



Trees, animals, birds, plants, forests, mountains, lakes and rivers — everything that exists in Nature are in desperate need of our kindness, of the compassionate care and protection of human beings. If we protect them, they in turn will protect us. - Amma

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GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

GreenFriends is one of the projects of [Embracing the World](#), a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma)

To join the Pacific Northwest GreenFriends Litter Project, write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net

PNW Gardening

Spring Photos by Kristin (Seattle)



In My Garden



In My Neighborhood

PNW Gardening

Spring Photos by Karuna (Seattle)

In My Yard



Nature



Nature

Spring and Winter by Kothai (Bellevue)

The spring blossoms in full bloom and snow dusting one early morning was a sight to behold.



Nature



Nature

So Much for the Early Spring by Karuna (Seattle)

It had seemed like it was going to be an early spring. Many plants were already blooming. Then on February 29, I heard a strange but loud sound. When I looked outside this is what I saw:



Minutes later, the deck and the ground were covered. The hail was still on the ground and on cars the next morning. In many places it was $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 inch deep. We've had hail in spring before but not like this.



Nature

A Visiting Hawk by Lin (Bellevue)

The hawk was hanging out near my neighbor's bird feeder.



Nature

Magnolia Tree in Full Bloom by Sarah (Eugene)

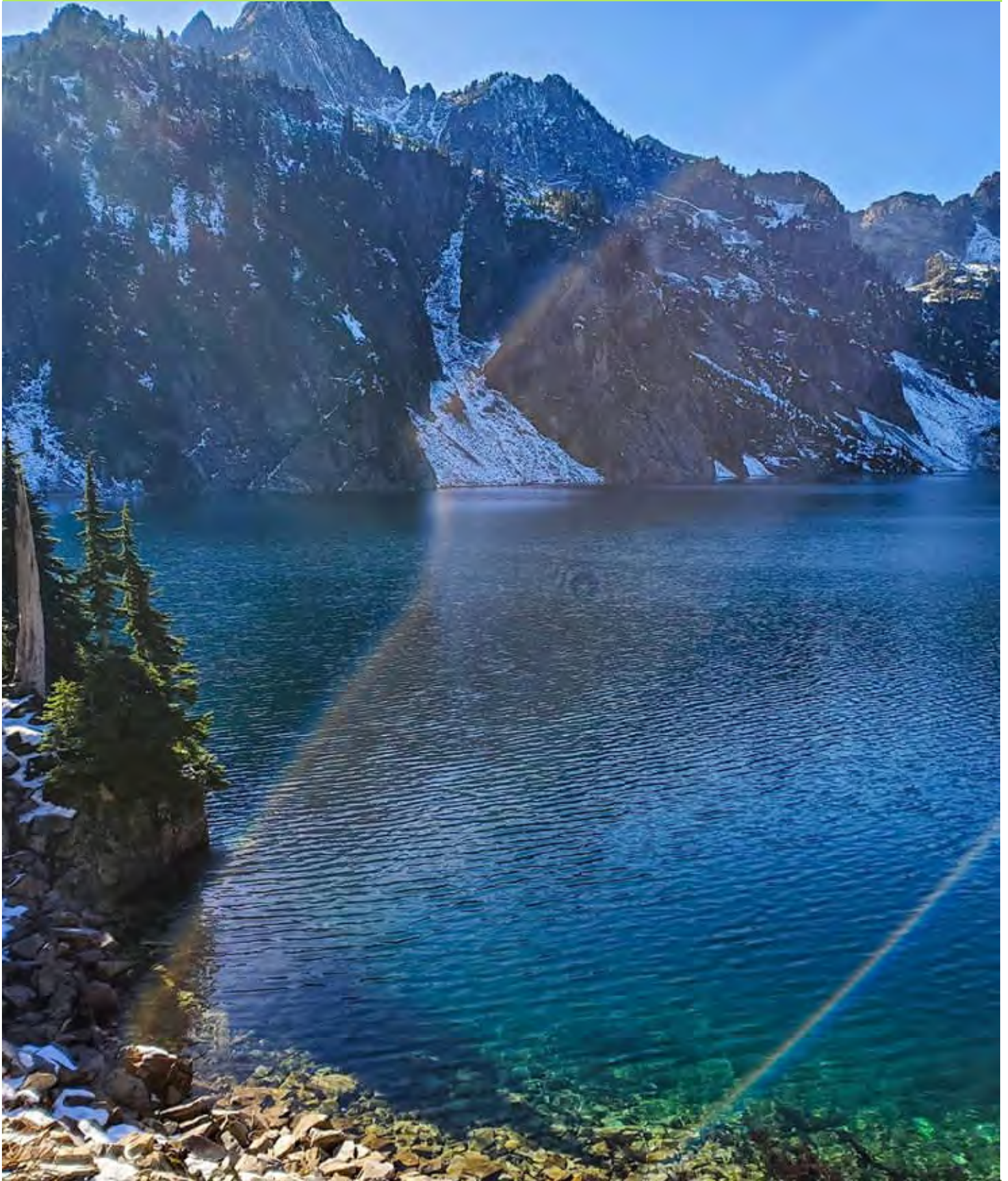


Nature



Nature

Snow Lake Photo by Haley (Seattle)



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Greenbelt Restoration Work Parties: February 26 and March 4, 2020

When we held the February 26 and March 4 work parties none of us knew that they would be the last work parties of the quarter. The remaining ones would be canceled due to the pandemic.

