s knife in his heart 11 years before. He thanked God for having preserved him for those years. His sense of purpose and instrumentality was remarkable.

But many historians write as if God does not exist.

In American historiography there’s a great tendency to downplay a specifically Christian element. That’s a shame. Even Thomas Paine, who challenged Christian belief, saw that there was no explanation for what had happened in the formation of the United States of America without looking to a higher power.

Let’s conclude with some thankfulness about the bad but educational political experiences each of us had in the 1970s soon after college. You briefly became the campaign manager for a radical congressman, Ron Dellums, who represented the People’s Republic of Berkeley, Calif. What was the most horrifying part?

First was the use of cocaine, because I have never been a drug-sympathetic person. The second most horrifying part was campaign money doled out in cash and paper bags.

That contributed to your movement from left to right?

It wasn’t just Dellums, it was living in Berkeley: My four years there were three of the happiest days of my life. You could say that mad Berkeley hurled me into conservatism, because in America we make our political decisions not necessarily by feeling enthusiastic for one side but by recoiling in horror from the other side. That was certainly my experience in the early 1970s.

Which came first, your political change or your movement from secular to Orthodox Judaism?

Probably religious change first. I was dating a young lady and believed my parents were negative toward her simply because she wasn’t Jewish. I was determined to show them the values of Judaism were more universal and started looking at Jewish texts for the first time to win those arguments. I found those texts compelling. I began experimenting with a minor Jewish observance: candle-lighting on Friday night, going to Shabbat meals. Every aspect of Jewish observance, including some of the dietary restrictions and daily prayer, improved the quality of my life, made me happier.

You’re 71 and must be thinking of mortality. Judaism has had broad debates about what happens after death. Where do you come out on that?

That’s an extraordinarily complicated question. The most widely accepted sort of itemization of the fundamentals of Jewish faith is that provided by Maimonides, who died in 1204. One of his 13 principles of faith is believing that the soul is eternal: There is a resurrection.
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CCOY TYNER, one of the truly monumental jazz pianists of all time, died on March 6. He was 81.

From the outset, Tyner attracted acclaim. As early as 1962, no less an authority than John Coltrane was praising his “melodic inventiveness,” his “exceptionally well-developed sense of form,” his “very personal sound,” and his “taste.” “He can take anything,” Coltrane said, “no matter how weird, and make it sound beautiful.”

The recordings Tyner made from 1967 to 1974 dramatically expanded the possibilities of what piano-driven jazz could do and where it could go. Three of those albums in particular—Echoes of a Friend (1972), Song of the New World (1973), and Enlightenment (1973)—remain unsurpassed in terms of their technical, artistic, and emotional range.

The “friend” in Echoes of a Friend was Coltrane, the “echoes” Tyner’s solo-piano reimaginings of songs that he had played countless times as a member of Coltrane’s best-known quartet (“Naima,” “The Promise,” “My Favorite Things”). “Folks” and the 17½-minute tour de force “The Discovery,” meanwhile, showcased what a composer Tyner had become in his own right. Enlightenment, which contained nothing but Tyner compositions, captured the excitement that a Tyner-led quartet could whip up onstage.

It was Song of the New World, however, and its title track especially, that made his imaginative capacities hardest to ignore. Four of the five selections were Tyner originals, and all of them boasted large-scale arrangements (for brass or string sections by turn). The results were stunning, an exhilarating whirlwind of sounds, melodies, and rhythms anchored by Tyner’s percussive left hand and shot through with iridescent glissandi rippling forth from his right.

During these years, Tyner also became a fixture of the jazz-festival circuit. In addition to Enlightenment (which documents a Montreux set), recordings of his Newport performances circa 1975-2004 reveal that he seldom if ever had an off night.

With the arrival of the 1980s, his studio output increasingly reflected his desire to experiment with different styles (including the commercial R&B of Looking Out) and different collaborators (including the saxophonists Frank Morgan and Jackie McLean). When Tyner told Marian McPartland, as a guest on her NPR show Piano Jazz in 1983, that he “just liked to move around a little bit,” he was referring to (and understating) his exploratory approach to modes and chords. But he could’ve been referring to his modus operandi overall.

In the late ’80s, with the albums Revelations and Things Ain’t What They Used to Be, he returned to the solo-piano format, proving with his interpretations of Gershwin, Ellington, and Berlin that it wasn’t just the weird that he could make sound beautiful. The piano, he told McPartland, “has so much to offer.”

If pianos could talk, they’d no doubt have said the same about him.
Lost and found
New albums make the old sound new
by Arsenio Orteza

Sorry You Couldn’t Make It by Swamp Dogg: Technically, the version of Johnny Paycheck’s “She’s All I Got” on this part-country, part-soul, part-country-soul follow-up to 2018’s all-Auto-Tuned Love, Loss, and Auto-Tune isn’t a cover. Why? Because Swamp Dogg (under his real name, Jerry Williams Jr.) co-wrote it about 40 years ago, right around the time that he was springing his out-of-the-box soul-man routine on an unsuspecting public. That that public never paid much attention says more about it than it does about Williams. It also means that for lots of folks each new release of his may as well be his first. He’s 77, and his voice has seldom sounded brighter. John Prine, meanwhile, guests on “Memories” and “Please Let Me Go Round Again,” making this album part-epitaph too.

Jesus Was Eclectic (Decades) by Darlene McCoy: The last word in this EP’s title, “Decades,” refers to McCoy’s attempt to reflect with each song the R&B sensibilities of a different era. Hence the wah-wah guitars of “Turn” (the ’70s song), the shimmering synthesizers of “Life” (’80s), the new jack swing of “Even Me” (’90s)—you get the idea. But to focus overmuch on McCoy’s gimmick is to miss the whole point of the first word in her EP’s title, “Jesus,” and, with it, to miss the forest for the trees. For whether McCoy is singing “It’s time to get back to God” or “Take up your bed and walk,” she’s exhorting for eternity.

Hide & Seek: The Lost Collection by Tom Jones: Maybe it’s simply their obscurity, but these 29 swings and misses from one of pop music’s heaviest hitters (19 U.S. Top 40 appearances, over 30 U.K.) sound fresh enough to qualify Jones for Rookie of the Year. (OK, no more American baseball metaphors.) In other words, undistracted by the extravagant kitsch for which Jones is best known (“Delilah,” “What’s New Pussycat?,” etc.), listeners can banish from their minds images of Jones the overheated showman and concentrate on Jones the adaptable pop stylist. It’s not as if you can’t hear Vegas calling. But for the most part he doesn’t rise any higher to the occasions than the occasions demand. Prize oddity: “Keep a Talkin’ ’Bout Love,” which goes “Think about the Jesus way.”

Everything Is Gonna Be Alright: Celebrating 50 Years of Westbound Soul & Funk by various artists: Detroit was home to both Westbound and Motown, so it’s no surprise that they rubbed off on each other—that a Temptations riff, for example, found its way into the Fantastic Four’s “Alvin Stone,” that the Jackson 5 decided to cover Funkadelic’s “I’ll Bet You,” and that the opening bars of Melvin Sparks’ “Get Ya Some” wound up undergirding Michael Jackson’s “Billie Jean.” But whereas Motown acts usually functioned as emissaries of their company’s sonic brand, Westbound’s functioned more like independent contractors, sometimes very independent. No way would Motown have ever countenanced Donald Austin’s bare-bones “Crazy Legs,” Ohio Players’ sillier-than-thou “Funky Worm,” or C.J. & Co.’s disco-gospel “Devil’s Gun.” It’s a good thing Detroit was big enough for both of them.

Encore

Two of the most gifted musicians from the Acadiana region of Louisiana have released strong new albums. Blacktop Run (Provogue) is the latest by slide guitarist Sonny Landreth, Lâcher Prise (Compass), the latest by fiddler and BeauSoleil leader Michael Doucet. Both rollick up a storm.

Six of Blacktop Run’s songs feature Landreth’s voice. The other four leave the singing to his guitar. Ordinarily, especially with a celebrated instrumentalist, such a ratio might signal compromise. But Landreth has always been an above-average lyricist and singer, and he continues to improve as both. And the instruments, in which the blues is a jumping-off point rather than a destination, really do cook.

Speaking of cooking, Michael Doucet’s Lâcher Prise is a prime example of why gumbo is the go-to metaphor for Acadiana music: Both have lots of ingredients, and both are hard to resist. Floating around in Doucet’s current soup are zydeco, the two-step, gypsy blues, and, believe it or not, Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
Anchors that hold

Looking back helps us face forward

Once on a visit to my Iraqi friend Insaf, who lives outside Toronto, I got lost. I went walking to take an editorial team phone call—back before Zoom took over our lives—and lost my way as the meeting went long, the houses and streets looked the same, and it began to snow. Then my cell phone died.

