
ECG Update 4.15.20

We asked our readers for suggestions of books, TV shows, takeout places, and walks that they would recommend to their neighbors. We also asked them what they were trying to accomplish during these trying times, and what they were looking forward to when all of this is over. This update includes our readers' responses.

Nancy Crowley: 1) I have been inspired just by the ECG's Resource Guide. And I especially liked reading what other people are doing. We were contacted and quite touched by a friend within the building to see if we needed any help with grocery shopping. Alyssa Cohen was wonderful to offer her assistance to us all. There have been articles in the *Boston Globe* and *New York Times* about anxiety and self-care that I found helpful. Even though it is nice to think about doing "all" the things we have put off, I have had periods of lethargy / anxiety, and it is important to note that others might as well. See the *New York Times*, "10 Ways to Ease Your Coronavirus Anxiety," March 18 and updated March 27.

2) I **most look forward** to being with my children and grandchildren and hugging each of them. FaceTime and Zoom are wonderful but there is nothing like tactile intimacy. Second to that would be close friends and meeting again with members of our Esplanade Community.

3) Were we in Cambridge, we would be availing ourselves of Formaggio Kitchen **takeout**. Also, Viale vialecambridge.com with options for wine.

4) **TV:** Anything on PBS! including the nightly "PBS Newshour." "Homeland" on Showtime...just to get one more scare of terrorism than the Covid-19. Netflix: Comedy stand-up John Mulaney, many crime dramas "Line of Duty." Amazon

Prime Video..reruns of "The Closer" with Kyra Sedgwick..great ensemble cast in LA police drama, filled with quirkiness, humor, and humanity.

5) **Local:** Go to the Multicultural Arts Center's webpage

multiculturalartscenter.org and virtually view its virtual gallery of artwork by Cambridge Public School students, grades Kindergarten - 8th grade...it is wonderful!

6) **MOMA NYC:** Online presentation of "Beyond the Uniform," with MOMA security officers sharing love, knowledge, and personal comments on five works in the collection. This is quite revealing and stunning about the people we usually only see in our peripheral vision as we travel through exhibitions. **Art**

for Fun: Getty Museum in LA asks people to choose an artwork and use three things available at home to recreate the art. Clever, creative, and fun.

<https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/getty-artworks-recreated-with-household-items-by-creative-geniuuses-the-world-over/>

7) **Podcasts:** "Politics with Amy Walter," well-researched and excellent interviews on topical politics. "Desert Island Discs," BBC Radio 4, asks the question...what would you want to listen to on a desert island... interesting interviews with artists, chefs, politicians, etc. I loved the interview with Judi Dench.

8) Some of our **favorite walks** in Cambridge have been to North Point Park and perhaps into Charlestown, up and down Memorial Drive along the river, and Fresh Pond.

9) I hope to accomplish a lot...but I am trying to forgive myself if I do not. So far: downloaded "Chair Yoga" and doing it daily (almost). Editing and organizing the pages AND pages of website passwords. Tackling family photos and making albums. Walking outdoors whenever weather permits. Preparing clothing, books, and household items that we do not need. Fine tuning medical directive.

Corinne Dame: My Report for "The past 4 weeks!!!" 1) Anxiously look forward to FREEDOM for mind and body! 2) No restaurants or takeout.....not certain who cooked the food, so I prepare my own. 3) Need TV: MSNBC.....Trevor Noah.... news programs, special productions. 4) **Daily Walks** along the

canal...found new companies, specialized business offices, interesting architectural designs and clean air. 5) Look forward to cleaning out old "treasure" from drawers and files. They are still there. 6) **Read a lot.** Dear friends left me their favorite books. Thanks! 7) Washed my own hair.....first time in perhaps 10 years.



Reading

Janis Gogan: Today came the WGBH announcement of a new Virtual Book Club which will have its first "meeting" May 13 -- someone will interview the author of *The Age of Light* (Whitney Sharer) about her novel describing a path-breaking female photographer who did some of her best work during WW II:

"Based on the life of pioneering photographer Lee Miller, Scharer's novel takes us from the cabarets of bohemian Paris to the battlefields of war-torn Europe during World War II, from discovering radical new photography techniques to documenting the liberation of the concentration camps as one of the first female war correspondents."

