

From: Rev Brian Goodings (self-isolating in my office at Trinity UC)

*(Warning...the following may contain comments unkind to Leaf's fans and tigers. Readers are advised and encouraged to practice kindness to both. Virus don't deserve the same break.)*

My daughter Hannah sent me a text yesterday asking the date... "Is it March 97<sup>th</sup> or 98<sup>th</sup>?" Funny kid. It does feel like this is the longest month in history. I went to bed last Wednesday and woke up on Tuesday...or so it felt. We aren't used to being held in suspension for such a long time. If there was a better time for Premier Doug Ford to pass "Buck-a-beer" or "dollar-dope" legislation this might be it.

I'd have to admit I'm getting a bit dopier by the day. Case in point (and I blush with this disclosure)...my son Isaac and I watched the entire "Tiger King" series on Netflix. Now that's a journey into a world I hope never to inhabit again. Perhaps it help explains how Trump got elected but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone who is looking for something with integrity to watch. After "meeting" those characters on the show I'm sure I just extended my need for psychotherapy for at least an additional 5 years.

The trouble with this virus (the one whose name shall not be spoken) is that it is invisible. When the "Barbarians" are at the gates, there's trouble we can see and choose to fight or run away, but this is an invisible threat.

They've shaken our confidence in a way that is most alarming because the world in which we lived and believed was a pretty safe place is threatened. Our warm and reassuring Goldilocks-illusion is wavering.

The weird thing about viruses is that, although they are THE most common "sorta-biological-thingy" in the known universe, we don't even know much about them. Some scientists used to believe they arrive on earth via meteorites and although there are no fossilized viruses discovered yet, they appear to be at least as old as earth itself. Maybe even older. They aren't really alive and they aren't really dead...they don't have cell walls and are not self-supporting or able to do much of anything on their own. However, they are extremely capable of invading the cells of living things (plants, animals and even bacteria) and commandeering their cell machinery. They especially target the mitochondria (there's a word you haven't seen since high school science). They are like the Borg from *Star Trek* that take over other beings and make them into drones, serving their purposes alone. Once they have control of a cell, the host cell starts working for "them" and spewing out viral RNA or DNA and so on and so on. Like a photocopier stuck on COPY backed up to a transport truck full of paper. The copying goes on until the machine blows up or something pulls the plug. Biologists place them in their own category, "replicators".

They are not unlike Leaf's fans...simply multiplying year after year with no clear purpose or accomplishment except multiplication itself.

It's important to realize, that viruses are not malicious. They have no "intention" to kill or hurt their host, or any other thought (as far as we know). They are entities to avoid and

understand, and vaccinate against (yep I'm a BIG pro-vaccinator!) but their rate and method of transmission can be stopped or slowed once we understand it. We are also a lot smarter than them and we are working to break the transmission by simply staying two metres apart (a *Covid* if you know that unit of measurement).

We can and need to do this with the social support of each other and the threat and ferocity of this virus will recede in the weeks and months to come. Don't forget that we have our own bag of biological tricks too and we've been living with viruses, literally since our beginning. We've got this, or will. There is wisdom and inherited experience in our own herd-immunity systems too.

I believe that in a time like this, we need accept that life on this blue planet has always been a rather precarious but (hopefully) often a wonderful state of existence. We live in an extremely complex neighbourhood of beings and we are always working out our relationships with "others".

And here's the religious part (gotta earn my pay)...sometimes the neighbours don't get along "real-good" but "God" always "hopes" we can work it out and find a way to thrive without harming each other. (Arguably, we have been ignoring this "hope" at our peril and the peril of life itself, but that's another sermon for another day).

My belief is that balance and harmony will be restored, sooner than later. Seems to me, this is what "God" has always intended for life. If you subscribe to the Gaia hypothesis you will also likely agree with this assertion/belief.

Perhaps, as crazy as it sounds to say, maybe there is even a place for these stupid viruses in this universe that is not ours alone? Maybe we just need Joe Exotic, the *Tiger King* to help us tame them!!!! You ask him, he might be angry with me!

