

# Doing Good in the Midst of a Pandemic:

EMMANUEL O. IHEUKWUMERE

**O**n March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic following the infection of more than 118,000 people in 110 countries, at that point in time. That declaration forced more of us to take serious notice of the virus, which has proven more deadly and economically destructive than invading armies. Soon after that declaration, many of us were forced into the reality of working remotely from home, particularly after Governor Wolf, and later, Mayor Kenney, imposed lockdowns.

Soon after working remotely and away from our offices, many of us, myself included, began whining about the inconvenience and uncertainty of it all, but were soon humbled by the fragility of life, and the realization, as Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, would later remind us, that the virus—not our political leaders—determines the time-table for when life may perhaps return to normal.

*Let's find the time to acknowledge our common humanity without regard to our differences.*

In telephone discussions with others, including our Chancellor, Hon. A. Michael Snyder (Ret.), about the devastating effects of the virus, I decided to write this addendum to my editorial column. I hope that the profound impact of this virus has unwittingly forced us to rekindle our appreciation for the many contributions and sacrifices others have made to our lives, which have allowed us, especially as attorneys, to work from the comfort of our homes, whereas many within our communities in the United States, and around the world, do not have that option.

Instead of bemoaning the ongoing lockdown, let's seize the opportunity to continue making positive differences in the lives of others, including making and pledging recurring contributions to great charities of our choices, such as the Red Cross, Save the Children, UNICEF, food banks, advocacy and legal services organizations, and religious and medical institutions, etc. Let's find the time to acknowledge our common humanity without regard to our differences. Let's find the time to increase our level of empathy and humility by showing more concern and appreciation for those risking their lives to serve, protect, and help us flatten the virus' curve, including, but not limited to, medical personnel, grocery workers, food bank volunteers, police, EMT, and firefighters.

Let's also show our concern for our fellow lawyers, judges, and others—here and abroad—struggling to maintain their sanity and contain mounting financial stress in the face of this unprecedented uncertainty. Let's also undertake some light-hearted activities to help us cope with the mounting stress of this challenging period, such as listening to our favorite songs, going for walks whenever possible, reading those books we have been meaning to read but never found the time to, watching comedies, and sharing laughs and jokes with others, via the phone, video apps, and inside our houses. Let's work on being nicer and more civil to opposing counsel, and to the parties in our cases.

Above all, in the midst of this pandemic, let's continue striving to do what is right, to love, have mercy, and to walk humbly with our God, as God enjoined us in the Bible through the Prophet Micah (Micah 6:8). ■

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# Music Hath Charms

93RD CHANCELLOR HON. A. MICHAEL SNYDER (RET.)

“*Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak.*”

- William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride*

**W**hen I sit in my home office on the third floor of our house, or when I would drive into work (when we still went into an office), or when I would occasionally take the train into town, I do something that has always transported me to another time, another place: I listen to music. Not just any kind of music, mind you, but for me, the kind of music that I truly crave is classical music. I've loved classical music of every genre, period, and style since I was a little kid.

Even more strange to understand, at least to many, is my love of opera. I grew up with a dear aunt who adored opera. She and I would listen to it together every Saturday on the Metropolitan Opera broadcast. Just hearing certain arias takes me back to sitting with her in her apartment, listening to *Madame Butterfly* and munching on some kind of snack that she had made for me.

In high school, in college, in law school, I always studied to classical music. It relaxed me, it allowed me to focus, and it just made me happy. To this day, when I really want to concentrate on something, the music comes on. In fact, I'm listening to something by Schubert as I write this piece. My wife teases me about “air conducting” when I listen to something that I really love; I don't know why she doesn't

realize how much better the orchestra sounds when I am “conducting!”

Now, in this time of forced social distancing, when we are each working at home, trying to be productive in our jobs, trying to multitask between our phones, and our monitors, having Zoom meetings, or watching a webinar, when it seems that the flood of information relative to the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 is never-ending, we each need to have a form of escape. We need to be able to hear something that truly elates us. Whether you love Classic Rock, Rhythm and Blues, Jazz, New Age Music, or even Country and Western (OK, I know that 5,000 of you will now tell me how much you love Country and Western music), listening to the music that we love allows us to be transported to someplace different than where we are; to a place where the conversation is not that of face masks, respirators, and self-quarantining.