I did what anyone ought to do in this bind: I flagged down a Canadian postman. He quickly invited me out of the snow and into his truck, asking for details to retrace my steps. I was useless for but one detail: the name of Insaf’s street, which she had given me on arrival. We wound our way back till I recognized her house and thanked him.

Inside with Insaf we laughed. We’ve gotten separated or stranded in Iraq, “but I never thought I might lose you in Canada,” she said. Then she added, “The Lord always prepares you when He asks you to undergo any trial.”

I had a street name heading into that small trial, and on quarantine I’ve thought of that little episode: In what ways, large or small, has God prepared us to undergo this big trial?

We most likely all feel cut adrift, lost even, by our worries and fears brought on by COVID-19, by the deprivations and new routines, or by difficulty finding any routine in this season of uncertainty with its seeming weeks of Groundhog Days. Looking back has helped me face forward.

Our home was graciously prepared for quarantine when my middle daughter and her husband moved in with us, stayed more months than they intended, and now provide company and help in all our times of need. My youngest daughter has quarantined with us, too. We work remotely in our corners but also plan and share meals, take time for walks together, and make a big deal of coffee breaks.

My work in this strange time of virtual reporting has been helped by prior visits to many scenes of sudden cataclysm. Empty cities, full camps of suddenly homeless people, and invisible threats have defined much of life in the Middle East for the last five years, and now suddenly ring familiar to many of us. People like Insaf, who lived with her young family for seven years as a refugee, have so much to teach us about greeting uncertain days with cheer.

Our news team was prepared with the recent addition of a gifted and energetic deputy editor in Michael Reneau, who’s been working alongside magazine editor Tim Lamer and with reporters (who span 18 time zones) to cover perhaps the biggest story of our time. I’ve watched our reporters lean into their experience—from covering Hurricane Katrina to Ebola outbreaks to homelessness and China’s censors—to cover this hardest global moment of our lives. They bring professional skill and unaccountable resilience, in a way similar to how medical professionals are doing heroic work because it’s the kind of work they’ve been doing all along.

Like you, we are all doing this work in altered environments, and with personal anxieties to manage at the same time. One colleague has canceled her spring wedding, and another has faced the hard reality with her husband that living abroad for now means no way of returning home. I have elderly neighbors to check on and a dear friend immune-compromised from six months of chemotherapy and needing surgery, soon. We have friends and relatives in hot zones, as you do, and people we love and worry about will get sick.

Every day I start with a running battle between faith and hope, doubt and unbelief—and sadness sometimes enough to sink ships. That’s why we need anchors that hold, including ones put in place before we knew we would need them.
This podcast explores what’s really working in the fight against poverty and how thinking biblically aids in the restoration of human dignity.

All of Season 1 is now available everywhere you listen to podcasts. This program is made for people who want to elicit real change because they know true hope.
CLIMBING THE CURVE

This is what living within a big historical event looks like

BY MARVIN OLASKY

IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS, J.R.R. Tolkien portrays his hobbit heroes toiling up a long, winding stairway that perhaps looks like early April’s rising curve of coronavirus cases and deaths. Sam Gamgee says he once thought adventures “were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for.” Sam realizes “that’s not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind.” Frodo agrees: Those in a hard adventure never know “what kind of a tale it is, happy-ending or sad-ending.”

Sam then wonders “if we shall ever be put in songs or tales. We’re in one, of course, but I mean: put into words, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards. And people will say: ‘Let’s hear about Frodo and the Ring!’ And they’ll say: “Yes, that’s one of my favorite stories. Frodo was very brave, wasn’t he, dad?”

All of us are in a big story now, the biggest of this century so far. The facing photo of a woman wearing an N95 mask as she crosses the Brooklyn Bridge brings back memories of 9/11, where thousands covered in the ash of dead human beings staggered across that bridge. The death count now is larger, and it’s nationwide—no, worldwide. But amid sudden hospitalization and sudden unemployment, every once in a while it’s important to stand back, take a breath, and realize: This is what living within a big historical event looks like.

WORLD’s job is to chronicle that event for our readers, our listeners, and those who years afterward will say, “Let’s hear how they fought the coronavirus in 2020.” They’ll want to know how brave healthcare workers risked their lives and pastors creatively communicated with their scattered church members. They’ll want to know how supply chains stayed open and children kept learning. We hope you’ll not only read this issue but listen to our daily podcast and go to wng.org for dozens of internet-only stories.

Chronicling a world at war against tiny, invisible invaders is risky business. Frodo says, “You and I, Sam, are still stuck in the worst places of the story, and it is all too likely that some will say at this point: ‘Shut the book now, dad; we don’t want to read any more.’” But Good Friday reminds us to keep reading. As Sam says, dangers “made into part of the great tales are different.” The Coronavirus War, 2020, is a hard and great tale.
Doctors and nurses with experience in overwhelmed health systems are a big asset as U.S. hospitals experience shortages for the first time in modern memory

BY EMILY BELZ IN NEW YORK
DR. CHRIS SOSSOU, a third-year internal medicine resident at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, hadn’t seen his wife in three weeks. He had 30 seriously ill COVID-19 patients to treat in his unit, and his wife was working in a labor and delivery ward in Brooklyn, where they live. They decided to live apart because of his high risk of contracting the virus, and he wasn’t sure when they would reunite.

“She has to continue to work and I have to continue to work,” he said. “If we have good health, we’ll see each other the rest of our lives, so it will be OK.”

At this point, New York City was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 1,400 deaths at the beginning of April. Experts didn’t expect a peak in the cases in New York until the end of April. The Gates Foundation was projecting 16,000 deaths in New York—which would outstrip the number of deaths from Ebola in the West Africa outbreak in 2014.

Sossou on this day celebrated the discharge of one COVID-19 patient from his unit, but the others weren’t doing well. He has had colleagues stricken with the novel coronavirus in the ICU, and he expects more healthcare workers will fall ill in coming weeks.

“If they get sicker, who will take care of the sick?” he said. “The entire hospital is being overrun with patients who are critically ill. ... Most of our supervising physicians have never lived through anything like this before.”

Sossou has. Growing up in Liberia in the midst of a civil war, and then spending part of his childhood in a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast, he experienced cholera and malaria outbreaks in healthcare systems without the resources to respond. He and others—like the Samaritan’s Purse doctors working in Central Park with years of experience fighting viruses in places with limited resources—are huge assets to a country experiencing an overwhelming pandemic, widespread medical shortages, and an incoming wave of suffering and grief.

AS NEW YORK HOSPITALS have barred visitors to limit virus spread, Sossou can identify with patients left alone to die. When he was a teenager living in a refugee camp, Sossou contracted cholera and stayed in a tent with other kids whom doctors determined wouldn’t make it. They decided not to give him IV fluid and reserve it for stronger patients. In the “death tent,” as he called it, a friend died next to him. Somehow he became stronger and stopped having diarrhea, even though he only remembers having unsanitary water to drink.

“A miracle, I guess,” he said. Doctors transferred him to the “survival tent,” and he was able to get treatment. For seriously ill COVID-19 patients now who aren’t allowed to have visitors, isolated as he was, Sossou spends part of his day calling family members to keep them updated on their loved ones’ medical status.

Now Sossou thinks about that kind of rationing coming to U.S. hospitals, where doctors would have to determine whether someone is too sick to get a ventilator. He’s friends with the ethics chair at his hospital, and they discussed how they hoped their hospital wouldn’t reach the point where doctors have to make such decisions. But New York area hospitals are quickly
burning through ventilators, and hospitals nationwide are concerned about a shortage in drugs for intubation.

“These are not easy decisions, and they’re very difficult for people who have never had to make them before,” said Dr. David Stevens, who worked for years at Tenwek Hospital, a rural mission hospital in Kenya. Doctors at Tenwek regularly had to make decisions about limited resources—which babies would get incubators, or who would get oxygen.

Stevens remembered one night that several children died in the pediatrics ward at Tenwek, and one of the doctors burst into tears over their limitations. Stevens told the crying doctor that more children would die without the doctors, so the doctor needed to stay healthy and avoid working 24/7. Stevens advises doctors in such situations: Ration yourself, ration your equipment, but also don’t ever be satisfied with a rationing scenario. Find more resources for patients. Get input from others for decisions on scarce resources, and document how you make decisions in order to be transparent.

“As competent as we are, as excellent as we are with our craft and profession, we cannot meet every need that is out there, and God comes alongside,” said Stevens, who went on to serve as the longtime CEO of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations. “In the midst of this coronavirus epidemic, Christ is walking down the wards with healthcare professionals.”

In the meantime Sossou, working shifts six days a week from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., is being creative in the face of shortages. He microwaves his N95 mask every night to disinfect it and uses it for a full week before getting a new one.

Having faced worse situations in his childhood, Sossou approaches the virus with calm.

