

I suppose all of us, without exception, have gained some new knowledge or belief—or both—since the onset of this Covid 19 pandemic. When facts come to our attention, that is a good thing, even if they reveal unpleasant truths. We can manage our lives a little better if we know what challenges we may face. If, though, our new perspectives are based on beliefs, not hard facts, that is an entirely different matter. Downplaying the seriousness of this disease or minimizing its infectiousness is detrimental to our success in confronting its effects. And yet, a few hundred people have, a couple of times now, descended on the State Capitol in Lansing to protest the directive for us all to stay at home. If they believe that the weapons some of them carried will help them avoid infection, they might, if they thought about it, have worn masks instead. We know that these “protesters” do not represent the majority—or even a sizable minority—of Michigan’s population. We applaud our Governor Gretchen Whitmer for her actions and her refusal to cave in to the demands of a few people who seemingly have no regard for the health and safety of themselves or of the families they return to after their ill-conceived “assault” on the Capitol.

So, we have learned a lot although the virus itself remains inscrutable to most of us. The scientists who are seeking a vaccine and an effective treatment still have much work to do to discover answers involving the most effective way to deal with it. About life in general, though, most of us have acquired a little insight into how we must live now and what is most important.

For those who are “climate change deniers,” who think that if there is any change in our environment, it “has nothing to do with us,” it must be instructive to note that air pollution in many areas has declined—to use a favorite word of the Denier-in-Chief—“tremendously” due to a large decrease in the use of fossil fuels. People just aren’t driving as much, consuming as much, wasting as much.

And, that leads to lessons all of us have learned. In talking with friends and family, it is worth noting that we are all “making do” with what we have as much as we can. We aren’t running to a store because we are out of some ingredient for baking, or if we don’t have some small item that we could use but can get along without, at least for the time being. We are beginning to act—most of us, anyway—more like people used to behave. I was low on yeast, but a neighbor had plenty. She loaned me some. The same would be true for the old standby, a “cup of sugar,” or a teaspoon full of ginger. I am not completely sure just how far this neighborliness would go—would someone loan a friend the next-to-last roll of toilet paper? In our family, I am pretty sure everybody would.

Some of the truths we have absorbed have been painful. Over 65,000 families in this country have lost members to this disease. And, most of us listening to the stories of the thousands of health care workers who risk their lives every day are so very thankful for these dedicated people. They work long hours with scarce protective equipment, and they do it for all of us, even for the foolish people who become infected with the coronavirus through unnecessary close contact with others or through confronting our governor

“protected” by guns instead of masks And the other essential workers of all kinds who are keeping the country going through this time—delivering what we need, working in grocery stores, taking care of garbage, manning police and fire stations—we know these folks are at a much increased risk when compared to those of us who can stay isolated. And we rightfully appreciate all of these people.

Then, too, there are the “small truths” we learn, often about ourselves. We find out how much vanity we possess. Does it really matter if I get that haircut? Or, if I attempt it myself, do I obsess about the poor job I did? Do I really need all the social interaction I am used to? Can I be content living a simpler life?

In my case, I discovered that I’m not a “candy snob.” I admit to a well-developed and sometimes insatiable “sweet tooth.” But, it is usually under control due to a sporadic, but not infrequent infusion of spearmint leaves, gummie bears, licorice, gumdrops, jelly beans, and/or chocolate. Having exhausted my supply, I was about to make homemade fudge when one of our friends came to my rescue. He was working the bee yard that day, so we had an outdoor coffee hour at a social distance much in excess of the recommended minimum. But, he also hung a bag on our gate. He, not having a great dependence on sweets, donated his stash of candy to me. None of it, except a bar of very dark chocolate, would make my list of “favorites,” but everything was consumed without too much delay. The best candy in the bag, though, was a little box of Jolly Rancher Gummies. I had never eaten them, but they were immensely satisfying. Halfway through the box, I noticed the expiration date: “Best by April, 217.” I ate the rest immediately, not wanting them to get any older. I can only assume, like the stories about Twinkies, that if someone came upon a box of Jolly Rancher Gummies a hundred years from now, they would be as edible as they were in their youth.

The demands of these times have also validated another truth. Here at Coe Creek, we don’t mind staying at home.