

RPM CAFE, THE HOME EDITION

Imagine that is early March. You have just received our OPC newsletter, and the Retired Person's Ministry article invites you to attend... *"A Celebration of Spring: RPM Cafe, March 19! Come celebrate the first day of Spring at the RPM Cafe. The Chapel will be in bloom, soup pots will be simmering, and the welcome will be warm. Spring is the season of discovery. On March 19, we will have the opportunity to discover ways in which "Seeds of Kindness and Social Justice" are being planted. The RPM Cafe is honored to welcome special guest presenters, Community Relations Officer Vanessa Washington and Patrol Officer Vance of the 19th Police District."*

In response to COVID-19, OPC in-person worship was cancelled on March 15, the church was closed, and a new chapter in our lives began. The first day of spring, came and went. It was 55 degrees and cloudy and we were in our own homes...not together, not enjoying soup and fellowship in the Chapel. Spring for us would indeed become the season of discovery. We soon discovered zoom, solitude, and masks...and how to be as ingenious as our grandparents. We discovered that life without paper towels truly is possible.

In the spirit of pandemic possibilities, *Kindred Spirits* was born. Since we are unable to gather in person, *Kindred Spirits* brings you RPM conversations, musings, idle thoughts, inspiration, and memories in print. It also includes an "official RPM Cafe soup recipe" for your home enjoyment. As you read *Kindred Spirits*, sip some soup, listen to your favorite music, and know that with God's grace, we will all gather together again. In our lunchtime grace, let us offer blessings for all our RPM contributors, and Carol Rozmiarek, who made this edition possible.

Confession Soup

*Worship had already begun when the church lady started reading through the bulletin. At some point during the Confession, and to her horror, she saw the Pastor's notice thanking her "for providing a pot of soup for the Congregational Meeting following worship." She had **forgotten** all about the soup! Immediately following the Forgiveness of Sins, the church lady slipped out of the pew, sped home, ransacked the kitchen, and returned with a pot of what is now known as "Confession Soup."*

- 2 family size cans of Campbell's Tomato Soup
- 1.5 soup cans of water
- .5 soup can of milk
- 2-3 tbs. butter
- 2 handfuls of finely diced onion
- Another handful of finely diced celery
- 1/3 box of either pastina or acini de pepe pasta (cook and drain) Should make about 2 cups of cooked pasta
- 2 cups of diced chicken
- 2 tbs. sugar
- Some salt and pepper, too

- Add pasta to boiling water and cook according to package directions. Rinse and drain.
- Sauté celery and onions in butter until soft. If the diced chicken is raw, toss it in too, and cook until done. (5-7 minutes)
- In a large pan, stir the tomato soup with 1.5 cans of water and .5 can of milk.
- Combine, chicken, vegetables, pasta and soup/milk/water mixture.
- Heat until warm, stirring most of the time. Stirring will make you feel better about forgetting to make the soup in the first place.

Soup's done...run back to church!

DURING THE QUARANTINE

shared by Edelene Carroll

Since I was not able to go to the hairdresser for months to have my hair colored, I decided to let the gray have its way. I've earned every gray strand. Past experiences, heredity and age advancement are all contributors.

I look at my gray as a catalyst for change. Change of past experiences with racial injustices that continue to plague Black people today, and for so many years had a negative impact on my grandparents, parents, and me in trying to get ahead.

As an avid reader, I continue to embrace books and knowledge that are more readily available to me today in advancing my knowledge. I continue to be hopeful that those who accept the system and benefit from holding it in place will see that changes can and need to happen, sooner than later.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

shared by Margaret Young

Renaissance by Kathryn Dickens

Do not dwell on who I'm not...if you do, who I am will soon be forgot
I'll live in your world pretending to be someone I'm not...*your* version of me
The real me inside continues to hide.

But I now realize I can no longer be a me that I'm not...*your* version of me.
It makes me unhappy, please understand that the beauty of me lies
within who I am...*my* version of me

I'm a woman undaunted with strength and with pride...that's why
the me inside, will never again hide.

If you cannot accept the splendor of me...then you and I cannot be.

Splashes from the Reflecting Pond: distractions during a time of pandemonium

"If Plan A doesn't work, remember that there are 25 more letters in the alphabet....204 if you are in Japan." *Claire Cook*

"Nothing in life is to be feared; it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." *Marie Curie*

"Please kindly go away, I'm introverting." *Beth Buelow*

"People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day." *A.A. Milne*

"Life is a shipwreck, but we must not forget to sing in the lifeboats." *Voltaire*

"I can't wait until this is over so that I can go back to social distancing on my own terms." *shared by Margaret Young*

OLD AND NEW MEMORIES

Although the pandemic will be hanging around for the unforeseeable future these are my treasured memories so far. I have many sad memories, as do most of you, with the illness and loss of life of friends, loved ones and so many others. The sadness of the stories is heartbreaking. But my focus today is on the lives of those in my neighborhood, the families and the children and the dogs!

