

# The national emergency as a time for community

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus March 13, 2020

If you read between and under the lines in Gadfly's last post, you understand that what he was really saying is that he's going to have to focus his attention more in-house in the near future.

And that he's hoping others will step up and keep the good conversation that builds community going.

But he, like you probably, is trying to wrap his sensibilities around our "national emergency."

In Weiss market last night he witnessed a pugnacious alpha-male filling two shopping carts (two) with the last of the cases of water and nearly the last of the jug water. Gadfly wondered how he would navigate to check-out — probably hooking the carts together like those menacing double-bodied tractor trailers that you sometimes come upon swaying in the wind on the superhighways, and that you are afraid to pass.

He witnessed two gray-haired ladies eyeball wrestling over the last Sunbeam bread, small size loaf, looking like it had already been squeezed mid-section. Forlorn, like a fish on a dock that somebody forgot to throw back.

And he witnessed a shopping cart filled, and filled only with pretzels and chips. And tried to envision that family.

And this afternoon, Gadfly witnessed a pack of ravenous Walmarters tear into a cart of toilet paper, still boxed, on its way to the shelf aisle across from the prescription counter. He expected to see the clerk emerge from the fray bleeding, half-naked, clothes in shreds. It was a pack of urban wolves (one guy was in a suit) pouncing on their paper-goods prey. But no howling, only the sound of ripping cardboard.

And then, with those images in his mind, tonight there was Anderson Cooper mentioning similar social media images and likewise trying to wrap his sensibilities around how we should be acting during this national emergency in what Gadfly found a thoughtful exchange with a psychologist.

Gadfly invites you to listen through to the end of this short segment.

During which he started to think about how we each might perform, as Schmelzer suggests, seemingly small but non-trivial gestures that might turn the national emergency into an instrument for improving community.

Which is always Gadfly's goal.

Here's the blog post that occasioned the invitation to Schmelzer to appear on Cooper's show.

*Gretchen Schmelzer, "This can be our finest hour — but we need all of you," March 10, 2020*

So what is our work? Yes, you need to wash your hands and stay home if you are sick. But the biggest work you can do is expand your heart and your mind to see yourself and see your family as part of a much bigger community that can have a massive—**hugely massive**—impact on the lives of other people. . . .

You can help by canceling anything that requires a group gathering. You can help by not using the medical system unless it is urgent. You can help by staying home if you are sick. You can help by cooking or shopping or doing errands for a friend who needs to stay home. You can help by watching someone's kid if they need to cover for someone else at work. You can help by ordering take-out from your local restaurants. Eat the food yourself or find someone who needs it. You can help by offering to help bring someone's college student home or house out-of-town students if you have extra rooms. You can help by asking yourself, "What can I and my family do to help?" "What can we offer?" You can help by seeing yourself as part of something bigger than yourself.