“I’m not afraid of dying,” he said. “Even if I’m dead today, if God planned for me to come this early, then it is His plan, and I’m pleased with it. Most of the time we don’t understand His plan for us and we think it’s irrational, but that’s His plan. If I don’t understand, when I get to Him we’ll talk about it. But I’m not afraid.”
Mayo Clinic and worked for years in the Democratic Republic of Congo, including during the recent Ebola outbreak. The first day the field hospital had patients from Mt. Sinai, Tenpenny put his head together with SP’s Dr. Lance Plyler, who oversaw Ebola treatment in Liberia. At one point in the 2014 outbreak, Plyler had to make an agonizing decision: who between two sick medical staffers would get the one course of a limited experimental drug to treat Ebola. Plyler and Tenpenny know shortages, and they were working to make sure they had the right supplies and staff in place as patients were arriving in ambulances, pulling in from Fifth Avenue.

The design of the COVID-only hospital, which went from a grassy field to a complex with a functioning intensive care unit in 72 hours, comes from SP’s experience working in war zones and in epidemics. The complex has an Ebola-inspired water tank filled with chlorinated water that pumps into sinks around the hospital for decontamination. Staff built wooden troughs where

Mount Sinai had requested the Christian humanitarian group’s help when its hospital system was overwhelmed, and on April 1, Samaritan’s Purse (SP) doctors were busy treating their first seriously ill COVID-19 patients in the tents. SP leaders were already in discussions with Mt. Sinai about the possibility of setting up an additional field hospital to handle overflow.

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they can push supplies with a cue stick from the cold “safe” zone through to the hot zone, which they presume to be contaminated with the virus and where everyone must wear full personal protective equipment. Mt. Sinai staff liked the trough design.

According to SP head of international relief Ken Isaacs, Spain and Canada had requested another one of the field hospitals, but he said, “our shelves are empty. … [W]e want to do more, but we’re maxed out.” Many SP staff members are stuck in countries around the world with travel restrictions, and other vetted medical personnel are already responding to the virus in their own communities.

Isaacs, at devotions outside in Central Park the morning before patients arrived, talked to staff about the possibility that some of them might get sick, or some might die. “They trust the Lord. They’re smart. … These people have put their lives on the lines, in cholera and cyclones and earthquakes.” He thinks New York overall, though, isn’t prepared for the loss that’s coming: “The city is going to be shocked.”

ACROSS TOWN, ICU nurse K.J. Rackley was reporting for her night shift at one of the city’s top hospitals, in an ICU that was full with 21 COVID-19 patients. Two of those seriously sick patients were top doctors from the hospital. (WORLD is withholding the name of the hospital due to media restrictions on staff). The hospital was one of the earliest to stop elective surgeries, a decision that cost the hospital financially but allowed it to be one of the better-prepared hospitals in the city. The hospital converted almost all of its operating rooms to ICUs for virus patients.

Rackley became a nurse because she hoped to serve overseas in resource-limited places, but she hadn’t served in such a setting, until now. “People get frustrated about simple things being available to us, because we’re used to having everything we need right away,” she said. “I have been loving this in a weird way, because it feels like a taste of what I want to do, having to be creative, having to come up with other things that can be used for something else. That spurs me on.”

She’s also found it to be an opportunity to encourage her co-workers. At her night shift, her church sent pizza for the staff, and she was happy to be able to tell her co-workers that her church cared about them and was praying for them.

In Staten Island, Dr. Janet Kim of Beacon Christian Community Health Center was checking on patients with the virus (Beacon is one of the few outpatient clinics offering COVID-19 testing) as well as the clinic’s usual patients with hypertension or pregnancies. Most of her telemedicine visits now are with people who have COVID-19 symptoms.

The clinic works in an ethnically diverse, lower income community, and is helping local hospitals overloaded with patients. Kim thought back to 9/11, when she was in medical school in the city and her husband was working as a doctor. In that stressful moment, some people turned to God, but she noticed a lot of others became “very cynical and hardened.” She worries that might happen now among New York medical staff, faced with the shock of having patients they can’t help.

“They can’t do anything because there’s no treatment, no intervention that’s been proven to work. They’ve risked everything including their own life,” she said. “If you don’t go into that with the right perspective, it’s going to make you very bitter. … I pray that people will see that there is still a good God above all this.”
GATHERING STORMS

Some churches continue to meet in person amid the COVID-19 pandemic BY JAMIE DEAN

WHILE CHURCH LEADERS across the United States scrambled to organize online worship services in mid-March, Pastor Rodney Howard-Browne told a large crowd gathered in his Tampa church why he would never cancel public gatherings: “This Bible school is open because we’re raising up revivalists, not pansies.”

The service on March 15 came as governors in other states were urging against large gatherings in the wake of the COVID-19 surge. Still, Howard-Browne told the congregation at the River at Tampa Bay Church: “Well, I know they don’t want us to do this, but just turn around and greet two, three people.” A video shows the smiling crowd exchanging handshakes and hugs.

A day later, President Donald Trump
said the nation was in serious trouble: He urged against gatherings of 10 or more people in an effort to flatten the curve of viral spread. More churches began shifting to online worship services.

On March 20, officials in Hillsborough County—where the Tampa church is located—issued an order that prohibited gatherings of 10 or more people. The order specified such gatherings included “faith-based events.” Howard-Browne held another church service on March 22.

A week later, Hillsborough police arrested Howard-Browne hours after a gathering at the church on March 29. They charged the pastor with two misdemeanor counts, saying he violated the county order. (They released him on bail about 40 minutes later.)

“I believe there is nothing more important than faith in a time like this,” said Sheriff Chad Chronister. “But practicing those beliefs has to be done safely.”

Safe worship is a bitter pill for many Christians to swallow when it involves firing up computers in their living rooms instead of filling up church buildings in their communities. But many have agreed to forgo public gatherings—at least for a time—to follow local orders and protect public health.

A much smaller number have refused, with some saying government officials are violating their constitutional rights by forbidding larger church gatherings. They also chafe against local orders that deem a range of commercial businesses as “essential services” but that don’t designate churches as essential, too.

Still, most Christians have recognized the essential service of protecting lives during a deadly pandemic. And they’ve been willing to give up beloved Sunday gatherings in order to love their neighbors as themselves—whether they’re legally required to do so or not. They’re not pansies.

Legal battles will heat up: The Christian legal firm Liberty Counsel agreed to represent Howard-Browne in the Tampa case, saying the county violated the church’s First Amendment rights. (The group also says the church practiced social distancing during the last two services in March.)

MEANWHILE, IN LOUISIANA, another pastor faces charges: Police charged Tony Spell with a misdemeanor after he held church services that officials say violated the governor’s orders prohibiting large gatherings. Hours later, Spell returned to Life Tabernacle Church in Central, La., and held another service. A Baton Rouge news outlet reported the parking lot was packed.

Spell—who has claimed the virus is “politically motivated”—vowed he would continue holding services, despite a state order that now bans gatherings of 10 or more people through at least April 30. Roy Moore—the former chief justice of Alabama—said he would advise Spell’s legal team.

According to an NBC News report, Spell declared, “The virus is attracted to fear, and we are fearless people.”

By early April, it was clear the virus wasn’t sparing churches. Health officials in Hopkins County, Ky., linked dozens of coronavirus cases—and at least two deaths—to a local church that held revival services March 15-16 in a rural town east of Paducah.

The federal government hasn’t issued orders related to church gatherings, but Vice President Mike Pence urged churches to comply with federal recommendations: “We really believe this is a time when people should avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. And so we continue to urge churches around America to heed that.”

It’s unclear how courts will rule in legal battles pitting churches against government orders. The array of county and state orders issued in the last few weeks is dizzying, and attorneys in different states will have to argue cases based on the specifics of each order.

After Howard-Browne’s arrest in Tampa, Gov. Ron DeSantis issued a statewide stay-at-home order in Florida but exempted religious services. The order didn’t appear to set a limit on attendance or require social distancing. (The governor of Texas issued a similar order for his state.)

That led commissioners in Hillsborough County to grapple with bringing their local order in compliance with the state directive: The commissioners said they would issue guidelines to churches about safety, but no longer place requirements on their gatherings.

After the meeting, attorneys from Liberty Counsel said they would halt plans for a lawsuit against the county, and they called on local officials to drop charges against Howard-Browne.

Earlier in the week, Howard-Browne—who had said he would never cancel services—announced the church was canceling on-site gatherings to protect congregants from the “tyrannical government.” The church shifted to online services.

The steady stream of orders, revisions, and new orders has created legal
MILAN, ITALY

For missionary Michael Brown, the most difficult moment of quarantine at his home in Milan came when a 50-year-old member of his church entered the hospital with COVID-19. Doctors placed the man, Sabino, on a ventilator.

“This is the hardest part for me,” says Brown. “I couldn’t go see him.” As in most hospitals battling coronavirus around the world, visitors aren’t allowed. Sabino couldn’t speak while on a ventilator, but Brown could still send texts to his phone. The pastor sent Bible verses and short notes of encouragement: “We love you.” “We’re praying for you.”