When I was growing up back in the dark ages, even before tv, I spent most of my days in the spring and summer outside on my bike, jumping rope, playing with jacks, playing hopscotch and meeting friends at the playground. During this challenging time, I have so loved seeing the families in my neighborhood riding bikes together and walking with their kids and their dogs. We have at least 5 new dogs in the neighborhood and, since I am an avid dog lover, I have made friends with all of them. They are not afraid of covid and seem to love my hugs!

This is not pandemic related, but the response from people on the street to OPC's Thursday Vigils has warmed my heart. The appreciative waves, beeping horns, smiles and positive responses from those of all colors encourages me to see how much caring there is in our OPC neighborhood.

The days pass quickly and I am appreciative of the extra time my church, friends and family have checked in with me during these times that are so new to all of us. I think it has brought out the best in those around me.

Peace and love to all, Ginny Leagans



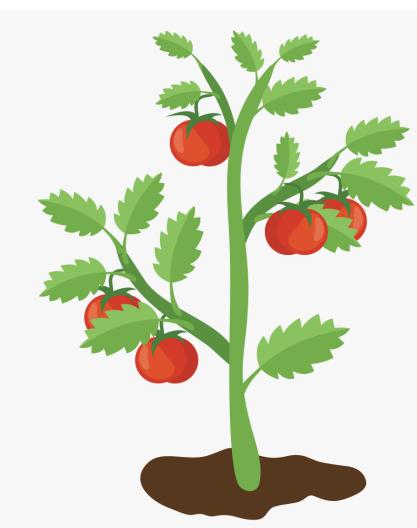
SEEDS OF IMAGINATION

My experience for many years has been that seed catalogues arrive in the mail in January usually during a snow storm if not a full blown blizzard. A seed catalogue in the hand is an excuse to sit down on the couch with a cup of hot chocolate and imagine the spring and summer gardens. It brings imaginings of fresh Jersey tomatoes ripened on the vine, crisp cucumbers, zucchini, purple and variegated eggplant, peppers, peas, beets, string beans...

It begins well enough. I make a list of the “must haves” which usually is about thirty vegetables long. Because I don’t really have a “back 40”, I pare it down to two or three kinds of tomatoes, two or three or four kinds of peppers, three kinds of string beans, two kinds of cucumbers, etc. and I place the seed order. It arrives within a week and I pace until early February when I can plant the seeds inside and start them under lights. All is going well. In a week to ten days, the seedlings will sprout true leaves and a couple of weeks later they will be big enough to transplant into the one-quart yogurt cups I save for that purpose. Another week inside will allow them to adjust to their new and larger homes, and then I will take them outside and put them in a cold frame so they can grow in the sun protected from the cold. All is well. And the weather is still on the cold to cool scale. And I am excited about what will be.

By the end of March, I prepare the raised beds where summer’s bounty will grow. The objective is to get the plants transplanted into the beds by early April. Sometimes, including this year when Covid-19 gave me plenty of time for gardening, the spring is too cold and rainy to subject the tender young plants to the elements that early. This year the plants are in the ground in early May. And the weather is still coolish and comfortable.

Peas and snow peas are early crops and ripen first. Peas freshly picked from the vine are one of my favorites and I eat as many as I take to the kitchen. Tomatoes and peppers are really slow this year. There are lots of vines! Lots of *green* tomatoes hanging there getting really big and staying really *green*! I check them out every day to make sure they don’t develop blossom end rot while I am waiting for them to ripen. And then come the heat waves and surely they will turn red. And I don’t like hot weather and I check them every day anyhow. And they are still green. Finally I pick sixty *green* plum tomatoes and put them on trays in front of a window in the laundry room so they can ripen.



Now it is hot and humid and I really want to stay inside in the air conditioning. Instead I check on my tomatoes which finally are ripening on the vine where they are supposed to ripen. My slicing tomatoes are the smallest tomatoes I have ever grown, but they are red, vine ripened, and taste good and I’m thankful that they are ready for the table.

Gardening in cool weather is not a problem. In July and August when I drag hoses to water vegetable gardens in ninety degree temperatures, I wonder why I don’t just let the dandelions have their way and buy fresh vegetables from the farm stand two miles away. And I resolve that next year that is what I will do.

In January during a snowstorm, the seed catalogue will arrive, and the whole process will begin again.