February 26

When Karuna went outside to make last minute preparations for the work party, she got a big surprise. A big tree had fallen not far from our toolbox. She hadn't been to that part of the site for several days, so she didn't know when it fell but guessed it was during or soon after the big wind and rain storm that had occurred the previous weekend.

The tree had fallen from the top path, over the old house foundation that is on the property, and partially over the planting area that is below the foundation. We hadn't realized how big the tree was until it fell; it must have been at least 80 feet tall. The photos in this post are primarily from the tree's bottom and top so in no way do they show its magnitude.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

The tree fell between two drying racks. It touched both of the racks but didn't damage either of them. Even though it had fallen over numerous planting areas, none of our native plants were significantly harmed; in fact, only one branch on a bald hip rose shrub and one on a pacific ninebark shrub was damaged. Once again, against incredible odds, Mother Nature had protected the plants.

Karuna had called her supervisor at the Seattle Parks Department to inform him that the tree had fallen. He said it would probably be left on the ground to provide habitat for birds and insects.



The tree's side-lying rootball is about 8 feet long and 12 feet high!

So, after all of us spent some time looking at the exposed tree roots, we began the planned activities for the day. Most of the students started removing weeds, wood chips and leaves from around all of the trees, shrubs and ground covers we had planted on the site since 2017. Having bare ground around each plant helps water reach the plant roots when it rains. The UW Capstone interns were team leaders for the UW service-learning students during this work party.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

An intern found some snail or slug eggs as she was working.



A student that loves to dig out invasive blue bell bulbs did that instead of clearing the areas around the plants. The photo of her shovel shows how wet the soil was that day.



While all of this activity was occurring, Antje, one of our regular team leaders, cut back bamboo shoots.



Later, one of the student teams removed some of the smaller fallen tree branches that were near the native plants

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



While those students removed the branches, the other team finished up clearing the areas around the plants on the site and then picked up litter. Sorry, no photos of that work!

March 4

During what turned out to be our last work party, the interns took the service-learning students back to the area along Cheasty Boulevard that they had started to clear several weeks before. Weeds were already growing through the wood chip mulch they had spread at that time. On March 4th, they dug out those weeds and cleared more of the area, and then spread more wood chips over all of the cleared area. I don't have photos of the work but I do have a photo of the results!



The fallen tree covered all but one of our Greenbelt paths. While the students worked, Antje identified and marked new ways to get around the lower part of the site without walking through the planted areas.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

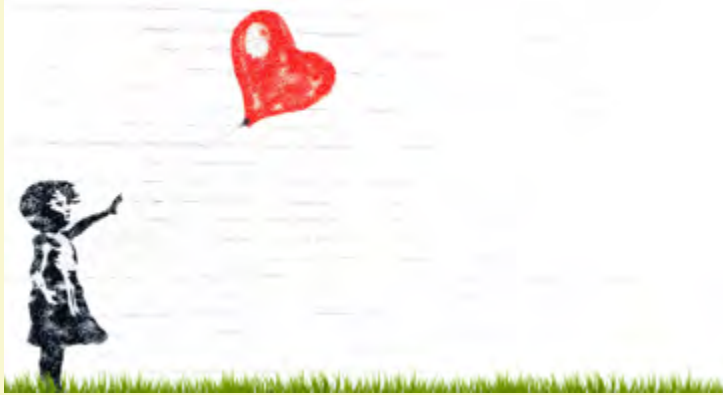


We feel so grateful to all of the students who chose to work on our site for their service-learning or internship this quarter. We also feel grateful for those who have worked here in the past or will work here in the future. Every volunteer leaves having made a significant contribution in creating “Another Future Healthy Forest”.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

A Time of Letting Go by Karuna (Seattle)



Some of you may know that I have been having trouble with balance. It started about two years ago but has been getting worse. With my doctor's support, I had dealt with it by working with a personal trainer at a gym and doing physical therapy. Both have been valuable, but it was while I was coping with uneven ground in India that I realized how much worse my balance had gotten in the last year. I also noticed that the balance problem was often accompanied by an increasing sense of wooziness and exhaustion. The India heat and jet lag made those symptoms even worse. It was towards the end of the trip that it first occurred to me that I should stop leading work parties in the Greenbelt. I let that thought percolate in the back of my mind.

Seeing that the symptoms were getting worse, and that strength building at the gym and physical therapy weren't sufficient for dealing with the physical problems, once I returned to Seattle, I started getting medical tests to rule out underlying causes. (Some of those tests have been delayed because of the pandemic.)

Around the same time, it occurred to me that my physical problems might also be due to overthinking, overdoing and letting myself get overly stressed. After all, from the time I started working in the Greenbelt, I had thought and even dreamed about the restoration work incessantly.

Overthinking and overdoing, as well as letting myself get overly stressed and exhausted, have been life patterns for me. There were times in my life when I felt as if my mind was like a computer that was about to explode. My present-day physical symptoms were eerily similar to those experiences. My old pattern was to keep doing all of those behaviors until I got so sick that I couldn't do the work anymore. I believe that was why I got Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in the mid 80's and in the 2000's developed high blood pressure.

