

March 20, 2020



Beth A. Broadway

Dear Friend,

During one of our nation's most challenging times, newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt challenged the American people with the assertion that "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Again, we find ourselves in another challenging time and facing a different type of fear -- as a nation and as a world nation.

There is no denying the coronavirus has put many people on edge, but we have faith in our collective future, as we all take steps to reduce the likelihood of transmission. As we join together and things evolve, InterFaith Works is committed to ensuring that essential services to our most vulnerable and at-risk clients are uninterrupted.

We'd like to update you on a few things:

- **Our offices are currently open**, with a very small staff providing essential services. Most of our staff is now working remotely, and we expect to come out of this period with much better technical skills! We are not holding any meetings during this time, and we are encouraging our clients to call rather than come in. We have established strict sanitation and social distancing rules for all of us left at the office.
- **Center for New Americans staff members are continuing to address the needs of refugees** and New American clients, especially those with critical medical needs, language and literacy barriers, and those who may be in need of essentials, such as food and medicine. This can be a particularly frightening time for refugees who have experienced trauma, and we are doing our very best to assuage these fears.
- **Our Senior Companion Program has been temporarily suspended**, including home visits by program volunteers. However, staff is checking in by phone and email with elder clients to address their needs. If you are or know a senior in need, please note Onondaga County has set up the Senior Citizen Nutrition Information and Resource Hotline: 315-218-1987. Email [ttracy@ifwcnycny.org](mailto:ttracy@ifwcnycny.org) with your suggestions on how we can help isolated seniors at this time.
- **We have postponed our InterFaith Leadership Award Dinner** to later this year and working to establish a new date--probably in late June. We appreciate our supporters' understanding and their continued support. We will let you know as soon as a new date is finalized.
- **True to our mission to Affirm Dignity, we are working actively and diligently to promote positive messages** about the humanness of all people, remembering that none of us is any more a carrier of the coronavirus than anyone else. Our job during these difficult times is to support one another, care for the most vulnerable, and responsibly follow public health guidance.
- **Our staff members -- those on site and those working remotely-- are committed to serving our clients, community and partners.** We will keep you updated regularly as things evolve through our social media platforms, e-newsletter, website, and "CNY Inspirations" columns in *The Post-Standard/Syracuse.com*.

Most importantly, don't hesitate to contact us. We are committed to being here for you. Please feel free to call our main number at 315-449-3552 or email [info@interfaithworkscny.org](mailto:info@interfaithworkscny.org). The names and emails

of our senior staff are available on our website: [www.interfaithworkscny.org](http://www.interfaithworkscny.org).

In closing, I'd like to share a poem written by Brother Richard Hendrick, OFM, Capuchin Franciscan priest-friar living in Ireland. This poem spoke directly to me, and gave me pause to think about this time in a different light. I hope you will find it inspirational as well.

Beth A. Broadway  
President/CEO

## Lockdown

*by Brother Richard Hendrick*

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul.

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.