—Eileen Wiggins



OMNIVORACIOUS: BOOKS FOR VARIED TASTES

Sharon invited Jeremy and me to recommend some good reads during this time when most of us are staying home far more frequently than we'd like to. Here are my five picks. They are all outstanding, thought-provoking, highly readable, and all, coincidentally, written by women.

—Carol Tulba



A Train in Winter by Caroline Moorehead. Non-fiction. 2011

This is the gripping account of the women of the Resistance in France during World War II. Disregarding their own safety, they heroically stymied and harassed the occupying German army at every opportunity after the French government fell quickly to the Nazis in 1940. Nearly all were eventually captured and deported to the camps. The description of life there is harrowing and often difficult to read. That any survived is a miracle. Few did.

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah. Fiction. 2015

This riveting novel could be a companion piece to *A Train in Winter*, telling the fictional story of two sisters in France during the Nazi Occupation. Their paths diverge as each struggles to survive in a different way amid the cruelty and casual brutality of war. I am a big fan of Hannah's work, and this is her best.

Americanah by Chimamandi Ngozi Adichie. Fiction. 2013. Winner of the National Book Critics' Circle Award for fiction.

Adiche writes of Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman who comes to America for college. Smart and self-assured, she confronts, with humor and pathos, what it means to be black in America, but not as a black American. When she eventually returns to Nigeria, her mindset is quite different than when she left. This depiction of a middle-class, successful African woman is one not often featured in American fiction. A real eye-opener for me on many levels.

The Radium Girls: the Dark Story of America's Shining Women by Kate Moore. Non-fiction. 2017

This meticulously researched book reads like a novel, and is a horrifying account of working conditions long before OSHA. In factories around the U.S. in the early 20th century, mostly young women found good paying jobs painting dials on watches using newly discovered radium to make them glow in the dark. When they began falling deathly ill from radiation poisoning, something neither doctors nor dentists were initially familiar with, they found they were on their own. Their years-long battle for recognition and medical compensation ended much too late for most of them. I was totally unaware of this sad occurrence, and outraged that these women were so callously considered expendable.

And finally, in a shameless bit of familial promotion- The Tears of Yesteryear by Julie Tulba. Fiction. 2019

The author is my daughter. She grew up in this church, and some of you will surely remember her. Her novel was inspired by her paternal great-grandmother, who immigrated to Bethlehem, Pa. in 1911. Julie's protagonist, Ewa, reluctantly comes to America with her uncle and sister, only to discover upon arrival that she has been promised to marry a Polish widower working in the steel mills in Homestead, Pa. Her harsh introduction to her new life and new world form the basis of the novel. Ewa's subsequent joys and heartbreaks chronicle the life of poor immigrants in America, which mirror many of the same difficulties they face today. Available on Amazon. Check it out and read the reviews.

And now from Jeremy Blatchley...

Having endured 27 weeks (but who's counting?) of quarantine, reading, as in reading books, is more vital than ever. Sanity is, of course, overrated but reading can help.

I'll mention one Coronavirus-related book and then leave that topic. *Spillover: animal infection and the next human pandemic* by David Quammen from 2012 presents everything you've ever wanted to know about zoonotic viruses. In this case, knowledge is indeed power. Mr. Quammen laid it out in this well-written and highly readable account from eight years ago. Yikes, if only more of us had taken this seriously!

I'm usually dividing my attention between a novel and a nonfiction book. Right now, it's George Eliot's 1871 novel *Middlemarch* and *Supreme Inequality* by Adam Cohen. The subtitle of this book says it all: The Supreme Court's 50-year battle for a more unjust America. Chapters cover the poor and poverty, education, campaign finance, democracy, workers, corporations and criminal justice. The introduction notes:

The court's decisions have lifted up those already high and brought
down those who are low, creating hundreds of millions of winners and losers...
It did not have to be this way and there was a time when it was not.

Interestingly, one of the themes of *Middlemarch* is reform: the reform in politics, in religion, in medical treatments and administration that swept through the England circa 1830 when the story takes place.

Readers of a certain age find it edifying to go back occasionally and read one of those books from high school, either read or avoided. *The Great Gatsby* holds up marvelously. One book I'd never read til now which I found shocking and disturbing (thus highly recommended) is *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. It's such a downer on the human condition you'd think it would be right up there among the candidates for banning by the upright parents brigade. Probably was somewhere. Further along these lines I recently read Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, one of those books I may or may not have ever read before. Extremely red of tooth and claw. Confirmed me in my vegetarianism.

I love show business biographies and what could be better beach reading than books about the bad, the beautiful, and occasionally the talented? Recently I finished Woody Allen's *Apropos of Nothing*. I get that he's been made a nonperson but who can resist a banned book? Prior to that I read a book I'd been meaning to get to forever: Moss Hart's *Act One*. That wasn't exactly what I was expecting in that the core of it was how to write a play – and how difficult that process can be. Who knew? Well, I've never even tried to write a play so why would I know? Wait, I did try, in 10th grade. It was sophomoric.