Having those insights felt very helpful, but what was to be done with them? Since August of 2016, my life had been primarily focused on the Greenbelt restoration project. I had loved working on the land as well as working with the team leaders and the many hundreds of volunteers who had helped. I had treasured watching the land transform from space overrun with blackberries, ivy and bindweed to land filled with native trees, shrubs and ground covers. But the joy had been accompanied by hardship. The ground is sloped and uneven and I had tripped and fallen many times, once even breaking my wrist. It had taken a tremendous amount of effort to find volunteers to help with the

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

work parties. All of the planning and administrative work had essentially turned into a full- time job. And everything had gotten more difficult for me to do as my balance problems and wooziness worsened.

I realized that almost all of my overthinking, overdoing and stress was related to my Greenbelt restoration work. I knew myself well enough to know that cutting back was not an option; I wouldn't be able to stop the overthinking with that approach. I knew I needed to stop the restoration work as soon as possible. In addition, I needed to accept the fact that I am 71 years old now and have limitations that go with aging.

But I would not make the change immediately. If at all possible, it was important to me to finish Winter quarter since I had University of Washington Service-Learning students as well as Capstone interns from the UW School of the Environment. Even though it was difficult, I was able to complete that commitment!

I have never questioned my decision to stop my involvement in the restoration project, but I knew that I would feel devastated if the land reverted to its 2016 state. I felt relieved when the Green Seattle Partnership staff told me that they were committed to finding another Forest Steward to continue the project.



August 2016



August 2019

Several friends and family members reassured me, saying that my replacement would be revealed. One day, our newest team leader came into my mind. She knows so much and has so much energy. And she had participated in almost all of the student work parties this quarter. I contacted her and asked if she had ever thought about becoming a Forest Steward. I was astounded when she told me she already was one, she had taken the Forest Steward training in 2014. And she was interested in the position!

She prefers to work in a team, so hopefully one or more of our other team leaders will take the training when it is offered in October. But the fact that she is already a Forest Steward means the project can continue now. The saying "what you need will be provided" has certainly come true.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

I will miss leading the project but know that I can potentially help in the future. And since the site borders my property, I can still watch the new plants grow and take nature photos. What I am primarily experiencing is a sense of relief.

Just before I sat down to write this the title of a book I used to recommend came to mind.

Life is Goodbye

Life is Hello

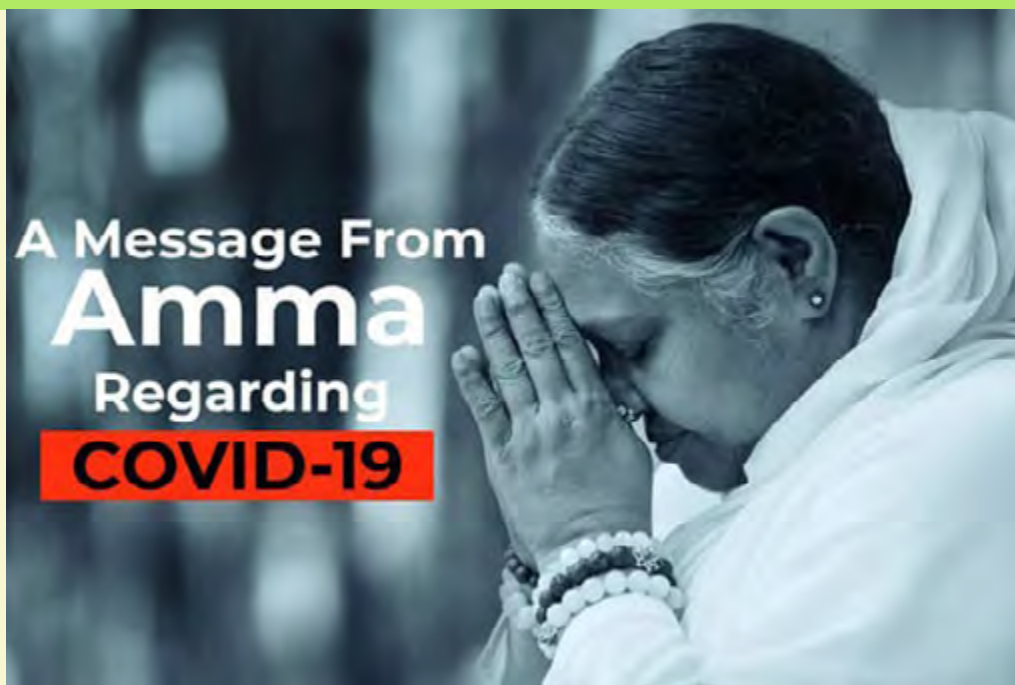
Grieving Well Through All Kinds of Loss

I know I am saying both goodbye and hello in my life and realize that I may experience a myriad of feelings as I continue this process of living, learning and letting go.



Coping with the Pandemic

Message from Amma regarding COVID-19



March 23, 2020 — Amritapuri

A Message from Amma on the Coronavirus:

Amma knows my children are all living in fear of Coronavirus. Amma is thinking of all of you and praying for you. This is a time when you have to exercise extreme caution and alertness. It is the time to respond with courage, self-control and unity. Amma knows that my children are all afraid, but fear is not helpful now. What is needed is caution and alertness. Courage is the primary thing. With courage, you can overcome anything. So, abandon fear and gather courage. The antivirus that can kill this virus is courage. Courage is our mind's antivirus. If you befriend Dhairya Lakshmi [the Goddess of Courage], you will gain the strength to face and overcome anything.

