

Everything has changed. We hear this over and over now as people—with the exception of the incompetent White House gang—are finally waking up to the realization that we are not all powerful. We are not a country that has planned for swift, reasoned, and effective response to a pandemic. As a people, we have perhaps finally realized that “it can’t happen here” no longer applies. The doctors, nurses, and hospitals we rely on to take care of us when we are sick don’t have what they need to do their jobs—not equipment, and not protective masks, gowns, and gloves. We have taken for granted for too long that everything is just fine here in the “land of the free and home of the brave.” In a piecemeal fashion, many of us are now under “stay at home” directives from our state authorities. Our Governor Gretchen Whitmer, among many others, signed this executive order this week. Action that should have been taken at the national level has been left to states, cities, and counties to implement if the health care system is to have a chance of avoiding a breakdown. But, when the President of the United States, the person that we should—regardless of political party—expect to look out for our best interests in the face of a worldwide disaster, is all about “me, me, me,” and has an ego and a narcissism that far exceeds his intellectual ability to assess the situation we are in and to take appropriate action, it is only to our state and local leaders that we can look for help in dealing with this crisis.

On the local, personal level, life has also changed. For many people, this has been a radical departure from their usual routine. With children home from school, adults working at home—if they are fortunate enough to have a job that they can do from a remote location, college students finishing the semester online, if they have good enough internet service where they live, and many people whose jobs in the food service industry and other sectors who are at home with no income, it is no wonder that the anxiety level of the population is high.

Here, on Coe Creek, it hasn’t been such an extreme change. Because we are in a sparsely populated rural area, it is easier to achieve “social distancing.” And for us, we are usually rather “socially distanced” from most other people this time of year, as we are shearing sheep and very soon will be entering the lambing season. We do not want to be sick—even with minor illnesses—in March and April. There is just too much to do to leave to others to do for us.

The biggest change for us arises because of the kind of neighborhood we have. Nearly all of our close neighbors are relatives, and we are accustomed to drop in on each other from time to time. We don’t do that anymore. The other component of our neighborhood is the Amish community in our midst. Our interactions with them are also on hold.

But, here on the farm, we go about our daily life as usual. The pickup has stood without being moved for over a week. But, that’s not unheard of. And, we don’t really need to go to a store very often. Anyone who gardens and preserves a good deal of their own food is not bound by weekly trips to the grocery store. Our meals might eventually be a little more limited by lack of some basic ingredients such as spices, baking powder, vanilla, etc. but we would not go hungry. Lily had her calf a couple of days ago, so there will soon

be fresh dairy products. That means butter and cheese, cream and milk to use in the months ahead.

And, believe it or not, there are alternatives to toilet paper.

The telephone has become more important recently. We can keep in touch with friends and relatives easily. We are not isolated. And, we hope all of those friends and relatives, as well as everybody else, takes this Covid 19 pandemic seriously and keeps the “social distance” that will help us emerge from this crisis. This is not something that will be all over in a few weeks. In time, there will probably be a vaccine to protect us from future outbreaks, but that is not even on the horizon now.