“I figured his body was being pumped full of vitamins and antibiotics,” says Brown. “I was just going to pump his soul full of the promises of God.”

As Sabino struggled, so did the rest of the country: At least 13,000 people had died of the coronavirus in Italy by the beginning of April. The country’s medical system groaned under an overwhelming load—particularly in the northern region of Lombardy.

That’s where Brown serves as the pastor of Chiesa Riformata Filadelfia in northwest Milan. (The Protestant congregation is part of a mission work called Reformation Italy.) Brown and his family left a home and church in California 18 months ago to serve as missionaries in the city.

He thinks back to normal church life just a couple of months ago: Sunday worship, fellowship, catechism classes, a new members class, and an English class outreach that was drawing 25 students. The pastor used the book of Mark to teach students: “The first sentence they learned in English was ‘The gospel of Jesus Christ, according to Mark.’”

These days—like pastors around the world—Brown and the elders in his church keep in touch with congregants by phone. They stream their worship service. Each evening at 8:00, they also stream a few minutes of Scripture and prayer, so the members can try to be together for at least a little while, even if it’s only virtually.

Brown says most people in the congregation know people who have died from the coronavirus: a brother, a cousin, an uncle, neighbors, close friends. Like other pastors, Brown bears the weight of not being able to comfort the grieving in person.

But he works the phone, and by the end of March, Sabino was texting back. At first it was two or three words. Then he could have short conversations. Doctors released him to recover at home. “We were elated,” says Brown.

Even in the burdens of the moment, and the stresses of a strict quarantine, Brown finds sources of encouragement. He
says the number of people watching online services in the city has grown: First a few dozen, then 200, 300, and at one point, 1,000. He hopes to meet some of those people when the quarantine lifts.

“This is such a grave time, you just feel a burden to preach the gospel,” he says. “Right now, the gospel is the most applicable thing in the world.”

NEW ORLEANS

Back in the United States, New York City became the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, as other cities struggled too: New Orleans quickly emerged as a hotspot for COVID-19. Some speculated the large gatherings during Mardi Gras could have fueled the outbreak before government officials sounded serious alarms.

The city is alarmed now, but that’s not new for New Orleanians: This summer marks the 15th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina—the powerful storm that emptied the city for weeks and devastated parts of Louisiana and Mississippi.

Ben McLeish remembers those days well. He’s lived in the city with his family for 20 years and led church teams gutting and mucking out houses in poor neighborhoods after water filled them and rotted most everything inside.

The deacon at St. Roch Community Church says the city is accustomed to trauma, but it can’t respond in its usual way. “When Katrina hit, you’d have a team come and gut your house in the morning and that night you’d have a crawfish boil for them,” says McLeish. “Eating and gathering in large groups is so how our culture has dealt with the intensity that exists here.”

That intensity spans decades, but it has a different feel now. “We mourn deeply and we celebrate big,” says McLeish. “Those are the pieces that have made us resilient over the years. It’s what makes New Orleans so beautiful. But we can’t do those things now.”

He says memories of Katrina’s trauma run deep in the city: “The difference now is that there’s no one to come to our aid. We’re all in the same boat.”

For a city dependent on tourism, the COVID-19 crisis hits particularly hard. It’s difficult to foresee when jazz clubs will hum again or when crowds will flock to the Café du Monde for its famous beignets.

Other parts of the city have known years of hardship and poverty, and job losses will only deepen previously existing problems. But McLeish says church members are keeping in touch, streaming worship online, and trying to serve the most vulnerable in the congregation.

He’s learning from his neighbors: “I’ve lived alongside and in community with people who are poor for the last 20 years of my life, and they know how to navigate this better than people who haven’t.”

“Theyir resourcefulness and ability to be patient and trust that God’s working—they have stronger muscles than I do,” he says. “I feel like I’m in an advantageous place to learn from them.”
SUPPLY, DEMAND, AND COVID-19

Toilet paper shortages are temporary, but threats to the global supply chain could have longer-term effects

BY DANIEL JAMES DEVINE
A worker moves a forklift at a Kroger grocery distribution center in Louisville, Ky.
A PANDEMIC HAS THROWN the U.S. economy into a tailspin. So far, however, the coronavirus hasn’t stopped Mathew Tubbs. The truck driver from Water-town, Wis., drives 400 miles a day, from a distribution center in Oconomowoc to Target outlets throughout the region, pulling a trailer filled with goods that might include paper products, clothing, or canned foods. On a typical day, Tubbs, 42, opens his company app to check his scheduled route, briefly stops at the office to collect his paperwork, inspects his tractor-trailer, and drives perhaps a dozen or 100 miles to his destination, where he unhitches his load, switches trailers, then drives back to where he came from.

For Tubbs, it’s an ordinary routine, although the highways bear signs of the not-so-ordinary: Rush hour traffic has largely disappeared, and restaurants are closed at Illinois Tollway rest areas near Chicago. Another new ritual: Tubbs cleans the interior of his assigned company truck with disinfectant wipes before hitting the road. In this Year of the Coronavirus, even a mostly isolated trucker must take precautions.

Truckers like Tubbs are one cog in the machinery that is the global supply chain. Other cogs include farmers, ocean freighters, manufacturers, and retailers. Working in tandem, they create and deliver the food and products we depend on each day. For most of us, it’s a machine we don’t think about—at least not until something goes wrong.

Most Americans saw early evidence of the coronavirus pandemic not on the highways but in the supermarkets, where we emptied the aisles of paper towels, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and flour. The unexpected shortages suggested the unthinkable: Could COVID-19, besides undercutting lives and livelihoods, also lead to a food crisis and the disappearance of goods we take for granted?

Regarding that, this story contains good news and bad news.

Let’s start with the good: Most of the supply chain is working just fine, at least so far. Tubbs can attest to it. In mid-March, amid U.S. panic buying, truck shipments surged. Tubbs hauled heavy loads of more than 30,000 pounds, delivering to stores where Americans were stocking up on Charmin, Clorox wipes, and bottled water.

“People were describing it like the Christmas season,” Tubbs said of the deliveries. His employer, J.B. Hunt, paid him a $500 bonus for working during the coronavirus outbreak.

Toilet paper and some food products will likely continue to sell quickly. Americans stuck at home are no longer taking restroom breaks at the office or eating in restaurants, places that purchase commercial-grade toilet paper and bulk food from wholesalers. Demand on local grocery stores is up. But the absorbent paper mills, running 24/7, can continue to restock shelves, and suppliers can shift food to the retail market.

Now, the bad news: Even more concerning, and uncertain, are the ripple effects that might happen if the coronavirus strikes the very workers who run the paper mills, hand sanitizing factories, and shipping distribution centers. Because a single worker’s illness may mean quarantining co-workers who’ve come into contact with him, a case of COVID-19 could hobble an entire operation.

It’s not an entirely unrealistic proposition. GoJo, which manufactures Purell hand sanitizer, reported a worker with COVID-19 at one of its two Ohio plants. Boeing halted production at its aircraft plants in Washington state after at least one worker there died of the disease. In Malaysia, officials shut down several palm oil plantations after workers contracted the coronavirus.

Outbreaks aboard freighter ships
could pose a problem. Maersk, the world’s largest ocean shipping company, said in late March five crewmembers on one of its ships had contracted the coronavirus and disembarked in Ningbo, China, for medical evaluation.

Some are worried enough to sound alarms: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations warned widespread quarantines or export restrictions, combined with outbreaks among farm workers, could disrupt the supply chain and spark a food crisis. (There is no food shortage yet, it noted.)

For American consumers, disruptions to ocean shipping would probably have a minimal effect on food supply, says Andrew Novaković, a professor of agricultural economics at Cornell University. Because America is a major agricultural exporter, it has plenty of its own food. The bigger problem for U.S. farmers would be if they can’t export and sell the food they’ve already grown, leaving them with “product you can’t sell and then having prices go in the tank.”

With government-mandated shutdowns of many retail stores, and with consumers unenthusiastic about making large purchases, industry experts do expect the economic downturn to deal a blow to the shipping industry in the coming months. Some trucking companies have already announced partial layoffs, and Wallenius Wilhelmsen,
Ford said it would repurpose a facility in Ypsilanti, Mich., in a partnership with General Electric to produce 50,000 ventilators by July 4. The devices, in short supply in the United States, are crucial for the survival of COVID-19 patients, who often struggle to breathe on their own. General Motors and Tesla have also committed to making the devices.

Ford and 3M said they would work together to produce powered air-purifying respirators, waist-mounted devices with a hood that would provide first responders and medical workers safe, filtered air. The manufacturers will use fan parts from the cooled seats of Ford’s F-150s.

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These companies can’t build additional factories overnight, so other businesses have stepped up to help in ingenious ways. Dozens of U.S. craft distilleries, for example, have repurposed their alcohol-production capabilities to instead make hand sanitizer.