As we go through our busy professional days, dealing with problems large and small, trying to help clients, and doing all the myriad tasks that make up the practice of law, let's allow ourselves to be charmed by music. Let's connect with one another by sharing the music that we love with others. Send a friend or a colleague a link to some music that is really meaningful or

special to you. For that matter, send me an e-mail with a song, an aria, a piece that you adore. I promise that I will listen to each of them; who knows, I may learn to love what you love, and you may learn to love what I love. Either way, we will be soothed, we will be charmed, and we will forget, at least for a moment, the world around us. ■

## IN MEMORIAM

Michael Fitzpatrick  
Jan. 6, 2020, age 56

Kenneth L. Fox  
Feb. 13, 2020, age 64

David Glyn  
Jan. 17, 2020, age

Al Marroletti  
Jan. 13, 2020, age 90

Ed Pawelec  
March 9, 2020, age 89

John Taulan  
Nov. 24, 2019, age 86

Please send In Memoriam notices to [tplmag@philabar.org](mailto:tplmag@philabar.org).

*Have you considered a contribution to the Philadelphia Bar Foundation in memory of a deceased colleague?*

*For information, call Jessica Hilburn-Holmes, executive director, at 215-238-6347.*

# Adapt or Die

## *Lawyers Must Pivot to Working Online*

**I** write this article during Passover, the holiday when Jews recall their liberation from Pharaoh after God inflicted 10 plagues upon the Egyptians. At the Passover Seder, it is traditional for the youngest child present to ask the Four Questions, which begin with “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

This year, as the world celebrated Passover, Easter, and Ramadan, it did so under the cloud of concern and trepidation created by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, when Jews recited the Four Questions, the question had an eerily contemporary as well as historic answer.

While contemplating the surreal reality in which we are living, not knowing the ultimate course of the COVID-19 pandemic, I also recalled the Unetannah Tokef, a prayer recited on the High Holidays:

*On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed,  
And on Yom Kippur it is sealed.  
How many shall pass away and how  
many shall be born,  
Who shall live and who shall die,  
Who shall reach the end of his days  
and who shall not,*

So, what do these prayers have to do with technology, or the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for law office technology? Actually, a lot, although not in a biblical sense, and certainly not in a sense of whether COVID-19 is 2020’s version of the plagues.

In particular, they portend which law firms will likely exist five, 10, or even 20 years from now—in a Darwinian sense. Some probably will not survive the pandemic because they were unprepared to work remotely. Others will not survive because they will continue to refuse to adopt even the basic technology every law firm should use.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been



Image by mohamed Hassan from Pixabay

a game changer for many lawyers, from solos to those in large firms, because suddenly their safety net, more commonly known as support staff, was gone, as was the reality that “someone” in the office could handle whatever they needed. Suddenly, they were at home, literally locked into their houses, with clients calling, deadlines coming up, and they couldn’t even figure out how to log in to their own offices, let alone complete their assignments.

They were the lawyers with offices in One Meridian Plaza who woke up to

discover in 1981 that their office building had just suffered a major fire burning everything, and they were never likely to get back into the building anyway.

In reality, the lawyers and firms who were technologically unprepared for COVID-19 discovered that they were no better off than the firms whose files were lost in the fire back in the days when almost every file was paper, and technology was an infant.

But a lot has changed since 1981 in legal technology.

We have computers; they had electric

typewriters.

We have scanners and electronic files; they had carbon paper and copy machines.

We have document management software; they had Redwelds and binder clips.

We have case management software; they had Day Timers appointment books.

We have smartphones, iPads, and laptops; they had legal pads and landlines, with toll calls and phone booths.

You get the picture. Times were different, but for some firms, the COVID-19 pandemic only demonstrated how far technology has come for many, but not for all.

And therein lies the rub.

One colleague sent the following email:

Everyone—I am forced to disconnect my office computer in about an hour or so, to take home, where I have no computer or INTERNET CONNECTION. I have to choose an ISP and learn how to get back on the internet to start working. Talk about a babe in the

woods! So I am not on email till I get my ISP, get set up, and learn stuff. Please call me at home for anything important, including telephone or virtual meetings, etc.

Another wrote the following email:

What good is working from home? When I log into my computer all I see are a few things, but I can't work this way.

My point is that lawyers need to be prepared for the worst, just like we advise our clients to be prepared. Of course, what lawyer would advise a client not to be prepared in case an emergency shut down their office?

Despite countless warnings given in lectures, articles, ethics opinions, and even in this magazine, many lawyers chose not to upgrade their technology and to not be able to work at even a minimum level of competency if—although we know it is really when—a major event prevented them from physically entering

their offices.

It's not possible to describe everything lawyers and their firms could, indeed should, have done to attain a minimal level of preparedness. Not for COVID-19; no one could predict this. But certainly, for lesser emergencies, like the Meridian Fire. Or even a major snowstorm that shut down the city for a few days.

After all, while the COVID-19 pandemic is different from all other catastrophes we have lived through, we do not yet know who among us will live and who will die. But we do know that firms that were better prepared for their staff to work from home were better able to provide the type of service clients expect. ■

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