I'm a big fan of historical novels, and this one seems like an opportunity to consider the relationship between history and fiction, having learned a very interesting angle on that topic in Caroline Fraser's *Prairie Fires*. Tonight Ash and I will start binge-watching "World on Fire" (otherwise showing on Masterpiece Theatre, but in trying times, we prefer binging), which features Helen Hunt as a WW II journalist. Perhaps these WW II stories will help us all appreciate the "Greatest Generation" and be inspired to rise to higher levels of courage and generosity....

Nancy Crowley: *Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks, “an unforgettable tale, set in 17th century England, of a village that quarantines itself to arrest the spread of the plague.” I read this book several years ago but am rereading and enjoying it more.

The Call by Yannick Murphy, “about a family dealing with the consequences of a tragic accident, explores marriage, parenthood, small-town life, medicine, and hope with a sensitivity, skill and fearlessness that will rattle your bones” (Ben Greenman, author of *Celebrity Chekhov* and *What He’s Poised to Do*).

Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman, “a compulsive, irresistible narrative that arcs toward compassion and light” (Mona Awad, author of *13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl*). This is a great read and makes one celebrate the persistence of being a good friend.

Jane Gould: I wanted to say how the choice of the April book for our book club, *Prairie Fires: The American Dreams of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, has been such a comfort and source of warmth. First, reading about the hazards on the Plains... diphtheria, malaria, malnutrition, drought, childbirth, cold....and more.... Then, thinking about the economy of the 1870’s.... truly the first Depression. Next, climate, drought, locusts.... All this is to say that the book gives me perspective (and courage). No spoiler in that one.

Amy Kwei: Finished reading Sue Monk Kidd’s two books: *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Invention of Wings*. They helped me learn about slavery and the South. Both are exciting, fast reads.

Mary Jo Bane: I am a big fan of two light mystery series and have been re-reading them. (How’s that for frivolity?) One is Martin Walker’s Chief Bruno series, set in the Dordogne. There are twelve mysteries; the first is *Bruno Chief of Police*. A new one will be released on May 26. The second series is Donna Leon’s Commissario Brunetti series, set in Venice. The latest, number 29, is *Trace Elements*. Both Bruno and Brunetti enjoy good food, so in addition to murders there are mouth-watering descriptions of meals. Walker’s series also includes a good deal of the history of that fascinating part of France.

Karma Kitaj: Just finished *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave, about the life of a young

Nigerian girl who escaped horrors to come to detention center in the UK. Timely as reader gets view of what our own asylum seekers must suffer at our southern border. Also read *Charming Billy* by Alice McDermott, who writes about the Irish American experience, namely here an empathic portrayal about an alcoholic and the effects on his many friends and extended family.



North Point in early April

Jane Hilburt Davis: I recommend the walk to **North Point Park** and, if you want to continue, go over the pedestrian bridge to Paul Revere Park. (See walking directions in the ECG Winter Newsletter.) In North Point, the magnolias, forsythia, tulips and fields of daffodils are in bloom. Hear the gulping trill of the newly arrived red-winged black birds in the wetlands; follow the geese and the ducks in the lagoons that are draped with neon yellow-green weeping willows. Enjoy the sights and sounds from our temporary sequestered life and know that spring has not been canceled!

Tom Kwei: In light of all public performances canceled, I wanted to provide the links below:

1. Seattle Symphony is streaming some concerts, including Mahler 1 tonight at 8pm PST! [Seattle Symphony](#)

2. [Berlin Philharmonic](#) makes 600+ concerts free to stream for the next month! Just sign up, first month free, no cancellation needed.

3. Europe has a collection of free operas that can be browsed and streamed through YouTube - - no sign up needed! [Operavision](#)

4. [The Metropolitan Opera](#) will also be streaming a free Opera every night starting Monday! Posted the schedule at the end of this email.

5. If you need even more Met Opera, they have a subscription to stream any of their 700+ video-recorded operas at any time for \$15 a month (think Netflix for Opera) [Metropolitan Opera On Demand](#)

6. And for **takeout**, as the pandemic drags on, many of my favorite Chinese restaurants have closed, except for **Royal East** on Main Street in Cambridge, as of this writing. I like their cooking which fits our taste. Their prices are moderate. I am sure they need all the support they can get to keep afloat.

Eric von Hippel: I am terrible at finding good movies to watch -- suggestions from others would be great! My tastes tend toward documentaries -- and I confess that I personally tend to especially like histories and technologies related to technology and innovation. A documentary fitting this description that I watched recently (twice) was on Amazon Prime called "Salt: Tears of the Earth," a really interesting look at the many ways that salt has been mined through history.

Jessie von Hippel: I was quite intrigued by the aspect of Tara Westover's *Educated: A Memoir* which our book club recently read where she describes over and over how "preppers" think and what they do to prepare for the apocalypse just around the corner. This is an aspect of society I had heard about peripherally, but is much more relevant in our current times.

With Zoom available, it might be worth experimenting with ways our community can connect more, perhaps through tea / coffee parties, sharing / cooking recipes, movie nights, or even help each other or others in the

building, etc. I have a Zoom account and am willing to try, just let me know [Jessie von Hippel](#) And I can forward simple instructions on how to use Zoom or how to host.

With regard to “when this is over,” we are all in the process of changing and reevaluating many things in our lives, even finding some of our values challenged and having to figure out new paths, so it is probably too soon to have any perspective, but it would be wonderful to have discussions, much like in our book groups and these updates, about this afterwards.

Susan Barron:

What **TV programs** would you recommend?

— “Unorthodox” – a four-part Netflix series based on Deborah Feldman’s 2012 autobiography about a young woman attempting to escape her ultra-orthodox, confining Jewish roots – a disturbing, yet fascinating glimpse into a seemingly overbearing culture.

— “Vienna Blood” — Max Lieberman, a student of Freud, helps Detective Rheinhardt in the investigation of a series of complicated murders around the grand cafes and opera houses of Vienna – period costumes, scenery, automobiles add to the delight of this entertaining series (Amazon Prime Video).

What do you hope to accomplish before this shelter-in-place time is over?

— For ever so long I have put off the dreaded task of purging our dwelling of no longer needed belongings (reprints of articles, outdated documents, accumulated “stuff” – a task I refer to as Mighty Tidy. Will I get to it during this interlude? I can only hope so

On a lighter note, I am including my recipe for **Barron’s Fabulous Fudgie Brownies** – a recipe perfected over the years with my daughters’ help:

- 1 stick of butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 squares Baker's unsweetened chocolate
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

pinch of salt

2/3 cup of flour

½ cup chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Grease an 8" by 8" pan (11" by 13" if doubling recipe).
3. Melt chocolate and butter in a double boiler, a single pan on low heat or in the microwave. If using the microwave, first melt the chocolate for one minute. Add the butter, cut into pieces, and continue microwaving until both butter and chocolate are melted (approximately one more minute).
4. Beat eggs and sugar until light and fluffy with an electric mixer for about 3 to 5 minutes. The eggs and sugar **MUST BE LIGHT AND FLUFFY!**
5. Mix in the slightly cooled chocolate and butter. Beat until blended well.
6. Mix in the vanilla. Beat to blend.
7. Stir in the flour and salt. Mix only until blended together. Do not overmix at this point.
8. Add chocolate chips. Mix them in to the batter.
9. Put batter in greased pan. Bake 18 minutes(cookie tester or toothpick should just come out clean - if a bit of batter remains, this is not a tragedy. The main thing is that you do not want the batter to be overcooked.
10. Put the pan directly into the refrigerator to cool. Yup, this is what the secret is!!!!

NOTE: The above recipe may be doubled and baked in an 11" by 13" pan. The only ingredient I do not double is the vanilla. You could add a little more than one teaspoon if you like. That part is up to you.

