



JOURNAL OF PLAGUE YEAR PUBLIC ARCHIVE: INTERNSHIP

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Portfolio by:

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Reflection Essay

The overall experience of the internship was a very positive one. Before beginning the internship, my only knowledge of public history, and the archives as well, was very general and non-practical. Before coming on as part of the internship team, I knew that these were things I needed to develop. Having completed the internship, I am much more confident in my ability to practice public history and organize an archive.

Before beginning the internship, I knew that collecting oral histories was going to be part of the archives. As someone who had not collected oral histories, I was concerned about my ability to collect these and collect them well. However, collecting and archiving oral histories was one of my favorite parts of the internship. This is something that I would like to do more of and further develop my ability to collect and archive them.

One thing I did struggle with was the monotony of curating. Curating for this particular project is one of the most important jobs and the entirety of the archive depends on curation. The daily work of curating stories certainly pushed me and helped me learn about my strengths and weaknesses. My preferred items to work on were oral histories and my collection. However, curating, I believe, is the job on which the archive hinges. Without curators, there would be no archive. Similarly, without contributors, there would be no archive. Reaching out to people was something as well that I enjoyed, but I received very little response. However, this was very important for the archive. Overall, I learned a lot and this knowledge will no doubt help me in my future endeavors.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Journal of the Plague Year archive is to crowdsource public information and personal stories to preserve and document experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Collection plans, in nature, feature or highlight various themes of an archive. Thus, religion, being such a major theme in the lives of many, should be highlighted. Highlighting religion gives adherents of all faiths a platform to share their pandemic experience and how COVID-19 has affected their religious life and culture

Collection Plan

Collection Scope

A major goal of this collection is to make sure all religions and faith groups can share how their beliefs have aided them throughout the pandemic and how aspects of their faith may be able to aid those of a different faith or those who are areligious. The purpose of this collection is to provide a seat to all religions so that we can adequately preserve their stories. For this collection, the major, overarching theme must be diversity. One voice cannot represent the whole of world religions. As such, the goal of this collection is to be all-inclusive.

Some key themes this collection will be targeting is how the faith of people has helped them cope with issues like loss, sickness, and death. Additionally, if someone's faith or religion has failed them during this time, that story needs to be told and heard as well. Finally, the historic goal of

this collection is to preserve how the pandemic has impacted various religions and religious traditions, as well as how various religions and faiths have impacted people during the pandemic.

Acquisitions

As previously stated, a pivotal aspect of this archive will be diversity. Thus, it will be crucial to reach out to people of various faiths and ask them to contribute their stories. This can be done in various ways. One can reach out directly to their friends via social media platforms. The only potential issue with this option is that often, social media accounts tend to be echo chambers wherein it is more difficult to be diverse. Another option is to directly reach out to various faith communities via their religious gathering place. This would encourage faith leaders to also contribute to the archive. Many methods will need to be employed to adequately survey a great diversity of faiths and religions.

Evaluation

This collection will certainly add to the list as no current collection can or will house every story about religion. While some stories about religion will certainly overlap with other collections, stories purely about religion and COVID-19 are left out of a collection. In this sense, having a collection dedicated to religion highlights religious stories and encourages people to submit stories about religion. While there is not current collection devoted to religion or religious cultures, a tag is extant for religion. Thus, while religion and religious cultures do not have a collection, there is a current way to preserve stories about religion and religious cultures.

Key/Sample Items in Collection

<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/39402>

1. Rebecca Jean Smith
2. This is a litany, or a series of prayful petitions, to God during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. It is unclear where this took place, but it is within the Episcopal Church.
4. The date attributed to the litany is January 19, 2021.
5. This story relates well to the overall religion collection because it displays how a religious group is praying and worshipping during COVID-19.

<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/39080>

1. Myer Bloom
2. This item is a story about one person's religious, specifically Jewish, experience.
3. It looks as though the story comes from Melbourne, AU.
4. The date attributed to the story is March 1, 2021.
5. This contribution shows a different religious aspect outside of worship. It tells the story of celebrating religious holidays within Judaism.

<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/38269>

1. Kris Engdahl
2. This item details how the PCUSA in Massachusetts is dealing, and has dealt with COVID-19.
3. Brookline, MA.
4. The date attributed is February 10, 2021.
5. The thing I really like about this story is that is somewhat all encompassing. It touches on high holidays in the Christian world while also discussing aspects of how the church is worshipping.

<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/11847>

1. Ellie Kennedy, Tom Beazley
2. This item focuses on the teaching of love in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.
3. NA
4. The date created is April 9, 2020.
5. While the other articles I have put in this section focus on worship and holidays of various religious groups, this article focuses on the teaching of love within the three Abrahamic faiths.

