

EXCERPT from *I AM ... A QUARANTINE SURVIVOR* by PJ Colando

On March 15 we began a requested 15-day homestay in CA.

Perhaps because we began with the live-streamed worship service and adult Sunday School service of our church, we were filled with peace and joy and good spirits. Perhaps because that's our constant life mode anyway . . . my husband and I are blessed.

We live in a paid-for home with lots of single-story space in which to self-isolate or commune closely as per our choice. We have two paid-for cars in the garage and have groceries and pharmacies nearby. We live on a single-loaded street, so there are few neighbors with which to mingle. Our weather is sunshine and/or gentle, much-needed rain so that we can walk and roam at our leisure and not feel blighted by the homestay mandate.

We have lots and lots of light and books!

We each have an inherent sense of humor and whimsy, no 'scores' to settle, no work to venture out to. We enjoy each other's company best.

My mental whip is always cracking, so the next day, March 16, we completed our tax prep and then I baked banana nut bread. Day three went similarly. Because it was St. Paddy's Day we prepared this, the only item in the frozen foods aisle at Trader Joes' with bottles and bottles of Irish Red beer.

The green crust was topped with parmesan cheese and sliced tomatoes—vegan Irish, we were!

But then the cascade of disruptions began to dawn on me. The loss of friends' income, the need to close schools and burden parents with kids used to the structure, learning, and interface with friends . . . and on and on and on. I didn't fall asleep until midnight for several nights in a row, despite my prescribed sleep aid, and my stomach began to churn for the sake of the pervasive losses—to culture, routine, and people's lives.

During the day I Facebook-slummed.

I was stymied until I determined something useful I could do: return to my former 'card buddy' service as a member of our prior church congregation. I culled my stickers and paper scraps—and empty envelopes—to craft two dozen cards to send to residents of a convalescent home who are

disallowed from receiving visitors. My desire to be of purpose fulfilled.

On Saturday, March 21, I was the recipient of an incredible act of service. Our dear pharmacist *pre-filled* a medication that protects my lungs, which are mildly compromised by asthma. I'm now stocked through the end of April when we hope the worst is past.

Yesterday, I received another call that suited my writer skill set: to contribute an article for the *Huff Post*. Now I'm able to process my feelings. I'm no longer numb and stuck in an out-of-body experience.

I think I can sustain the positivity required to extend the homestay another 15 days—can you?