

Finding gratitude in 2020

Gayle Nichol - January 2021

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“Aren’t you glad you got to England when you did,” my mom asks?

It’s Christmas day and I am an hour away from my parents and siblings, sitting on my couch with a Bailey’s laced hot chocolate, a Corgi curled up on my feet, Home Alone playing silently on the television.

It’s not a bad day, but certainly not the Christmas I expected to celebrate at the beginning of 2020 – away from the family I love and the traditions we hold to as we grow and add new people to our mix and watch the slow loss of my dad to Alzheimer’s heartless progression.

Our situation was no different from every family around the globe. We made decisions to keep each other safe by visiting on telephones and small FaceTime screens, confirming that we missed each other and planning for the future. Our family has circled July 25, 2021 for a Christmas in July celebration which lands on my brother’s birthday, with hopes that we will all be vaccinated or at least be safe to social distance out of doors. We did not allow the pandemic or the constricts of time defeat our chance for a Christmas TOGETHER. It will just be a tad delayed

But my mother’s comment about my lifelong desired trip to England that took place two years ago was a gentle reminder on that Christmas day, that while things were lost to us, the opportunities for gratitude were everywhere.

She was correct, I am so glad that I got to travel the United Kingdom before world travel took a hit from which it cannot possibly recover quickly. This past year I mourned for the lovely people of Italy with whom I fell in love during a trip last year. I am grateful for having shared in their rich culture before they suffered this unimaginably painful year.

Sipping on my beverage after my mom’s phone call it became clear to me that while most years I would spend the week ahead thinking about things I wanted to change and goals I wanted to tackle, this year I would spend the waning days of 2020 resolutely seeking those things for which I could be grateful.

The list is personal and specific to me and ranges from how grateful I am for discovering nutty flax seed, to the gratitude I feel toward the people who have worked with me through the challenges of this century’s first global pandemic (especially Brodie).

It’s not the usual list of do’s and don’ts that fills the end of a year, but it’s a much more productive exercise in a year that’s been filled with doom and gloom. I invite you to turn your back on 2020 with gratitude, and resolve to start 2021 with your glass half full.