Karma Kitaj:

What would you like to see the ECG Update cover that might inspire you?

— I think the Update had some book reviews a while ago. Would appreciate more of those. Also, would like to get to know my neighbors since we moved to Esplanade last September and have been away since early February. Perhaps people could write a little summary about what is important to him/her, what makes life meaningful, especially during this unprecedented time we're all living through.

What do you most look forward to "when this is all over"?

— Going back to dance Argentinian tango, a dance that relies on intimacy and connection through the body. No, not in a sexual way, but human-to-human.

Are you willing/ able to help others in the building? How?

— My husband Jeff Cooper and I are spending this time in Western Mass. until we can resume city activities. We can perhaps help with some perspective on the status of health care as Jeff is in daily meetings with MGH providers who have to endure formidable hardships and administrators who face tough decisions about how, when, under what circumstances hospitals can give care without adequate protection or equipment.

What do you hope to accomplish before this shelter-in-place time is over?

— I'd like to get a lot of my sequel to my novel *Beguiled* written in its 1st draft. See [Beguiled](#). I'd like to create several new pictures using techniques I practiced with a wonderful encaustic instructor in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, this winter. If you are not familiar with encaustic, please see [Kitaj Art](#) I'd like to get better at interpreting tango music composed from the late 1900's through 1950's. This is a wonderful opportunity to deepen one's creative experience. I would like to find out how to support a local (W.MA) undocumented immigrant family.

Liang Yang:

What would you like to see the ECG Update cover that might inspire you?

— In future issues of the ECG newsletters, I would like to read more about interviews with various residents — about their work, families, lives, hobbies, etc.

Heather Hohenthal:

What do you most look forward to “when this is all over”?

— Finishing our kitchen renovation that was halted by government order and going out to dinner.

Are you willing/ able to help others in the building? How?

— Have picked up items at the store for neighbors

What TV programs would you recommend?

— “The Peanut Butter Falcon” and “Icarus”

What movies would you recommend?

— “Ford v. Ferrari” – for guys

— “Bombshell” – for gals

— “Dark Waters”

— “JoJo Rabbit”

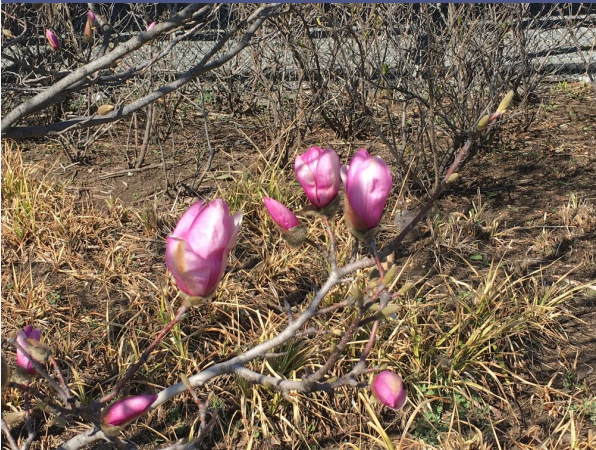
— “Harriet”

— “Judy”

— “Rocketman”

— “Second Act” - j LP gin free

And I recommend these [four meditation apps](#) can help ease the anxiety of social distancing.



A Poem: In Time

In time, there will be Aprils when
Paired lovers walk these rainswept streets
Daphne perfuming quiet footsteps,
Wet camelia littering sidewalks,
Daffodils and star magnolia
Beckoning summer filled with hope.

When neighbors share the sight of rainbows,

Runners prep for marathons,
When nurseries fill with avid gardeners,
Choosing lettuce, chard and spinach,
Dreaming of heirloom tomatoes,
Flanked by basic, garlic, scallion.

Dim memories of this cruel year,
So many ill, so many dying;
Someday perhaps, if all goes well,
We'll venture out into the world,
Seeking companionship and love,
Gentler to one another,

"Stay safe" a whisper in our minds.

- by Vicki Singer, April 3, 2020

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Have ideas for these newsletters and updates? Send them to [Jessie](#), [Mary Jo](#) or [Jane](#).

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