My children should strictly follow all the instructions and directions given by their government and law-enforcement officials. At the same time, pray intensely, with a melting heart, for God's grace. Our grandmothers used to say, "Take the medicine and chant the mantra at the same time." Similarly, in this circumstance, both our diligent effort and God's grace are equally needed. Every citizen should exercise the same amount of Sraddha [attention and alertness] as a soldier serving on the battle line. My children, pray for the souls of those who have passed on and for the peace of mind of their families.

Three years ago, Amma felt an impending disaster looming ahead in 2020. Two years ago, Amma developed the "White Flower Meditation for World Peace & Divine Grace" to alleviate this. In it, it is said that what is coming cannot be completely averted and we will have to experience some of its effects. Amma has explained this meditation technique, and we have been practising it for the past two years, benefiting the world. Children, Amma requests everyone

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to regularly practice this meditation once or twice a day for the benefit of the entire world.

Everything exists in the form of waves or vibrations. In the last century, the French designed the Concorde—a jet that can fly at supersonic speeds. Its sonic boom was so powerful that its shockwaves damaged buildings. Similarly, the sound of a song is transmitted in waves or vibrations. Everything exists in the form of waves or vibrations. The type of vibration generated by anger is different from that generated by a mother showing affection for her child, which is again different from that generated by love, and different again from that generated by lust. With the vibration of our prayer along with our diligent effort, it may be possible to resist the virus. Prayer with Sankalpam [deep intention] does have an effect.

There is a rhythm to everything in creation—an undeniable relationship between the entire universe and every living creature within it. The universe is like a vast interconnected network. Imagine four people holding the four corners of a net. If it is shaken in one place, the vibration is felt throughout. Similarly, whether we are aware of it or not, all of our actions reverberate throughout creation—whether performed as an individual or as a group. That is why Amma repeatedly says, we are not individual islands but links of a common chain. Therefore, don't wait for others to change before you do. You can create change the outside by changing yourself inside, even if others do not.

Suppose a person living on the 10th floor of a building sees the ground floor on fire and hears a person staying there calling to him for help. If he says, "It's the ground floor that's on fire. It's your problem. Why should I worry about it?" it would be complete foolishness. The fire on the ground floor will soon rise upwards. In a similar way, someone else's problem today will become our problem tomorrow.

Similarly, when the virus first surfaced in China, all of us thought it was China's problem, not ours. Eventually, didn't it turn out to be our problem? The question is not whether they controlled the disease or not, but how we tackle it. If we are alert and exercise caution and diligence, we will be able to protect ourselves and prevent the disease from spreading.

What should my children do? Imagine if we break our leg. We may have to stay in our room—sometimes for two to six months. We won't think of this as a burden because we know it is necessary in order for our leg to heal. Similarly, the isolation, sanitation and extreme caution we have to practice now will help us gain strength to fight the virus. Those who have contracted the virus shouldn't be afraid. Just adhere to the quarantine and ensure that you do not spread it to others. Stay in your room. Similarly, if you develop any symptoms, inform the proper authorities and seek help.

There are currently 3,000 people living in Amritapuri Ashram. There are people from many nations as well as Indians living here. In the ashram, we are strictly adhering to the government's regulations and not allowing anyone to come inside. Even if someone who lives here goes out, they are not allowed to return for many days. These rules were put by the government, and we have complied. These 3,000 people here have to be protected as well. That is why this

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rule was put into place.

During this time, Amma is receiving her children who have not left the ashram. This is the one time in a year when the ashram residents get a chance to share all their issues with Amma. Amma calls each person and listens to their problems of the year. Usually every year, Amma sets aside about 25 days for this. Following all the government guidelines, Amma comes out for daily meditation and prayer. The rest of the time is set aside for listening to the problems of the residents.

In India, both the Central and the Kerala State Governments have been very alert and proactive in addressing the pandemic. That is why we have been able to resist it at least this much. Let us pray sincerely and practice due diligence and caution so that it is contained and doesn't spread further. Let us protect and save ourselves. We ourselves are the light or darkness in our own path. We ourselves are the thorns or flowers on our path.

There is always a limit to human effort. However carefully we may drive, a careless driver can crash into us. For anything to bear its intended result, the factor of grace is needed. A proper effort is needed first. But for it to succeed, we require Grace. Prayer is essential to receive this grace.

Now my children have understood that our life is only in the present moment. Even our next breath is not in our hands. Our real lifespan is determined by how well we use the present moment. Because that is where our life abides. Amma always says that my children have to know themselves. Know yourself and pray for the world with wakefulness, enthusiasm and peace.

Each day sit in your room for some time and chant the mantra Om Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu. That is a good practice during these times.

Om Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu |
Om shanti shanti shanti |

May grace bless all my children.
– Amma

<https://amma.org/news/message-amma-regarding-covid-19>

Video of Amma's message - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=62BOvKckpAs&feature=emb_logo

Coping with the Pandemic

Prevention is Easier than Cure by Dr. Nibodhi Haas

Twelve Ayurveda Tools to Prevent Virus Vulnerability

1. ABC – Always Be Calm. Remain Positive. Stress is the biggest contributor to immune weakness and inflammation. If you already have a meditation practice, take this time and go really deeply into it. If you don't have a meditation practice, this is the most opportune time to start.
2. Exercise – Daily Yoga, Chi Kung, Tai Chi, H.I.I.T, hiking in nature, walking, biking or any other movement is a crucial part of maintaining great health and immunity.
3. Aromatherapy – Therapeutic Grade Essential Oils contain terpenes that support the immune system, nervous system and whole endocrine system. Great oils for immunity are Tulasi, Rose, Calamus, Neroli, Jatamansi, Lavender, Oregano, Thyme and Rosemary.
4. Drink lots of hot water with ginger. Lemon and honey can also be added if you wish. (Wait till the water cools a bit to add honey.)
5. Immune boosting, anti-viral and anti-bacterial herbs like Guduchi, Kalmegh, Kutki, Bhumihamalaki, Neem, Manjistha, Ashwagandha, Guggul, Turmeric, Tulasi and Amalaki are all great to use.
6. Eat organic fresh fruits and vegetables. Avoid sugar, processed, packaged and toxic foods.
7. Nasya oil (Nasal application of oil) lubricates the nasal passage and decalcifies the pineal gland supporting Prana (Life Force).
8. Abhyanga (Self Oil Massage) improves circulation and immunity and helps to relax the nervous system
9. Sweating – If you have access to any kind of sauna (steam, dry, infrared) daily sweating for 30-45 minutes keeps toxins out of the body. If you don't have access to a sweating apparatus then work up a sweat through exercise.
10. Chant Mantras – If you already have a mantra that you use, increase the amount you are doing it and tune into your breathing with it. If you don't have a mantra then you can do positive affirmations like, “ I AM LOVE/I AM LIGHT” or “I AM Happy, Healthy and Whole” or create your own.
11. Gratitude – expressing gratitude for what we have instead of focusing on what we don't have supports a healthy and vibrant mind. Create a gratitude journal and writing down three things every morning and evening that you are grateful for brings contentment and a sense of well-being. During the day (with all of your newly found free time) call

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or write someone and tell them how grateful you are for them in your life!

12. Once a week, turn off all electronic devices including the one you are reading this on. If you were born before 1980 it is likely that you grew up without all this technology. Remember how peaceful things were back then. Remember what life is like with that profound silence. In any case, it is really good for us to disconnect from the outer web and instead attune to the inner web of consciousness.

Aum Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu

Boosting Immunity and Balancing the Body By Dr. Nibodhi Haas

Many of you suddenly have a lot of free time at home- why not use it to do a kitcheri cleanse?

Here is something great you can do to boost immunity and balance the body in all aspects. In addition to being a powerful way to bring health to the body, doing a cleanse is a way to deepen spiritual practices and focus our minds/emotions in a positive way.

You can drink as much warm ginger tea as you wish with the kitcheri cleanse.

(This is not a guided cleanse of any sort- just an invitation for all of you to simplify your diet and use this time to deepen your sadhana as Gunavati and I are doing the same! It may not work for some and is an Ayurvedic cleanse, not something recommended by a physician.)

Cleansing and Healing with Kitchari

The Kitchari cleanse is a very mild version of the traditional “Pancha Karma” cleanse and can be safely performed at home with minimal guidance. This cleanse is suitable for all body types, as it can be adjusted to accommodate individual needs. This cleanse consists of only eating Kitchari, which will allow the digestive system to take a break, cleanse and give it new energy and vitality as well as the ability to properly flush out toxins in the system.

The Kitchari cleanse can be performed solely as a mono-diet cleanse, or it can be assisted by including medicinal cleansing Ayurvedic herbs like Triphala. To do this take 1 heaping tsp. of Triphala powder in 16oz. (500ml) hot water in the evening an hour or two before bed. This cleanse is normally done for 3-10 days, depending on individual needs and schedule.

For those who are not already familiar with Kitchari, it is the traditional cleansing and healing food of Ayurveda. It is a combination of whole or split mung beans and basmati rice cooked with digestive spices

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Kitchari assists in restoring proper nutrition back into the body by calming the intestinal track and enkindling the Agni (Digestive fire). Ayurveda teaches, proper health and nutrition begin in the digestive tract. Cleansing with kitchari involves a mono-diet that is easy for the body to break down. This allows the digestive system a chance to rest and restore.

Kitchari is also considered to help facilitate spiritual growth as it promotes the Sattvic (Pure) Quality of mind. It assists in rejuvenation the gut flora, microbiome and gut serotonin. Furthermore, it assists in reducing stress on the digestive system and the mind.

In traditional Ayurveda Kitchari has long been used to nourish babies and the elderly, the sick, and the healthy during special times of detox, cleansing, and deep spiritual practice.

-Kitchari is Tri-Doshic

Kitchari is balancing for all constitution types.

-Kitchari is a Complete Protein

The combination of rice and mung dal provides all the amino acids needed to form a complete protein. The protein in kitchari supports stable blood sugar levels so that energy and mental clarity are balanced during the cleansing process.

- Kitchari is Easy to Digest

Basmati rice is traditionally used in kitchari because it is very easy to digest. Kitchari is a food that is gentle enough for babies. As a mono-diet of primarily kitchari for three to ten days provides the digestive system an opportunity rest.

- Kitchari is nourishing enough to provide all your energy needs

Unlike fasting cleanses, a kitchari cleanse is substantial enough to provide the body fuel to accomplish your day-to-day activities.

- Kitchari enkindles Agni

Agni, the digestive fire is considered in Ayurveda to be the essential key to all health. Good agni means we are able to digest, assimilate, and absorb nutrients from our food. Weak or imbalanced agni creates malabsorption and formation of ama, or toxins. Digestive spices like ginger, cumin, coriander, fennel, turmeric and Himalaya salt support healthy agni.

- Kitchari removes toxic build up in the Dhatus (Bodily Tissue)

Mung dal has an astringent and drying quality that has a natural pulling action that helps to remove toxic build up from the intestinal lining. This pulling action is much gentler than a harsh or abrasive scraping action that happens

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with raw or cold foods, especially raw vegetables. Once toxins are loosened and liquefied, it is essential that they get properly eliminated from the body. Mung beans provide enough fiber (over 15 grams per 1-cup serving) to move these toxins through the G.I. tract and out of the body.

How to do:

Eat Kitchari for each meal. Some people only need one or two meals a day. Ideally take all meals between 7-9 am and 5 pm. The best thing for the digestive system to eat early in the evening giving 12-14 hours of “fasting”.

Breakfast- 7-9am 1-2 cups of Kitchari

Lunch 12-2pm 2-2.5 cups of Kitchari

Diner 5-6:30pm 0-1.5 cups of Kitchari

The Recipe

Immortal Bliss Kitchari (Traditional)

This recipe comes from:

Health and Consciousness through Ayurvedic Cooking

by Dr. Nibodhi Haas

Published by:

Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust

Amritapuri P.O., Kollam Dt.,

Kerala 690525, India

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Tridoshic

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

2 cups whole or split mung beans

1 cup basmati rice

6 cups water

2 Tbs. ghee or Coconut oil

¾ tsp. sea salt

1/8th tsp. asofoetida (Hing)

½ tsp. ground black pepper

½ tsp. ground ginger

1 Tbs. ground cumin

1 Tbs. ground coriander

1 Tbs. turmeric

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½ cup cilantro (freshly chopped)

Instructions:

Soak whole mung beans overnight or split mung beans and basmati rice for a couple of hours then rinse until water runs clear. Bring 6 cups of water to a boil. Add the beans and rice, bring to a boil, then reduce the temperature to low and cook for 20-25 minutes. Keep covered. Stir every 3-5 minutes. While the kitchari is cooking, heat on low temperature the ghee or coconut oil and the spices, in a saucepan for a few minutes. Add the spices to the kitchari. Cook another 5- 10 minutes or until creamy “soup”. Remove from heat, cover and let sit for 10 minutes before serving. Add fresh cilantro. You may also add a tablespoon of plain yogurt (vegan can use coconut yoghurt) and additional fresh cilantro to your personal serving. If you prefer it spicy, you may add cayenne pepper when cooking the spices or a couple of, finely chopped chili peppers.

(Dr. Nirbodhi says it's fine to use any type of organic rice, millet, quinoa or even amaranth. For the beans you can use any lentil, mung or adzuki beans. If one truly has no access to grains, then a mung bean or lentil porridge with veggies will work. It's also fine to substitute coconut oil for the ghee, but not olive oil. Sea salt or himalayan salt is best. If you can't get organic rice then consider making lentil/vegi soups.)

Coping with the Pandemic

Surviving Social Isolation by Tirtha G. (Victoria BC)

If you're stuck at home in social isolation, either alone or with family, it is likely to be stressful. The shape of your days has changed. It can feel disorienting. And naturally we are all concerned about the unfolding pandemic, our loved ones, what the long-term effects will be on us all.

Our minds can feel tense, overwhelmed, fearful, frantic with worry. We need to look after our mental health all the time, but especially now.

The challenge is to be real, but also to stay positive. We're all stressed, so give yourself some wiggle room. But also keep an eye on whether you're panic-buying, having anxiety attacks, spiralling into depression, or becoming increasingly negative. Don't be afraid to ask for extra support or understanding.

Here are some suggestions for managing social isolation without going squirrely:

- Check news only once a day. Limit the amount of information you're taking in. The rest can wait till tomorrow.
- Ayurveda tells us that routine is essential for health. Try to establish a fairly regular **structure** to your days.
- **Keep in touch** with family, friends and neighbors by Skype, Facetime, phone, text, email, or spending time together outside. Make a point of being affectionate, supportive and encouraging. Share about how you're all coping, what you're finding that works, and what doesn't.
- Don't spend all your time on computers and devices. Plan to spend time in **constructive** ways.
- Do something positive. The more the merrier, but, especially if you are climbing the walls or feeling depressed or anxious: **do at least one positive thing.**
- Go outside. If possible, spend time in nature every day. (Amma says being in nature is satsang too.) It is grounding and calming. Sunshine and fresh air are beneficial for the immune system, and they're also good for the soul.
- Let friends and family know how much they mean to you.
- Make something with your hands – bake bread, make art, build a birdhouse. You can find all kinds of how-to information on the internet. You could learn to knit or crochet. Practice playing a musical instrument. Start that book you've always wanted to write.
- There's something magical about singing. It will almost always lift your spirits. Even if you're feeling blue, sing a sad

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song, or play one and sing along with it.

- Read. Play board games. Play charades. Tell jokes.

