

FFBC

First Friday News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the *First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.*

May 2020

Volume 25

Issue 5

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, May 1,
2020
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:

ONLINE ZOOM
MEETING



ZOOM MEETING
Login Directions

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FFBC Website:
www.ffbciaowa.org



Inevitability and Paradox

by Jonathan Wilson

The current pandemic was almost certainly inevitable; if not this particular viral strain, then another one. After this one, there will eventually be another and, over time, another. We, as a society, need to recognize this reality and make preparatory public policy decisions.

Funding of the World Health Organization (WHO) is an imperative now that we live in an ever shrinking, inter-connected world more than ever before. Pandemics can be initiated anywhere and spread everywhere, and in a very abbreviated time frame. No longer can we count on those closest to the point of a pandemic's start, to bear its brunt, to die quietly, hopelessly, and helplessly, and not to pass the infections to others around the world.

Funding the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention is another imperative.

Coordination and planning, in advance, between and among DHS and the public health agencies in all of the states is another imperative.

Finally, having a plan – a national plan – is an imperative, together with pre-determined criteria for triggering implementation of the plan.

When a pandemic begins, there is not time then to develop and implement plans to control the spread (mitigation); to find, responsibly test, and disseminate vaccines (immunization); and to generate therapeutics (treatments and/or cures). Without a combination of those responses, and a plan, more people will die needlessly in the US and abroad, leaving their loved ones to mourn the loss while maintaining prudent social distancing.

We do not have to be so victimized, but the price is eternal vigilance and voting for political candidates who understand the imperatives and who will vote in favor of necessary funding. These are not exciting topics and public office holders, in the tension that there is for prioritized spending, will be sorely tempted to cut corners here – not unlike neglecting infra-structure needs until we have an interstate highway in Minnesota collapse into a river.



World Health Organization



[continued on page two]

["Inevitability and Paradox" / cont. from page 1]

It is not true, as we are being repeatedly told, that we are all in this together and we will get through this. Tell that to the dead, the dying, and their loved ones. Tell that to the elderly, people with compromised immune systems, and people of color who are being infected and dying disproportionately. "Feel good" words, that are not good for much.

As inevitable as the pandemic itself has been the misinformation, hollow excuses for the delayed response, and finger-pointing. The president has downplayed the fact of the pandemic, insisted that no one could have anticipated it (even though he was warned as long ago as November 2019), and called it a hoax as recently as February 28, 2020.

Karen Kolb Sehlke, of Texas, bought into the "hoax" line and said that the pandemic could be stopped by "faith." She died of COVID-19 complications on April 2. So much for the strength of her "faith." Her surviving family members have set up a GoFundMe account to raise money for her hospitalization and burial.

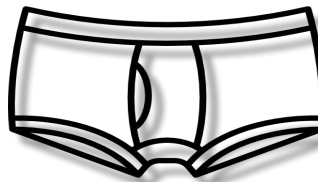
The Israel Health Minister claimed the COVID-19 was divine punishment against homosexuality. Now, he and his wife have tested positive for COVID-19 and sent other members of Israeli political leadership into quarantine. Makes one wonder whether he was wrong about that, or wonder what he and his wife have been up to.

We have evangelical "Christian" pastors out there defying "stay at home" orders in favor of religious services as usual, claiming that God will protect the faithful from infection, and – get this – claiming that "true" Christians would be willing to die from the pandemic rather than change their faithful attendance at church services.

There are two paradoxes operating here. First, this pandemic doesn't just challenge our physical well-being; it challenges our theology. For my part, I believe that God has no hands but our hands, and God gave us minds and science with the intention that we should use them. The Bible tells us that rain falls on the just and on the unjust, on those who "deserve it" and those who don't. The same is true of viral infection in a pandemic. Folks are being tested on what they think God is capable of and what God is incapable of.

The second paradox is the fact that the anti-science and mixed messages from the president will disproportionately impact, and reduce, his political base – those who believe the hoax malarkey, those who want to blame homosexuality for a viral pandemic that cares not a whit about sexual orientation, and evangelical, so-called "Christians," who are Trump supporters and think God will protect them from infection and death. It's a challenge to muster sympathy for them.

Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Scott Kuknyo** for introducing our April speaker, Ted Corrigan, Interim CEO and General Manager of the Des Moines Waterworks during our first ZOOM virtual meeting. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru. Thanks to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our website. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

Our annual fundraising effort is underway to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over \$275,000 for scholarships that are awarded to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a contribution on line or by sending a check.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **May 11, 2020.**

If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

*Don't Miss the
DEADLINE!*



Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.** Thanks to **Scott Kuknyo** for helping coordinate the book exchange.





May Meeting

ZOOM



Login Instructions

The IN-PERSON meeting of the First Friday Breakfast Club scheduled for Friday, May 1, will **NOT** take place because of the coronavirus pandemic. Difficult times call for creative solutions. **We do plan on having a VIRTUAL meeting instead. Below are the instructions for your participation.**

To prepare for the virtual meeting that will be conducted over Zoom, it is recommended members install the free Zoom application. To get started go to <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697> and follow the instructions under "Getting Started on Windows and Mac." It is recommended this be done before Friday morning. During the process you'll be prompted to create a free account.

To join the meeting Friday morning, either click on the link sent to you in an email from Jonathan OR open a web browser and type in this link <https://zoom.us/j/394244067?pwd=aUIEYm1FZGpUYk5pVFpZVWtrODViZz09> and follow the prompts on the screen.

For Zoom-savvy members, it will be much easier to join the meeting with:

Meeting ID: 394 244 067

Password: 021481



To join the meeting to hear the audio only through a phone, dial one of the two numbers below and input the Meeting ID, **394 244 067** when prompted.

Audio Only (no video):

929-205-6099 or 312-626-6799

Regardless how the meeting is joined, please ensure the microphone/phone is muted.

For those not familiar with Zoom, the website has easy to follow information on how to get started and use Zoom:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>.

Anyone who has announcements that need to be made, please get those to me prior to Friday using:
jonathanwilson@davisbrownlaw.com.



May
Speaker:



**Mark
Bennett**



Our speaker in May will be Federal Judge, Mark Bennett. You won't want to miss this. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!! Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.



**May
Day**



3

Maintaining the Flow

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, April 3, 2020, was Ted Corrigan, Interim CEO and General Manager of the Des Moines Waterworks, who gave us an impressively smart précis of DMWW's history and operations, with particular attention to their response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting was conducted virtually, over Zoom.

Corrigan told us that DMWW serves a half-million customers on a \$50 million budget, thus it is the largest utility in the State of Iowa – big for Iowa, though only moderate in size compared to utilities across the nation. *Editorial note: As Corrigan ran efficiently through his litany of fact and figures, more facts and more figures, and provided compelling context for all of it, this reporter relaxed so quickly into the warm bath of competence and convincing professionalism that I neglected to take notes, and I'm therefore quoting from the DMWW Website as much as possible. I guess I'd forgotten what a joy it can be to trust what you hear and see over a monitor.*

As for emergency planning, Corrigan noted that: "DMWW was one of the first water utilities in America to begin sequestering critical staff at its water treatment plant as part of our response plan to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan was created by staff over 10 years ago for situations just like we are experiencing today. Beginning in late March, DMWW sequestered employees at each of our three water treatment plants for two weeks at time. [DMWW provided mobile living quarters to those sequestered, Corrigan noted, to keep up morale.] Critical staff includes operations, maintenance, repair, controls, supervision, and regulatory compliance employees to ensure a continuous supply of safe and reliable water to serve Central Iowa during these unprecedented circumstances. Our general office remains closed to the public. In-home customer service visits and backflow inspection visits are temporarily suspended, unless an emergency. Log-in to our Website or call (515) 283-8700 for assistance with payment. And because proper sanitation is important to curb community spread of the virus, DMWW will temporarily suspend service-termination for delinquent accounts. [Corrigan noted that DMWW has a very large cash-only customer population.] Des Moines Water Works field crews will continue maintaining and repairing the infrastructure that supports the water system, including responding to main breaks and planned improvement projects."

You can listen to a complete audio recording of Ted Corrigan's remarks, and the very interesting Q&A which followed, by clicking on the Speakers tab at our Web site, <ffbc Iowa.org>.



Meeting conducted
via Zoom



Des Moines Water Works

Ted Corrigan earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Iowa State University in 1985. He joined the Des Moines Water Works in Jun 1990, and has been employed there ever since, for just under 30 years, rising through ranks and responsibilities to become Director of Water Distribution and Grounds. When Bill Stowe retired as CEO early last year, Corrigan was named Interim CEO. Ted Corrigan can be reached professionally at the Des Moines Water Works, 2201 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines IA 50321, telephone (515)283-8700.



From the excellent DMWW Website: "Des Moines Water Works grew in 1919 out of the original Des Moines Water Company first organized in 1871 by Frederick M. Hubbell, Jefferson K. Polk, and B.F. Allen. DMWW is an independently owned and operated public utility, deriving its legal status from the Constitution of the State of Iowa and the statutes enacted by the Iowa General Assembly. Its legal authority is set out in Article III, Sec. 38A, Constitution of the State of Iowa; Chapter 388, Code of Iowa; and Division V, Chapter 384, Code of Iowa. The Board of Water Works Trustees of the City of Des Moines consists of five members, appointed by the Mayor of the City of Des Moines for a term of six years. The Board of Water Works Trustees appoints Des Moines Water Works CEO and General Manager. The Board of Trustees has all of the powers of the City Council to operate the utility, except for levying taxes. The utility is owned by the water rate payers. DMWW provides drinking water to approximately 500,000 customers in the Des Moines metro area and sells water to many cities and other entities in central Iowa. DMWW is proud to have the next-to-highest revenue bond rating in the water utility industry and water rates below the national average. DMWW operates three water treatment plants: Fleur Drive, L. D. McMullen Treatment Plant at Maffitt Reservoir, and Saylorville Water Treatment Plant. The utility maintains over 1,360 miles of buried water mains which have 9,800 valves, over 80,000 water meters and automated reading devices, nearly 10,000 fire hydrants and 7 water storage facilities. DMWW also operates Water Works Park and Maffitt Reservoir. Water Works Park comprises approximately 1,500 acres of land near downtown Des Moines and is one of the largest urban parks. Maffitt Reservoir includes 1,300 acres of land, including wooded areas and a 200-acre lake popular for fishing.

Nobody Deserves Coronavirus

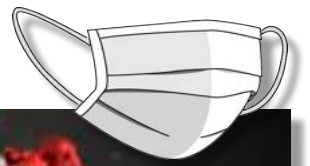
By Jordan Duesenberg

I couldn't tell you when the first time I heard about COVID-19 or Coronavirus (as it's more commonly called) was. As a financial advisor, I keep up on the global news, but the news I was getting starting back in January was just about how this new virus had sprung up in China. Hadn't we seen this before? Wasn't SARS basically the same thing? I was too young and blissfully unaware to even remember how that affected things at the time, but from what I remembered life went on. Therefore, I kept going on with my life, I got my flu shot this year as a result, but that was just in case.

Cut to the first full week of March – I was in Los Angeles to run the L.A. Marathon and also party for my 30th birthday. Coronavirus was in the news a lot more, now about how the virus had made its way to the United States, but at this point there was nothing that indicated that this would be as big of a deal as it was. It was just a bad case of the flu, or at least this is what I thought. 'Everybody is just overreacting,' is what I kept telling myself. So, I went on with my life as usual. I ran the marathon, danced and cruised in leather bars in Silver Lake, went to sold-out concerts, ate at packed restaurants, partied throughout West Hollywood, etc. All during this time, the news was getting worse about coronavirus, but still there were mixed messages. I flew back home on Friday, March 13, and everything changed. Pretty much as soon as I got back home, the message was now that we shouldn't leave our homes, businesses were to be temporarily shut down, that this virus was much deadlier than we anticipated, and even more infectious. I thought about everything I had done the last two weeks, pretty much everything you weren't supposed to do now that they were telling us then. Therefore, I've been in self-quarantine ever since, and thankfully I never got sick.

As rapidly as things changed, I noticed on social media there was news about how a popular Circuit Party, which is essentially a big gay electronic music dance party for Instagays (gorgeous, yet superficial, gays with massive muscles), the Winter Party in Miami, went on the same weekend I ran my marathon in LA, and how there were positive cases of COVID-19 and people were getting sick. What surprised me was our community's reaction to this news. People were mocking those that got sick, perhaps due to the fact that people associate Circuit Queens with beautiful Mean Gays, the Plastics of our community (please watch *Mean Girls* if you don't get this reference, I know you have plenty of time on your hands now). There were even people saying these people deserved it, either through comments or memes. I read some comments where people basically said that coronavirus was essentially retribution for everything bad with the Circuit scene (elitism, rampant drug use, promiscuity) which made me think about how in the last pandemic our community faced, some parts of society claimed HIV/AIDS was retribution against homosexuality; now our own community was kind of doing the same thing. There were other comments I was reading about how Circuit Queens getting sick also deserved it because they simply went to the Winter Party to begin with, even though they knew about coronavirus, which I also found ridiculous. In that case, I too deserved coronavirus for going to Los Angeles, or anyone who did anything prior to the stay-at-home orders deserved to get coronavirus. Trust me, everywhere I went, you would have no clue there was an oncoming global pandemic on our hands, and I'm guessing that was everywhere in the United States and beyond.

Right now our community and beyond needs compassion, and nobody deserves coronavirus, period.



“The world is going through a period of crisis, but whether we look at it as a crisis or as an opportunity to reshape our thinking, depends on us. So use this period as a lesson on how to live life with a concern for all of humankind.”

Abhijit Naskar

1917

A Film Review by Mark Turnage



A film's cinematography is critical to establishing the mood of a movie and how its story is conveyed; while every film has its own "voice" in terms of what's being shown on screen, good cinematography can take a great film and make it legendary. