



If you have nothing to say, say nothing.
Mark Twain

When it became time to prepare the March *Newsletter* we had just cancelled a concert intended for March 14, and in the next few days, almost as if we had triggered them, other cancellations and closures poured in. It very quickly became apparent that although we might have reported on the Twelfth Night party (which we will do – it was a great success, thank you, Gord and Carol!), we had nothing to say about coming events. What events, and when might they be? And given the pandemic raging outside our houses, at least we hope it's still outside, who would want to read it? So we really have nothing to report or announce.

Nevertheless we thought that we should at least greet all of you, the members and friends of the Kingston Centre, and wish you well in this time of trial.

Fran David

From the Editors
What's to do?
David Cameron

As I begin to write, Fran is practising the piano down in her studio. Earlier I heard Bach, one of the English Suites, but now she's playing the Franck Sonata in A, without the necessary violinist or cellist a complete performance needs. Fran still plays a lot of chamber music, piano trios and quartets mostly, and solo sonatas, but alas: the Coronavirus has blocked our former frequent visitors carrying violin, viola and cello cases. She also practises the violin, but since Orchestra Kingston, the Community Strings, and the Cathedral Chamber Orchestra have all ended their seasons *sine die*, it's probably hard to know what to work on.

When I finish writing this, I may play the organ a bit, very badly, or continue to sort the musical detritus of more than sixty-five years as an organist (I'm still a serious organist and teacher in my head, even though hands and feet no longer obey messages from above; as Sir Ernest MacMillan did, I award myself the FAGO: Formerly A Good Organist). Or write, music or articles, two about anthem accompaniments just at the moment. Or there's Netflix, or Acorn TV, or if you want to be dismal, CNN.

That's how we fill our days (I say nothing about eating – when we get out of this I may have to eat nothing, for an extended period, to compensate).

How are you filling your days? If we have a few replies about this, I'll forward them to the group.

In the meantime, keep two meters' separation, or stay inside: and wash your hands! And be well.

Dealing With an Earlier Pandemic
From *A History of the Plague in London, 1665*
 Daniel Defoe

I now began to consider seriously with myself concerning my own case, and how I should dispose of myself; that is to say, whether I should resolve to stay in London or shut up my house and flee, as many of my neighbours did. I have set this particular down so fully, because I know not but it may be of moment to those who come after me, if they come to be brought to the same distress, and to the same manner of making their choice; and therefore I desire this account may pass with them rather for a direction to themselves to act by than a history of my actings, seeing it may not be of one farthing value to them to note what became of me.

I had two important things before me: the one was the carrying on my business and shop, which was considerable, and in which was embarked all my effects in the world; and the other was the preservation of my life in so dismal a calamity as I saw apparently was coming upon the whole city, and which, however great it was, my fears perhaps, as well as other people's, represented to be much greater than it could be. . . .



It was a very ill time to be sick in, for if any one complained, it was immediately said he had the plague; and though I had indeed no symptom of that distemper, yet being very ill, both in my head and in my stomach, I was not without apprehension that I really was infected; but in about three days I grew better; the third night I rested well, sweated a little, and was much refreshed. The apprehensions of its being the infection went also quite away with my illness, and I went about my business as usual.

These things, however, put off all my thoughts of going into the country; and my brother also being gone, I had no more debate either with him or with myself on that subject.

It was now mid-July, and the plague, which had chiefly raged at the other end of the town, and, as I said before, in the parishes of St Giles, St Andrew's, Holborn, and towards Westminster, began to now come eastward towards the part where I lived. It was to be observed, indeed, that it did not come straight on towards us; for the city, that is to say, within the walls, was indifferently healthy still; nor was it got then very much over the water into Southwark; for though there died that week 1268 of all distempers, whereof it might be supposed above 600 died of the plague, yet there was but twenty-eight in the whole city, within the walls, and but nineteen in Southwark, Lambeth parish included; whereas in the parishes of St Giles and St Martin-in-the-Fields alone there died 421.

Business led me out sometimes to the other end of the town, even when the sickness was chiefly there; and as the thing was new to me, as well as to everybody else, it was a most surprising thing to see those streets which were usually so thronged now grown desolate, and so few people to be seen in them, that if I had been a stranger and at a loss for my way, I might sometimes have gone the length of a whole street (I mean of the by-streets), and seen nobody to direct me except watchmen set at the doors of such houses as were shut up, of which I shall speak presently.

One day, being at that part of the town on some special business, curiosity led me to observe things more than usually, and indeed I walked a great way where I had no business. I went up Holborn, and

there the street was full of people, but they walked in the middle of the great street, neither on one side or other, because, as I suppose, they would not mingle with anybody that came out of houses, or meet with smells and scent from houses that might be infected.

The Inns of Court were all shut up; nor were very many of the lawyers in the Temple, or Lincoln's Inn, or Gray's Inn, to be seen there. Everybody was at peace; there was no occasion for lawyers; besides, it being in the time of the vacation too, they were generally gone into the country. Whole rows of houses in some places were shut close up, the inhabitants all fled, and only a watchman or two left.

The Newsletter

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