- Get some good exercise to work the stress hormones out of your body. Go for a long walk or run. Have a dance party with your family, or by Skype. Find a workout or yoga session on YouTube.

- Do something creative. Write a poem, draw a picture, solve a problem. Be your own best friend and give yourself positive feedback on your efforts.

- Plan your garden. Catch up on yard work or do-it-yourself projects.

- If you have a yard, think about taking some cuttings to start new trees and shrubs to sell or give away to benefit the environment.

- Take time to meditate and/or to pray. Simply watching your breath for a few minutes can be very calming. Be aware of your body in the present moment. Many internet sites offer instructions for simple meditations, or you can listen to a guided meditation.

- Take care of yourself. You are worthy of healthy meals, exercise, a clean home and connections with others.

- Find jokes and share them widely. Laughter is good for us. Be goofy, even if you're the only audience.

- Share a **daily gratitude practice** with a friend or a group by email or text. Let each other know three to five things that you find to feel sincerely grateful for each day. They can be as small as a good cup of tea or hearing a bird sing, to being grateful for major life experiences you've had.

- Keep a journal and get to know yourself better. Feel free to pour your heart and all your frustrations out. Then for fun you could try to create a song or poem using some of your thoughts and feelings.

- If you are feeling persistently negative, anxious or fearful, try to see your doctor or a health professional. If that is not possible, do a search for 'cognitive behavioral therapy', or order one of the many books on this subject, such as "Mind Over Mood," or "Feeling Good." Positive psychology can also be helpful to read about.

- Challenge yourself and/or your family to add value to each day. Plan several bright spots throughout the day and evening. Positive psychologists tell us that two activities actually give us more pleasure than indulging in treats or luxuries: using a skill, and helping others. Call people you know who might be feeling worse than you and try to lift their spirits.

Pandemic

If you know people who live alone, are elderly or disabled, or are in situations where domestic abuse, or abuse or neglect of children could occur, try to provide extra support and connection. Stressful times add pressure to all those situations. Offer to be a phone buddy, or to pick up groceries or run errands for those who need help.

Most of all, stay safe and healthy.



Photo credit: [John Hain](#) [Pixabay](#)

Coping with the Pandemic

Stop and Listen by Lin (Bellevue)

In our brains there's a fight-or-flight panic button that triggers an inner voice meant to keep us safe. Unfortunately, it tends to think everything is dangerous. So it's a big fan of compulsive worrying and over-reaction. Or it makes us freeze and go into denial. But that's no way to live.

It's also no way to use the gift of our human rationality—the rationality that's being tested right now by the coronavirus. Already, hoarding toilet paper has become a joke. The freedom to shake hands has new importance now that it's lost. Availability of groceries is no longer taken for granted.

Being confined to our homes can make us restive—not to mention our alarm being further raised by every news bulletin.

But let's stop for a minute, take a breath, and get creative. How about ordering seeds for micro-greens online and setting up sprouting jars on our kitchen counters? In four days, we can have delicious and highly nutritious little greens with our meals. Even kids can do it. Here's how:

<https://www.foxyfolksy.com/how-to-sprout-mung-beans>

<https://www.edenbrothers.com/store/microgreens-seeds.html>



Photo Credit: [Wikimedia](#)

We can also contemplate the recent talk delivered via YouTube by Swami Dayamritananda Puri, one of Amma's newly-initiated swamis. In his uplifting message he suggested we imagine a letter written by Covid-19 to humanity.

In such a letter, the virus microbes would tell humans to stop, to be still, to listen, and to consider the concerns of all. They'd tell us to find our humanity, relinquish the chattering of our minds, and listen to our hearts so that we'd recognize our health depends on the health of the planet and everything on it. They'd remind mankind that it has turned a deaf ear to the gentle voice of Mother Nature—leaving it to the virus to come shout at us.

Its shout has indeed terrified us, but are we making good use of that fear on a personal level? My own answer to the question comes from rock climbing, of all things. Years ago, it taught my mind to distinguish between what was worth being afraid of and what was not. And how to respond to fear constructively. On the face of a wall of rock, if I didn't pay attention to what was before my nose and beneath my fingers, I could fall and hurt myself. Actually get hurt. That was reality. Non-reality on the other hand was my over-busy mind back in the regular world that worried about every little thing. Those were the shoulda-coulda-woulda's of my inflated imagination.

Once I learned to listen realistically to fear, I could turn uncomfortable emotions into valuable messages instead of blanket alarm signals. I could recognize that fear is a good thing when it makes me pay attention and take effective action.

Pandemic

So now that the Covid pandemic has reached Seattle, I am trying to use this opportunity to practice rationality. I'm trying to stay present to the real needs of the moment by sprouting micro-greens, adhering to hand-washing and social distancing, and finding creative ways to enjoy life in the face of temporary restrictions that could last longer than I'd like. The squirrels and birds outside my windows provide endless entertainment, the internet keeps me connected with friends, and reading and contemplation help me remember what's most important in life. Making good use of my time in isolation has become an interesting challenge instead of a deprivation.

"Keep Clam" Ivar's Seafood signs used to proclaim in Seattle. Stop and listen to our hearts Swamiji told us in his talk. Use this time of isolation for the spiritual practices you said you didn't have time for. With those reminders, I'm aware that the panic-button voice isn't the only one in my brain. There is also one of equanimity. It tells me attitude matters. Together we can help lighten the heaviness of the times.

Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Karuna in Seattle:

[Why soap, sanitizer and warm water work against Covid-19 and other viruses](#)

[26 Immune Busting Recipes](#) from Minimalist Baker.com

From Shobana in Shoreline and Karuna in Seattle

Shobana- Poem delivers strong message of hope amid pandemic: [A Message of Hope](#) Excerpts read by Anderson Cooper

Karuna- This is a [full recitation](#) of the same poem, "Lockdown," which was written by Fr. Richard Hendrick.

From Tirtha in Victoria:

No toilet paper? No problem! A hand-held bidet is available from your local hardware store or online, from about \$30 and up. There are even portable options that you can take with you!

<https://www.bidet.org/pages/how-to-use-a-hand-held-bidet>;

<https://wiki.ezvid.com/best-handheld-bidets>

[How to make a substitute for toilet paper](#)

From Kathie in Bellevue:

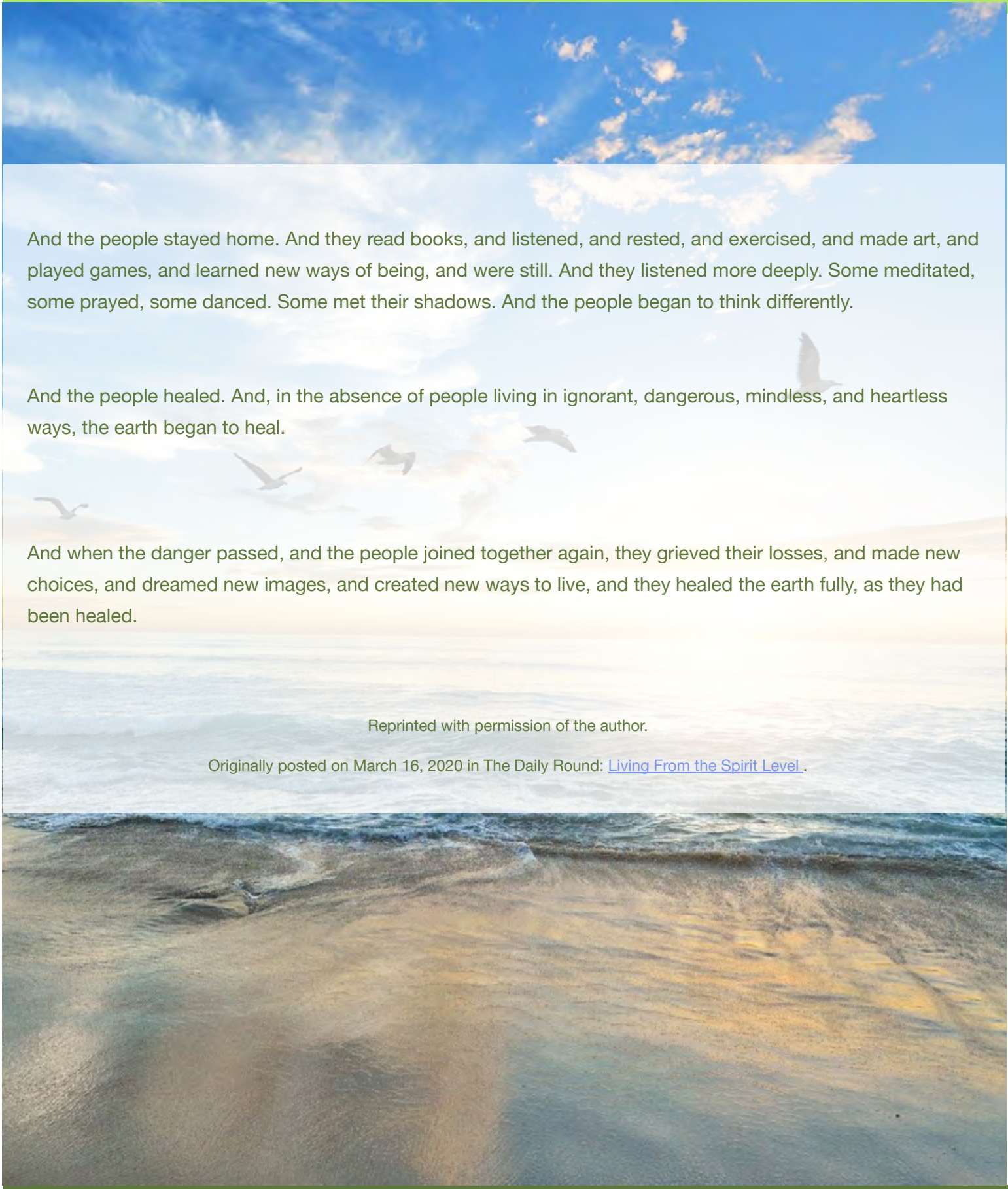
[WATCH: Berklee Students Create Virtual Orchestra During Coronavirus Perform "What the World Needs Now is Love"](#)

From Anonymous

[Replace Handshakes and Hugs with One of These Greetings](#)

Coping with the Pandemic

In the Time of Pandemic by Kitty O'Meara



And the people stayed home. And they read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And they listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live, and they healed the earth fully, as they had been healed.

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Originally posted on March 16, 2020 in The Daily Round: [Living From the Spirit Level](#).