Clothing manufacturers are also helping, with companies such as Eddie Bauer and Ralph Lauren retooling their production lines to produce masks for medical workers. Smaller companies have done the same—as have countless American volunteers handy with a needle and thread. (Not all of these masks are medical grade, but federal officials have said they are better than nothing.)

Back in the United States, motor vehicle companies are helping with more complicated medical equipment. They face pressure from President Donald Trump, who has invoked the Defense Production Act, which allows the government to order private companies to create products in the interest of national defense.

THE BIGGER PROBLEM FOR U.S. FARMERS WOULD BE IF THEY CAN’T EXPORT AND SELL THE FOOD THEY’VE ALREADY GROWN.

which ships automobiles across the ocean, announced it would lay off 2,500 employees and place up to 10 ships in “cold layup,” according to shipping news website FreightWaves. Some current product shortages aren’t primarily due to shipping problems but to unprece- dented demand. Facemasks, bottles of hand sanitizer, and ventilators have, in a matter of weeks, become vitally needed goods in the global fight against the coronavirus. There simply haven’t been enough to go around.

Manufacturers say they are making these products as quickly as they can. Gojo said its Purell-producing operations were running 24/7. It has added shifts, with some employees working overtime. 3M said it had doubled its global output of N95 masks to nearly 100 million per month.

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NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

The problems of a Los Angeles café show the challenges facing small businesses

BY SOPHIA LEE IN LOS ANGELES

SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP more than 99 percent of all U.S. businesses and employ more than half of the American workforce. To bolster the flailing economy during this COVID-19 crisis, Congress passed an emergency $2 trillion economic aid package, which includes $367 billion reserved for small businesses in loans and payroll-tax deferment. The loans are for sole proprietors and freelancers, and many are forgivable if the owner pays normal salary rates to all employees for eight weeks and uses the money for specific payments: rent, mortgage interest, payroll, or utilities.

But as many small business owners pore through the program’s requirements and conditions, they also hear precious time ticking off the few days left before they run out of cash reserves and may have to shutter their shops for good.

Bobby Roshan, owner of Cafe Demitasse, a local coffee bar in Los Angeles, said he’s planning to apply for every loan and grant available. But he’s not sure if that will be enough to save his business. Under LA’s safer-at-home orders, his coffee shops can only provide pickup and delivery services. Cafe Demitasse is known for its unpretentious, sun-splattered ambience and cool coffee gadgets. Few people, other than die-hard loyal customers, are going to fork over the extra cash just for Kyoto-style cold brew drip and lavender hot chocolate. Today, two of his three coffee shops are closed, and the only branch still open in Santa Monica is barely scraping enough cash to pay the six remaining employees—let alone his coffee importers, milk delivery, rent, pastries, and coffee beans.

Even if he pays all 25 of his full-time and part-time employees to work for eight weeks, what “work” is there for them to do in an empty shop that’s constantly running up electricity, water, and internet bills? Even when the shutdown ends, will customers feel safe enough to cozy up in coffee shops again as they once did without a second thought?

“That’s the real scary thing that puts fear in our hearts,” Roshan said. “Even if they lift the quarantine, it doesn’t mean people will be out on the streets again. We’re entering a whole new era where people are afraid to go to shops, offices, restaurants. ... That’s one issue that nobody has an answer to: Why would I get all these loans and go into debt, just to find out that there’s still no point in keeping the doors open?” And what if a second COVID-19 wave breaks out, as some experts predict? “Maybe with the help of the government, we can survive this first shutdown,” Roshan said. “But having a second shutdown where we have to fire more people? Forget it. Those people are gone. Suppliers, gone. Can you imagine?”

Already, two of Roshan’s four landlords have refused to grant him any kind of rent relief, not even a deferral. They told him to apply for loans from the Small Business Administration so he can pay them on time. Another landlord gave him an ambiguous “We’ll see.” The fourth landlord hasn’t responded to his pleas. Roshan has not paid himself since the crisis hit, and like most businesses in the retail and hospitality industry, he doesn’t have a cash stockpile for such emergencies: “They can stomp their feet, they can demand, but I have no money to give them.”

Meanwhile, Roshan’s wife is pregnant and due to deliver a boy in June. They haven’t left the house in weeks. What is supposed to be an exciting time for this new family is also terrifying and stressful as Roshan weighs all the unhappy and uncertain options before him. That includes a world in which he doesn’t reopen his businesses at all. For Roshan, that world won’t be too bad: His wife can support the family with her healthcare job, and he’s content to be a stay-at-home dad for a while. But he worries about his staff: “My heart bleeds for them. I’ll be OK, but there are a lot of people who are not going to be as lucky in a couple of months.”
SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

... for families forced to live in a shoe

BY SUSAN OLASKY

Illustration by Mark Fredrickson
Kevin DeYoung retells the Bible’s central story, showing God—clearly the hero—continually rescuing His wayward people, fulfilling His promises, and working toward our final reunion in the new heaven and earth. (10/31/2015)

Marty Machowski’s **THE OLOGY** is a kid-friendly introduction to the study of God. His presentation of God’s character through clever, humorous essays—with titles like “The Ology of Creation”—sets this book apart. (4/2/2016)

**STORIES**


**I REALLY WANT TO SEE YOU, GRANDMA** by Taro Gomi is a story about a determined little girl and her equally determined grandmother who live far apart and desperately want to visit. (2/2/2019)

**STICK!** by Irene Dickson shows the endless ways a boy can entertain himself with a stick and a dog. (10/13/2018)

With only 25 words and simple illustrations, Anna Kang’s funny **YOU ARE (NOT) SMALL** introduces preschoolers to relative size. (9/15/2015)

**PEGGONY-PO: A WHALE OF A TALE** by Andrea Davis Pinkney is a tall tale of a boy carved from wood who vows to catch the whale that ate his father’s leg. Vivid language and vibrant images combine to tell an action-packed story. (12/16/2006)

The precocious narrator of Sally Lloyd-Jones’ **HOW TO GET A JOB BY ME THE BOSS** explains secrets of work: “If you are a Doctor, you need to get a White Coat and some Patients,” and “Here’s what isn’t a job: Sitting in your chair eating cookies.” Lloyd-Jones is a treasure, a Christian who writes both explicitly Christian books (**THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE**) and fun books for the general market. (7/2/2011)

**DEMOLITION** by Sally Sutton is a noisy book, sure to delight little people who love trucks and destruction. Its pages are filled with wrecking balls and bull-
dozers, short and punchy sentences, and vivid action words: “Work the jaws. Work the jaws. Bite and tear and slash. Dinosaurs had teeth like this! Rip! Roar! Crash!” (5/19/12)

The first page of **THIS IS NOT MY HAT** by Jon Klassen shows a small fish wearing a tiny derby hat, plus these words: “This hat is not mine. I just stole it.” From that brazen beginning Klassen tells a moral tale with few words and simple pictures. (11/17/2012) Klassen’s other “hat” stories—**I WANT MY HAT BACK** (2011 and 2016) are also fun.

Chloe is the elementary-aged narrator of **ADRIAN SIMCOX DOES NOT HAVE A HORSE** by Marcy Campbell. She’s indignant because poor, red-headed Adrian insists he has a horse and she knows that’s not true. The inside jacket flap reads, “Sometimes we have to learn to see with kindness.” That’s the message of this pitch-perfect picture book, but as in the best books, it shows rather than tells. (3/2/2019)

**HELLO LIGHTHOUSE** by Sophie Blackall portrays the daily life of a lighthouse keeper as he faithfully tends the light that keeps passing ships from crashing onto rocks. (3/2/2019)

In **SATURDAY IS SWIMMING DAY**, author and illustrator Hyewon Yum captures the trepidation children often feel when learning to swim. The illustrations capture through body language the pains and joys of overcoming the fear of water. (6/9/2018)

Martin Jenkins’ **BEWARE OF THE CROC-ODILE** is nonfiction that reads like a storybook. Illustrations often stretch across two pages, leaving plenty of room for teeth. On one spread, we see the shadow of a huge croc waiting for a creature to come close. “And then? Then there’ll be a sudden lunge and a tremendous SPLASH. And then? Oh, dear. What happens next is rather gruesome. In fact it’s so gruesome that we should skip the details.” (8/3/2019)

**MR. SQUIRREL AND THE MOON** by Sebastian Meschenmoser features an expressive squirrel with a lively imagination who wakes up one morning to find something large, yellow, and round on his branch. He thinks it’s the moon, though alert readers will realize it’s a wheel of cheese that has fallen from a farmer’s wagon. From there the story spirals off into lots of fun directions. (9/5/2015)

**JABARI JUMPS** by Gaia Cornwall is about a boy trying to overcome his fear of the high dive. His dad tells him it’s OK to be scared and shares a trick for overcoming it. (6/10/2017)

