

March 29, 2020: Conversations that Unbind Us
(**Lection Connections-Spirit Sightings from *Seasons of the Spirit***)

From Ray McGinnis

In the midst of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many citizens are following the directions of their provincial or state health authorities and politicians and are practicing social distancing. In Clintonville, Ohio, 78-year-old Helena Schlam had been self-isolating for five days. A lover of classical music, she was delighted and surprised when two neighbourhood children showed up on her front porch to play their musical instruments. Schlam sat safely at the far end of her 30-odd foot porch while the musicians played their cellos at the other end of the porch. Jackie Borchardt stopped by during the 30-minute performance and tweeted, “My elderly neighbour is self-isolating. So the neighbour kids are playing her a cello concert from her patio.”

The idea to play a cello concert for Helena Schlam was the idea of nine-year-old Taran Tien and his six-year-old sister Calliope. They got dressed up for the occasion, with Taran wearing a black suit jacket and pants, and Calliope wearing her pink party dress.

The concert included a variety of classical pieces, as well as “Go Tell Aunt Rhody,” a tune composed in 1752 by Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and given folk lyrics in America (by 1850) about a grey goose that has died. Calliope smiled with glee, even as two of her front teeth were missing. Taran and Calliope played a Bach minuet and all of the Suzuki method Book 1. Taran and Calliope also know Helena Schlam’s grandchildren who usually come to Columbus during Passover to visit in her northern suburb. Given the bans on travel during the Coronavirus outbreak, Schlam’s grandchildren – ranging from ages three to ten – are staying in Israel. For that reason, the concert was held at 12 p.m. (EST) so that it could be shown in Israel on FaceTime.

Said Schlam, “I haven’t been out of my house for five days, and I won’t be out anytime soon. This was a delightful break for all of us. I love all the kids, and I love music. It was such a real gift.” The children’s mother, Rebecca Tien, said “It was one of those moments where you feel like you’re a part of something incredible. It was also a good way to remember the value of connection, especially at a time like this when everyone feels disconnected. Just to know we were a part of something so sweet, even just for a minute, meant a lot.”

Explore...John 11:1–45

- What is the cause of Mary and Martha’s despair? What is Jesus response to the news of Lazarus’ death?
- Why does Martha tell Jesus that Lazarus has been dead in the tomb for four days?
- What is happening to people and communities during the Coronavirus outbreak?
- What is your response to the story of Taran and Calliope Tien playing cello for Helena Schlam?
- What actions can you think of in your community that could help people deal with loss, or free them from their troubles?

Prayer links...

Oh God who calls us back to life, help us when we are locked in fear or despair.

Help us to imagine more is possible.

Remind us of your unanticipated miracles and your power to take away the stones that are locking us away from your light.

In Christ we pray. Amen.

Read more...

[“A delightful break”: Ohio children play porch concert for self-quarantining neighbor during coronavirus outbreak](#)

[Two siblings held a porch concert for a neighbour who is self-isolating](#)