<https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/30153>

1. Britton McNerlin
2. This article deals with how Buddhist monks and nuns are dealing with the pandemic.
3. Heatherdale, P.E.I, Canada
4. October 16, 2020
5. This article speaks to how Buddhist monks are protecting themselves and one another from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Call for Submissions

Hello [person I am reaching out to]. My name is Brandon K. Presley and I am reaching out on behalf of the Journal of Plague Year online digital archive. As you know, over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone in different ways. As a student in the MA program in History at Arizona State, I have the opportunity of working with the archive. Over the past year, the program has been collecting personal stories for the Journal's public archive. At the present time, I am working on collecting stories revolving around religion. Religion plays a pivotal role in lives of many, and thus, it is important to see how various religions and religious cultures have been affected by the pandemic. Some potential examples for a submission would be stories about how the pandemic has changed your own personal spiritual practices or how COVID-19 has impacted the corporate religious service wherein you engage. However, any story engaging your faith would be helpful for the religion collection of the archive.

The digital, online archive is user-friendly. Simply navigate to <https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/page/Share> to share your story. When submitting a story, fill out the following required fields: Title, Description, Contributor Name (the name of the person submitting the story), Accepted File Types (this would be for items like PDFs, photos, videos, etc.), and a time frame for the story. If you have any further questions, please feel free to reach out to me at bkpresle@asu.edu. Your help and stories are much appreciated as we work to preserve the happenings throughout this pandemic.

Blog Post

Title: Religion – What is it good for?

Religion. The sibling of the other notable controversial topic at family gatherings: politics. Arguably, the COVID-19 pandemic has only created a more rigid divide in people's lives and opinions. However, we must bridge this divide as religion plays a major role in the lives of many Americans. The way to successfully be united is to listen to differing voices while respecting people of all faith traditions. Thankfully, while the pandemic has exposed the deep fault line between people of varying religious traditions, it has also demonstrated how religious groups can work together and how faith-based organizations can serve the needs of society.

COVID-19 and Religious Unity

The COVID-19 archive displays religious unity in two ways: first, by displaying stories of how various religious groups are working together to help those in need during the pandemic, and secondly, by encouraging voices of all faith backgrounds to contribute. During the pandemic, division has been at the heart of many. Seeking to create rifts, many have been successful; however, certain stories in the religion collection highlight how this has not always been the case. One article entitled, "Love your neighbour: Islam¹, Judaism² and Christianity³ come together over COVID-19," focuses on how the three Abrahamic faiths are working together during the pandemic. To cooperate with one another, an open dialogue is present between the three faiths to discuss their similarities and their differences. Chiefly, however, each faith holds the common belief regarding the inherent value of human life. Thus, the faiths are cooperating to combat the virus.⁴

Another example of religious unity within the collection is the sheer amount of voices present. Through diversity, the archive shows unity. The religion collection holds stories from a host of religions, from Christianity, to Judaism, to Islam, and also faiths like Buddhism, Bahai, and more. The pandemic has impacted all religions and faiths. By hearing and sharing stories from how the pandemic has impacted various faiths, readers are able to see how faith groups are reacting during adverse times.

¹ Islam has much in common with Judaism and Christianity regarding love of neighbor. C.f. *A Common World: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, ed. by Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, Melissa Yarrington (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

² Judaism highly values community and one's love for their neighbor. C.f. Joseph Telushkin, *A Code of Jewish Ethics: Love Your Neighbor as Yourself* (New York: Bell Tower, 2009).

³ In Christianity, the practice of charity/love is historic and integral to one's faith. C.f. Joseph Sollier, "Love (Theological Virtue)," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. Accessed 28 Mar. 2021 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09397a.htm>.

⁴ This story can be found here: <https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/11847>

Love your neighbour: Islam, Judaism and Christianity come together over COVID-19



Religious Culture, Practice, and Charity during COVID-19

Key parts of religious culture and various faiths are charity and service. In an article published by Harvard Divinity School, five authors discuss how love, service, and giving, plays an important role in the discussed faiths.⁵ Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Sikhism all place a high value on charity and service, especially during difficult times. The practice and teaching of charity comes from a belief in the value of human life and the importance of loving one's neighbor.

The pandemic has highlighted the role of charity in various faiths. The USAID (United States Agency International Development) published an article detailing exactly how religious groups are helping neighbors as the pandemic rages. These faith-based organizations are helping both their neighbors in their home countries while also investing a lot of resources into countries overseas.⁶ The act of loving one's neighbor while giving and serving to those who have been sick or in need has been encouraging while the pandemic continues to rage.



⁵ Jon D. Levenson, Dudley C. Rose, Jocelyne Cesari, Chris Berlin, Harpreet Singh, "Why Give? Religious Roots of Charity," *Harvard Divinity School*, November 26, 2018. Accessed March 27, 2021: <https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2013/12/13/why-give-religious-roots-charity>.

⁶ This story can be found here: <https://covid-19archive.org/s/archive/item/41028>.

Takeaway

While the pandemic exacerbated some divisions between Americans, the religion collection of the archive is a place where unity and diversity are clearly visible. While not all religious organizations have done their part, what many have done should encourage everyone and show the benefit that religious organizations can indeed have for society. In spite of reduced charitable giving, faith-based organizations have continued to pour into the communities and lives of many.