**GROWING UP PEDRO** by Matt Tavares focuses on the relationship between former Red Sox pitcher Pedro Martinez and his older brother Ramon, a star in his own right. (6/10/2017)

**POEMS**

**SING A SONG OF SEASONS: A NATURE POEM FOR EACH DAY OF THE YEAR** offers 366 poems selected by Fiona Waters—including one for Feb. 29. Lovely illustrations by Frann Preston-Gannon accompany the poems in this coffee-table book. (10/13/2018)

If you love noisy picture books, ones that demand sound effects, you’ll like **SQUEAK, RUMBLE, WHOMP! WHOMP! WHOMP!** by Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis. His celebration of sound has saxophones speaking, ambulances wooooo-uuuing, trombones brrrawmp-ing, tubas whomping. (11/17/2012)

**WHEN YOU’RE A PIRATE DOG AND OTHER PIRATE POEMS** by Eric Ode and illustrator Jim Harris. The poems in this captivating collection will turn even the most reluctant child into a lover of doggerel. The book features rhymes like this one from the title poem: “When you’re a pirate dog, your life is free from troubles. They never put you in a tub with smelly soap and bubbles.” (5/19/2012)

**HISTORY**

**HOME IN THE WOODS** by Eliza Wheeler is a true story of a family that survives and prospers despite hardship. It offers beautiful illustrations and a hopeful message in our present circumstances. (2/29/2020)

William Boekestein proves that it is possible to make the story of a 17th-century synod compelling to children. **THE GLORY OF GRACE: THE STORY OF THE CANONS OF DORT** offers attractive woodcut-style illustrations and text focusing on a
doctrinal battle between Calvinists and Arminians that was important theologically and also played a role in European politics. (11/17/2012)

**IT BEGAN WITH A PAGE** by Kyo Maclear tells the story of Gyo Fujikawa, the Japanese American illustrator who convinced her publisher in the 1960s to print her “international set of babies”—babies of all colors—despite the typical all-white representations of the time. Delicate and expressive illustrations help tell the story of this unassuming hero who recognizes the power of a children’s book to change the world. (2/29/2020)

Ashley Benham Yazdani’s **A GREEN PLACE TO BE** tells how Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted created New York’s Central Park. It began with a contest, and they almost missed the deadline. The book focuses on both the park’s design and its construction. (5/11/2019)

**LUMBER JILLS** by Alexandra Davis tells the story of the British women who joined the Women’s Timber Corps during WWII, keeping the country supplied with lumber for planes, ships, newspapers, and more. (6/29/2019)

In **SIX DOTS**, Jen Bryant explores the early life of Louis Braille. The storyline traces how Braille’s remarkable resilience and creative thinking led to the invention of the Braille system. (4/15/2017)

**THE BOO-BOOS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD** by Barry Wittenstein is a picture book biography of Earle Dickson, the inventor of the Band-Aid. (9/1/2018)

During the Korean War, the U.S. Marine Corps gained an unlikely recruit: a small red mare named Reckless. In **SERGEANT RECKLESS**, Patricia McCormack tells the story of the former racehorse that went through special training to prepare for the rigors of battle. (2/3/2018)

**WHO SAYS WOMEN CAN’T BE DOCTORS?** by Tanya Lee Stone tells the story of Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in America. In this picture book, Stone steers clear of feminist agendas and sticks to history, highlighting the determination Blackwell needed to overcome both obstacles and discouragement. (8/9/2014)

### 20TH-CENTURY PICTURE BOOKS

#### 1930s-1940s

- **THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD**—Watty Piper (1930)
- **THE TALE OF CUSTARD THE DRAGON**—Ogden Nash (1936)
- **THE STORY OF FERDINAND**— Munro Leaf (1936)
- **MIKE MULLIGAN AND HIS STEAM SHOVEL**—Virginia Lee Burton (1939)
- **CAPS FOR SALE**—Esphyr Slobodkina (1940)
- **HORTON HATCHES THE EGG**—Dr. Seuss (1940)
- **THE RUNAWAY BUNNY**—Margaret Wise Brown (1942)
- **THE CARROT SEED**—Ruth Krauss (1945)
- **GOODNIGHT MOON**—Margaret Wise Brown (1947)
- **BLUEBERRIES FOR SAL**—Robert McCloskey (1948)

#### 1950s

- **HORTON HEARS A WHO!**—Dr. Seuss (1954)
- **HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON**—Crockett Johnson (1955)
- **HARRY THE DIRTY DOG**—Gene Zion (1956)
- **I, MOUSE**—Robert Kraus (1958)
- **CARS AND TRUCKS AND THINGS THAT GO**—Richard Scarry (1959)

#### 1960s

- **ASTERIX THE GAUL (SERIES)**—René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo (1961)
- **CHICKEN SOUP WITH RICE**—Maurice Sendak (1962)
- **WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE**—Maurice Sendak (1963)
- **BROWN BEAR, BROWN BEAR, WHAT DO YOU SEE?**—Bill Martin Jr. (1967)
- **CORDUROY**—Don Freeman (1968)
- **WHAT DO PEOPLE DO ALL DAY?**—Richard Scarry (1968)

#### 1970s

- **OH WHAT A NOISE!**—Uri Shulevitz (1971)
- **HOW SPIDER SAVED CHRISTMAS**—Robert Kraus (1973)
- **BEARYMORE**—Don Freeman (1976)

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Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis’ celebration of sound has saxophones speaking, ambulances woo-uuuu-oo-uuuing, trombones brrrawmping, tubas whomping.
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<td><strong>GRANFA’ GRIG HAD A PIG</strong> — Wallace Tripp (1976)</td>
<td><strong>MISTY OF CHINCOTEAGUE</strong> — Marguerite Henry (1947)</td>
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<td><strong>MR. AND MRS. PIG’S EVENING OUT</strong> — Mary Rayner (1976)</td>
<td><strong>MRS. PIGGLE WIGGLE</strong> — Betty MacDonald (1947)</td>
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<td><strong>THE BED BOOK</strong> — Sylvia Plath (1976)</td>
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<td><strong>FREIGHT TRAIN</strong> — Donald Crews (1978)</td>
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<td><strong>COWARDLY CLYDE</strong> — Bill Peet (1979)</td>
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<td><strong>THE OX-CART MAN</strong> — Donald Hall (1979)</td>
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<td><strong>THE KNIGHT AND THE DRAGON</strong> — Tomie de Paola (1980)</td>
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<td><strong>LOVE YOU FOREVER</strong> — Robert Munsch (1986)</td>
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**20TH-CENTURY CHAPTER BOOKS**

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<td><strong>ANNE OF GREEN GABLES (SERIES)</strong> — Lucy Maud Montgomery (1908)</td>
<td><strong>BETSY-TACY</strong> — Maud Hart Lovelace (1940)</td>
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<td><strong>UNDERSTOOD BETSY</strong> — Dorothy Canfield Fisher (1916)</td>
<td><strong>THE BLACK STALLION</strong> — Walter Farley (1941)</td>
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<td><strong>WINNIE-THE-POOH</strong> — A.A. Milne (1926)</td>
<td><strong>THE MATCHLOCK GUN</strong> — Walter Edmonds (1942)</td>
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<td><strong>CADDIE WOODLAWN</strong> — Carol Ryrie Brink (1935)</td>
<td><strong>STUART LITTLE</strong> — E.B. White (1945)</td>
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JENNIE HIGGINS IS A 62-YEAR-OLD employee at a Costco store near Houston, Texas, where she assists customers in the clothing section. Her husband, Randy, drives trucks to deliver stock to other Costco locations. The couple have worked for the retailer for years, but now, Jennie Higgins said, “We’re considered essential people.”

In March, Randy worked six days a week, and drivers doubled their loads to meet demand. Meanwhile, Jennie...
said, she has experienced a range of emotions “from unbelievable to just frightening,” never knowing what she’ll face at work: the coronavirus or angry, scared customers.

Grocery workers are facing pressure from long hours, upset customers, and the threat of the coronavirus. But amid the challenges, some Christian employees say they are serving others by listening, encouraging, or just remaining calm.

On March 26, Costco announced reduced hours at its U.S. locations: Stores would close at 6:30 p.m. on weeknights. The stores are rationing some quick-selling items, and food courts now offer a limited menu and no seating. Costco locations around the country are reporting COVID-19 cases among their employees. Some have added sneeze guards at the registers and provided “hazard pay” for employees who work with customers.

The warehouse retailer has been overrun in recent weeks, but Chip Lind, an optician at a Costco near Seattle, said the company has cared well for employees. When his store closed the optical department, it offered him work on the warehouse side, checking out customers department, it offered him work on the

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The warehouse retailer has been overrun in recent weeks, but Chip Lind, an optician at a Costco near Seattle, said the company has cared well for employees. When his store closed the optical department, it offered him work on the warehouse side, checking out customers or assisting cashiers. Lind, a nine-year Costco employee, said the work is mundane, but he’s thankful to have a job. His store has limited the number of shoppers allowed in the building at once: Before that, Lind said, “fights were breaking out every day,” as customers competed for the last of certain products. Police sent officers to stand at the Costco doors.