One of my fondest summer memories is when my older sister's erstwhile boyfriend, plotting to remove us from the scene, showed up with a huge box of comic books for me and my twin sister. Looking back on it now, he probably stole them somewhere. The joy of a lazy summer with nowhere to go, and nothing to do and a box of unread comic books as co-conspirators has never been surpassed. Well, that's not true, but I'm keeping this family-friendly. So comic book lovers, try these, highly recommended: volumes 1 & 2 of Kris Bertin and Alex Forbes' *The Hobtown Mystery Stories*: volume 1, *The Case of the missing men*, and volume 2, *The Cursed Hermit*. From the blurb: "Nancy Drew meets David Lynch". And even better: *Return to Romance: the strange love stories of Ogden Whitney*. It's published by New York Review Comics, edited by Dan Nadel and Frank Santoro from 2019. As the title says, they're strange, they're love stories. They're comics! What could be better?



from Whitney's The Red-haired Boy and the Pug-nosed Girl

PLACES I REMEMBER...

During times of stillness, memories can become welcome companions, and even entertainment. In solitude, with passports and plane tickets unusable, good memories lift our spirits...and even allow us to hear the sounds of our own laughter and awe.

Time travel can be good for the soul.

DISCOVERING GREECE

Of all my international travels the most memorable trip for me was to Greece in 1993. Memorable because I had the best guide imaginable: my daughter, Greta. Greta spent two semesters in graduate school at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, which included trips to great archeological sites all over Greece. She and I retraced her steps to many of those sites by bus, ferry, foot and one terrifying car rental in the mountains of Crete. There could be no trip more wonderful than having a guide whose main concern was to teach me and have a good time doing it.

But wait, there's more: Busy Athens streets, spectacular mountain views, the beautiful Mediterranean - the scenery would have made the trip. Memorable food, some fancy, some simple - like the souvlaki on a stick sprinkled with oregano and lemon juice at a bus pit stop on the way to Delphi or pistachios on the beach in Santorini. And add the friendliness of people saying "yassou" (hello) as we passed through little villages or the innkeeper who, though she couldn't speak English, insisted we have tea with her before settling in. It was the trip of a lifetime.

—Mary Lou Ryce

Although we are at home, we can still enjoy a trip to Greece.

Greece Ultimate Travel Guides/Best Places to Visit/ Top Attractions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lepdqiCF-W8>



REMEMBERING HOLY WEEK IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This text was originally written in April, 2015, near the end of my missionary service as an English instructor at Martin Luther Seminary in Lae, Papua New Guinea. I treasure these memories...

Holy Week arrived in Papua New Guinea with boundless energy and powerful joy. Here, the walk to the cross and the empty tomb has been a vigorous march, replete with demonstrations of denominational and national pride. In a country where church and state appear to be one, Holy Week takes on the spirit of a fourth of July celebration. Greetings of "Happy Easter" began during the Palm Sunday benediction, and have continued throughout the week.

The Maundy Thursday service, held in the seminary's open air chapel, was high-spirited and attended by five feral dogs, a colony of energetic bats, and over a hundred enthusiastic worshippers. It was a foretaste of the excitement to come.

Good Friday marked the opening of the three-day, national Easter Bible Camp for children and youth. Held in Lae, the camp's opening ceremony was staged at the seminary. School groups reflected the diverse cultural traditions and tribal communities of a land where 867 unique languages are spoken. Over a thousand celebrants, many walking for days, gathered on the seminary field for the combined opening ceremonies and Good Friday worship service. The service, which began with a flag raising and the singing of the national anthem, was a far cry from the solemn, three-hour Good Friday worship of my childhood.

On Easter Sunday, the village was joyfully awakened with shouts of *Hallelujah*. Sensing movement in front of the mission cottage, I opened the door, to find a brightly colored egg and a cross fashioned from vibrant flower petals. Although I dearly missed my family and my church, my spirit was lifted by this gentle reflection of God's love...and my heart sang *Hallelujah!*

—Sharon Parker



Let's all head to Papua New Guinea for the afternoon...

Following the Way (Papua New Guinea Documentary by Steve Ramsden):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5Gh7c9ueCU>

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PRAYER FOR THESE TIMES

Lord, remove the fears that bind me so that I can be happy in the knowledge that you are there to comfort me, no matter what else is happening.

Lord, you are my strength and my song. Help me to teach others to sing, no matter what is going on around us. I want to make a joyful noise to you, Jesus...the author and finisher of our faith. Amen

