

## *A Personal Note –*

*As 2019 came to a close, turkeys were cheap, even after Thanksgiving; and some of us were shopping online to hopefully receive packages before Christmas morning. That was followed by ringing in the New Year, albeit most from the warmth and comfort of our homes, and a smaller number even celebrating Kansas City's Superbowl victory. Then, love was in the air around Valentine's Day and the unseasonably mild winter yielded to a seemingly early spring with a plethora of daffodil blooms. Those past three months now seem so long ago . . .*

*It is doubtful any of us during those celebratory times envisioned a world-wide pandemic. The mere thought of store shelves being empty of toilet paper (a.k.a. bathroom tissue) would have seemed more akin to the making of a new Monty Python comedy than reality; and the activities of a relatively unknown city named Wuhan impacting the entire planet more like science fiction than our current circumstance. It is unfortunate that is not the case; but fortunate, as of this writing, Wuhan and even New York appear to be seeing the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.*

*What many of us do now know are the media reports that Virginia's darkest days may still lie ahead. Nonetheless, as the disciple John once wrote, darkness never overcomes light; and it is during times of greatest darkness that light shines brightest. The time in which we are now living is no exception.*

*I have personally witnessed several "God moments" during the past few weeks and would be pleased to tell any of you all about them on another occasion. For now, though, I am led to share with you something else; and that something else is my sincere thankfulness for all of you.*

*This moment of time will one day pass, and all that we have experienced may be written in history books younger members of our families will eventually read. If asked, we will be able to tell them our personal stories, too, of how concerned we were with everyone who walked past us a little too close and every surface we touched as possible sources of contamination. We may also share how anxiously we waited to hear the latest reports on the evening news regarding the spread of the outbreak, and the number of deaths. When those occasions come, I hope you will be able to recall how strong you were and reported to work every day because your company was deemed an essential business. Many were counting on you. However, despite your important role in all of this, it was not always easy. Also make sure to let your children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews know that despite how careful everyone was, one of the best comforts, in addition to keeping occupied by helping others, was having someone to talk to. That is one of the many things I have witnessed of you – a sympathetic ear to console, a willingness to listen to others as they do their best making it through another day. Your compassion, your loving kindness to just be there for someone else working beside you (while maintaining a 6-foot social distance, of course) is so inspiring Gary and I want to shout out, in a word or two, Thank You! Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do.*

*And, similar to how this letter began, we do not know how the Covid-19 pandemic will turn out. There is still a lot of uncertainty, and questions. Nonetheless, someone whom I cannot remember once said:*

*When we do not know what to do, do what we know.*

*Hence –*

*Remember the elderly and immunocompromised. They are the ones with the greatest needs by being sheltered in place; and, they may be going “stir crazy” from “cabin fever” as a result.*

*Be considerate. Some may not handle stress as well as you.*

*Be patient. A greater measure may be needed in the weeks and lines ahead.*

*Be the best we can be – at home, in the marketplace, and at work.*

*If we must go out to get groceries, consider getting more than a few day's supply; and wear a mask.*

*Be mindful of all surfaces we touch, from shopping carts and items purchased to letters and packages in the mail*

*Be vigilant in maintaining proper hand washing and social distancing*

*Keep hands away from faces – especially eyes, nose, and mouth.*

*Keep busy. This has worked for us in the past, and will continue to do so.*

*Keep our spiritual houses in order, perhaps even more important than the traditional spring cleaning of our physical houses.*

*Keep others in our thoughts and prayers. Remember, where two or three are gathered . . .*

*Keep looking up, and especially be on the lookout for the Lord's hand helping us through all of this. And, it goes without saying, be thankful for the same.*

*Sincerely Yours –*

*ROBBIE*