

Reflections on Life During the Pandemic
A Reflection by Kathryn Haskin
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Here's the thing that I hate to admit in this reflection. But it's the truth. I can't stop complaining.

I'm whining about being in my house. My house that's full of food, has heat, AC, hot water, a ridiculous amount of stuff. I'm complaining about all the time I'm spending with the two people I love the most in the world and truly the best dog ever. I'm stressing out about work, my messy house, the weeds in the yard, and the clutter that I cannot get a handle on. I'm whining about the trips we've canceled, the visits we aren't going to get to make, the milestone moments we aren't getting to share with those we love in the ways that we want to. So much whining and complaining – it's quite embarrassing to admit.

Even while I'm complaining, I know that I have it so, so good. The impacts of this crisis on my direct life are as minimal as they can be, and I am absolutely grateful for that. I'm also not naïve enough to think this is somehow a sign that we have lived a more righteous life, or that we are doing a better job of social distancing, or that we are just #blessed. I'm well aware that the blessings we have aren't because we have worked really hard, or even that we are just lucky – we didn't end up here on our own.

Matt and I, and Adeline, are faring so well in the midst of this crisis because of unearned privilege. We've been given the benefit of the doubt in every moment; we have had steady housing, healthcare, and a system of support in place that enabled us to get to where we are today. Our jobs allow us the privilege of staying home, and they are flexible enough that we can take care of our daughter. When it comes right down to it, we're missing very few "need to haves" and fortunate that most of what we are missing is in the "really, really, really want to have" category.

So where do I end up most days, in balancing my whining and complaining with the knowledge that I am in a position of privilege and safety?

On the better days, I go back to this question: What am I compelled to do as a follower of Christ?

Luckily the answer is easy to find, and in case I had forgotten, we were just reminded of during Holy Week. Love God. Love one another. And, our faith tradition offers a clear set of expectations in the baptismal covenant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself; and will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I'm also really grateful for the answer to those questions, again from our faith tradition – I will, *with God's help*.

So, what has God led me to do in this particular instance?

Figuring out how to serve others in this time has required more thinking, more researching, and moving beyond my normal go-to solutions. I am intentionally looking at how I can support those who are impacted the most in this moment. And the data available today seems clear; those most impacted by COVID-19 are our black and brown neighbors, the Native populations, the immigrant community – all of whom are our siblings in Christ. The groups of people who have been most impacted by the unequal application of systems of justice, education, housing, and advancement in the US are again bearing the brunt of the pandemic. There are many reasons for this disproportionate impact (and I'm happy to share more about what I'm reading), but what matters today to me is what my response is.

What am I doing to love others as Christ loved us?

First, I'm staying home. I'm socially distancing, and I'm wearing my mask. I'm checking on family, friends, and neighbors.

Matt and I have agreed to increase our financial donations, in recognition of the financial stability we have right now. We're giving to funds that support those who have lost their jobs, to support for the families of essential workers, to organizations that are providing food and meeting immediate needs of those in Alexandria (including Christ Church Lazarus Ministry and ALIVE), and to the organizations that we normally support. We are researching and looking for opportunities to specifically help populations that are getting hit the hardest right now AND have the least resources – such as Navajo Nation. And, we continue to contribute to Immanuel, which is helping the church keep paying all our staff and clergy and take care of the community we're closest to. I continue to seek ways to do my part to impact long term change, including donations to causes and candidates I support.

I'm buying local, because when the worst of all this is over, I want to be able to go back to Old Town Books, and Hooray for Books, and Rustico, and Bastille, and Bread and Water, and Unwined....and the list goes on and on.

And I'm praying. I'm praying more than I think I ever have. My prayers feel extra selfish these days, imploring God to help specific people that I care about (preferably in the way that I want those people to be helped), and I'm constantly asking for God to give me patience. I'm also getting angry with God, because my goodness, this is horrible and tragic. And again, on my better days, I'm thanking God for the gifts I've been given and asking God to help me use whatever I've got in service of others. After all, I will, *with God's help*.

So that's where I am today, at the end of April, in the year 2020. I'm whining; I'm remembering what being a follower of Christ calls me to do; I'm acting on that call in the best ways that I can right now; I'm loving my neighbor; and I'm praying for the help only God can provide.