Lind, in his late 50s, sees his non-Christian co-workers responding to the virus fearfully. He said those who resist fear and keep good attitudes stand out. He and his Christian co-workers quote Bible verses to each other during their shifts and sometimes sing worship songs between customers at the registers. Lind said co-workers see him reading his Bible in the break room and ask about it, and he encourages them to read the Psalms when pandemic anxiety keeps them from sleep.

As a Christian, Jennie Higgins said, “I’ve prayed that God would allow me to be a light in an unusually difficult situation.” Sometimes angry customers direct their frustration toward her. When that happens, she said, she listens and acknowledges how difficult the situation is. Often people are surprised she cares, and thank her for listening. She also tries to encourage co-workers: One told her, “This place has been like a dark cloud, and I have seen who you are in this, and it means a lot to me.”

“I had no idea that just being kind and asking questions about his life would change his life so much,” Higgins said.

H-E-B grocery stores in Texas have placed tape on the floor to remind customers to keep 6 feet of social distancing. Employees give customers wipes for cart handles and point them to hand sanitizing stations.

Bonita Brant has worked at an H-E-B near Austin for 2½ years. Brant leads the team that provides in-store food demos, but two weeks after the coronavirus hit Austin, her store canceled the demos. Brant and her team took on other tasks, from sanitizing surfaces to bagging groceries to working in the store’s backlogged curbside pickup program. The store began rerouting customer traffic to reduce shoplifting and set product limits to reduce hoarding. “You could look at people and see the anxiousness on their faces,” Brant said. “I’m thinking, ‘Calm down, people. God is in control.’”

High-school junior Mason McGuire works as a bagger and parking lot attendant at another H-E-B store near Austin. He said the first week after the coronavirus reached the area was “insane.” Crowds of customers emptied whole shelves before 11 a.m. Managers worked quickly to keep the chaos under control.

Some days, the customers seem aware of employees’ efforts and thank them. Other days, they seem fearful and hostile. Once when McGuire was bagging groceries around closing time, a customer became angry at the cashier. When the cashier stepped away to get a manager’s help, the customer began yelling and cursing at her. McGuire stepped back and waited for things to calm down.

As a Christian, McGuire said he tries to help and support the cashiers while being gentle and thanking the customers. “There is an upper pressure on us right now to keep everyone safe, and it weighs on you,” he said.

But at the same time, the drain he and his co-workers felt during the first week of the virus in Austin has lifted. Now he said they are staying calm and “just doing our job.”
PRAYING FOR RAIN

In Northern California, a prayer group’s weekly entreaties include the weather, coronavirus, and spiritual renewal

by Shayla Ashmore in Susanville, Calif.

Professional Engineer Jeff Morrish can’t engineer the weather—no matter what fellow members of his Susanville, Calif., church say. But after several drought years, in 2015 he started a group praying for rain, even though others said prayer would do no good at all.

Rain or shine, Morrish and others in the Pray for Rain group at Susanville Church of the Nazarene, known as SuzNaz, kept meeting on Monday evenings. Sometimes a few attended, sometimes as many as 25.

On the evening I visited in February, attendees sat with heads bowed and eyes closed in chairs along the sides of four long white plastic tables pushed together to form a square in the middle of the room. Along one wall sat a desk and computer and printer, and on another hung a whiteboard with a half-erased Sunday school Bible verse. Morrish began by praying for the knowledge of Christ to permeate the souls of people as the rain saturates the soil: “Just like the rain and the snow, it refreshes and brings life. Your presence brings life as well. ... Help men and women to see Christ in all that’s happening. Help them to see You in all circumstances.” Around the table, group members responded with petitions for healing the land and “restoring this nation to one that loves You.”

A soft voice asked God to open hearts in mourning and grief and bring comfort. “Thank You,” a strong, deep voice intoned, “that young people are coming to call on You.” Another prayer begged God to send people to their knees to ask for help, to make the group members bold to share His answers to prayer and bold to go out in expectation looking for what He will do. Retired teacher Sue Sommerville referenced James 5:17-18: Elijah, a man with a nature like ours, prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

What were the physical results? California had average rainfall in 2015 and 2016, then record rain in 2017. Some areas of Southern California in 2018, though, received less than half their average annual precipitation. This year California had one of its driest Februaries on record, followed by a wet March. Meteorologist Mike Alger, of KTVN Channel 2, in Reno, Nev., the closest population center to Susanville, said those fluctuations are no surprise. Others say California boasts one of the most capricious climates in the United States.

But one member of Pray for Rain, Mary Dillion, plans to keep praying until water fills Eagle Lake, a 24,000-acre natural basin 16 miles north of Susanville. Another, Bob Bengard, says he wants to launch a sailboat at the north end of the lake before he and his wife, Gail, die. When Gail says the water is nowhere near deep enough, Bob answers, “We only need 2 more feet.”

Eight people showed up at Pray for Rain on March 16, and six on March 23: Morrish planned to continue meeting within coronavirus under-10 requirements. They prayed for neighbors’ health, for hope and peace, for God to stop this plague—and for rain.

—Shayla Ashmore is a graduate of the World Journalism Institute mid-career course
EVANGELISM OVER ISOLATION
The coronavirus provides opportunities and hurdles for ministry to South Africa’s Chinese population

by Onize Ohikere in Gauteng province, South Africa

On a recent Sunday morning in Krugersdorp, South Africa, people slowly filled the green cushioned pews inside the multiracial Christian Heritage Church. Many smiled at each other, a few others hugged, and even more greeted each other with elbow-bumps to avoid handshakes.

At the foot of the pulpit, Mei, her daughter, Joyce, and at least 18 other people joined a South African Chinese Outreach Network (SACON) mission program.

Karl Teichert, an American missionary who leads the network, explained to the congregation the importance of taking the gospel to unreached communities. That includes the Chinese population within the province: “We need to take our love for the Lord and extend it in practical ways into loving our neighbors.”

The blue logo of China’s state-run construction company looms over major construction sites from Nigeria to Ethiopia. China has taken advantage of the urbanization push across Africa, offering infrastructure for airports, hospitals, and rail stations. That opens the doors for profit-seeking businessmen and Chinese state employees. The Migration Policy Institute estimates about 1 million Chinese migrants are on the continent. At least 350,000 of them reside in South Africa, with the majority running private businesses.

That migrant population has created a unique evangelism opportunity for Christian missionaries and Chinese converts to Christianity. That work has been going on for years. But the coronavirus outbreak brings new business and social challenges to that work and makes technology all the more important.

Days before the program at Christian Heritage Church, Chinese migrants Joyce and Mei (whose full names WORLD is withholding to protect their mission work) arrived at the One Challenge (OC) Africa office.

They gathered around a conference table with Teichert and two other team members to plan the church program and future events. The session began with prayers, which mostly focused on the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. The pandemic had begun to sweep westward from China. By early April, South Africa had confirmed more than 1,600 cases and about a dozen deaths.

Teichert thanked God for “shaking up the powers of the world.” He prayed for creativity in ministry and for God to “reawaken the Church.”

Teichert first came to South Africa in 1997 with his wife, Jenny, and their four children. He had worked as an engi-
The coronavirus outbreak is complicating yearslong mission efforts, like Teichert’s.

Since the outbreak began, South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa has suspended international travel to some of the most affected countries, banned public gatherings, and shut down schools.

The growing isolation has prompted the Teicherts to start considering ways to increase their outreach. The couple plan to collect encouraging words and Scripture from some Chinese pastors to hand out at shops, where they say many of the Chinese workers still remain.

The health crisis has also affected other members of the network. Joyce and Mei had to postpone a three-month training session for Chinese business owners. They intended to teach English to the group and coach children on English and Afrikaans, South Africa’s official language. The course would also include sessions on understanding labor laws, team building, and other “soft skills” needed to run a successful business.

They see such efforts as opportunities to build trust within the Chinese community. Their understanding of the culture also shapes their ministry efforts. Joyce is working on e-guides to help Chinese understand the local community and another to help other local Christians understand Chinese culture and traditions. “People wanted to go to China to share the Word, but China is now at our doorstep,” she said.

But the pandemic is affecting all business in the country. South Africa Tourism Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said the tourism industry has already suffered losses she anticipates will increase.

Mei has seen fewer clients at her herbal medicine shop. She last ordered stock in January, and in mid-March it was still stuck in China, where the outbreak began. “My medicine for diabetes is out,” she explained.

Joyce called it the worst time for her city’s Chinatown in years: “Even the Chinese won’t go there.”
She also gets cautious glances from native South Africans at malls and other public spaces. Joyce said she was somewhat relieved the first case of coronavirus in South Africa came from Italy, not China.

A day before the government enforced a 21-day lockdown beginning March 27, Joyce said, someone came to her family’s shop shouting curses and blaming the Chinese for bringing the outbreak and the shutdown.

Such incidents underscore the need for relational ministry to Chinese migrants.

Daniel Hughes—a South African missionary who also works with SACON—worked as a missionary in Asia for 16 years before returning to South Africa to work with Chinese churches. His “funny Chinese” has helped in ministry, he said. But he admitted ministering to people with little or no exposure to Christianity is a long-term endeavor.

His initial focus is on building relationships. In 2008, Hughes connected with six Chinese shop owners all selling similar items but with no relationship with each other. “It’s a Communistic mindset,” he said. “You can’t trust your own people.”

He started to visit them and help with taxes, labor laws, and technology. Gradually, several of them started attending small group sessions at his home. Hughes said laughter filled the meetings.

“Many of the folk live in their shops. They don’t speak much English—they don’t have many relationships outside of their little group,” he said. “So when they started to come to our home, talking in their language, eating food together, it was like family again.”

From that group, two sisters and one of their husbands got baptized in 2018—10 years after Hughes first met them.

Other Chinese migrants are indifferent to Christianity. Hughes connected with a businessman and his family. The man was willing to attend meetings in Hughes’ home but said he will never become a Christian. He later returned to China with his family.

“We cannot change a person’s heart, but we can sow into their lives,” he said. “We trust the Lord that something good was sown in their hearts.”

The coronavirus pandemic doesn’t change Hughes’ approach. At the SACON meeting, he reminded the team to be “careful but not fearful.” He shared how a Jewish community continued to take cakes to workers in Chinese malls now devoid of customers: “Somehow we need to bring the love of Christ.”

As in other countries around the world, the coronavirus outbreak is forcing Chinese Christians in South Africa to rely on technology even more.

As the number of coronavirus cases began to rise, Christians in the South Africa Chinese Methodist Church started wearing masks and using sanitizers. Gradually, people started to sit farther apart during Sunday services, and fewer people attended weekly study sessions. The church moved the Wednesday evening Bible study to social media platform WeChat before suspending all in-person services.

Several members of the Chinese Covenant Church in Edenvale, near Johannesburg, traveled to visit families ahead of the Chinese New Year celebration in January. As they returned, the church implemented a 14- to 24-day waiting period before they could rejoin the congregation.

As cases worsened, weekday services similarly shifted to WhatsApp and WeChat.

Boaz and his wife, Hannah, joined the church in full-time ministry in 2016 (WORLD is also withholding their full names). The Chinese couple converted to Christianity in 2003, while they were students in Cape Town. Boaz said the majority of the Chinese business owners come from poorer families and focus solely on making money. That drives many of them to work every day of the week.

“It’s hard for them to separate time for the meetings or even Sunday services,” he said.

That’s what makes the digital community even more important for the church this season.

For Hannah, the ongoing outbreak is an opportunity to keep sharing the gospel as more people search for peace. “The only true peace we know comes from God.”
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GOT PATIENCE? I know you got milk. And toilet paper.

You will have patience by the time this is all over. Or you won’t, and will have wasted a perfectly good crisis, the word crisis being related to “opportunity” in the Chinese language (which is ironic enough under the circumstances).

A 1944 French play titled No Exit deals with a crisis, but one sans opportunity. A crisis without opportunity is one with no hope of a good ending. God-rejectors have no hope of a good ending, and Sartre at least got that right.

To illustrate this, he put three strangers in the same cramped room for all eternity as their punishment for bad living they had done on earth. Becoming one another’s eternal tormentors would be more amusing for hell’s Grand Inquisitor than the conventional instruments of torture could ever afford. People have an endless capacity for this.

But Christians have an endless capacity for improving—as in “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Still, it is one of the oddities of observable Christianity that many do not have concrete goals in spiritual improvement. They have goals in other spheres—career goals, vacation goals, weight loss goals—which they pursue like von Moltke pursued the French from Belgium all the way to the outskirts of Paris. But formulating spiritual goals is considered taboo in certain Christian circles.

Why? Because somewhere along the line they have been convinced that making up their minds to attain some spiritual goal—like patience—is a kind of works, and that works are against grace. But I like the way professor John Frame put it to me once: God is not against working, He’s against earning.

If that clarifies it for you, as it does for me, let us put the old unproductive thinking behind us and “press on toward the goal,” as Paul did, who spoke in muscular terms of “fleeing” bad passions and “pursuing” good ones (2 Timothy 2:22), and who at the end of his life was able to claim that he had succeeded in these objectives: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (۱۰:۷).

This morning you will wake up into a bad Groundhog Day radio recitation of the same coronavirus news as yesterday. But your relationships with the people in your house don’t have to be a repeat of yesterday. And here is how you’re going to do it (I’m talking to myself now): You are going to be prepared in advance for the sand traps that tripped you up yesterday. Yes, you will do it! By prayer and God’s grace!

And these traps are a finite number, so this is doable. After all, it is not as if all 24 hours of the day have proved to be dangerous times for you. First of all, eight of them you slept away. And of the remaining 16, you did pretty well in keeping from the reprehensible lapses that you are now conscience-stricken by. Those falls, if you observe well, tend to occur in the same predictable spots every day. So be smart and target these places like a laser in your campaign to “be conformed to the image of Christ.”

What will you do when your father sneaks behind your back and puts a used piece of silverware in the silverware drawer rather than in the sink as you have often asked him to do? As I see it, you have only a few options:

1. Berate him.
2. Speak respectfully to him about it again.
3. Simply remove the soup-smeared spoon from the drawer without fanfare after he has left the kitchen.

Once you get sick and tired enough of the way sin makes you feel like you’ve got a bad hangover in the morning, you will pick option 2 or 3. You will discover to your surprise how good obedience feels—that instantaneous lightening and strengthening that accompanies a moment of putting the flesh to death.
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Rising and falling

Early signs of COVID-19’s effects on society are worth pondering

ROMANS 8:28 SAYS “all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” How could the effects of COVID-19 possibly be good? Many are dying. Many more face disruptions in their lives and careers, financial hardships, family stress, boredom ... the list of difficulties goes on.

Understanding the deaths is a hard question, but Jesus didn’t dodge it when asked about 18 who suddenly died as “the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5). Every dead person is a missionary and an evangelist, reminding us that we must repent if we don’t want to perish in this life or the next.

This is not sufficient for a person mourning a loved one, but that’s a topic for another day. It’s not as hard to understand how trouble affects survivors. The Bible offers evidence: Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jonah, Peter, Paul, and just about every other person called according to God’s purpose faced disruption of some kind. They benefited from unexpected hardship, but Ahab, Judas, and others tumbled into trouble and turned further away from God. Jesus, as Simeon told Mary, was “appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34).

In American history, the American Revolution led to the rise of George Washington and the fall of Benedict Arnold. The primary benefit of the Civil War, which cost 600,000 lives, was the freeing of 5 million slaves, but Southern novelist Walker Percy pointed out a secondary benefit: “Why has the South produced so many good writers? Because we got beat.” The Depression and World War II expanded misery but also produced “the Greatest Generation.”

Walker Percy’s characters have one main enemy: everydayness, being stuck in routine. They often have one major opportunity—maybe a hurricane, maybe the tuberculosis that moved Percy from a planned medical career into writing. Quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada, decades after her diving accident, reflected: “Had I not broken my neck I’d probably be on my second divorce, maxing out my husband’s credit cards.” Percy and Tada amid crisis turned to Christ.

Will the pandemic work for the rising of many or the fall of more? God only knows. Some early signs are worth pondering: Copenhagen professor Jeanet Bentzen analyzed internet searches for prayer in 75 countries and reported preliminary findings that “search intensity for prayer doubles for every 80,000 newly registered cases of COVID-19. ... Google searches on prayer have skyrocketed.”

That’s not surprising. We have more time to pray, more time to read the Bible, and more time to think about our own sin. We have more time to realize: “What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” But the flip side is also true: What can make me sneer again? Misuse of the name of Jesus.

When news spreads of Christians acting self-sacrificially to love our neighbors, that encourages a worried world to check out the gospel and hear the good news. But Christians who harm their neighbors by ignoring medical advice place millstones around the necks of those who might otherwise see Christian love and say, “I need and want some of that.”

This does not mean that we seek popularity by dodging what the Bible clearly teaches or idolizing “scientific” pronouncements that go beyond what scientists can test. But the Bible has clear teaching about quarantining disease carriers and preserving life. We can also learn from a great Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper, who developed a useful approach called “sphere sovereignty.” Churches have authority over religious activities, but governors have authority for public safety. If a governor discriminates against churches, he’s overstepping his sphere; but if he’s even-handed, he is in his sphere.

Yes, real threats to religious liberty exist and must be opposed, but let’s be careful not to cry wolf. Instead, let’s save lives and help save souls.
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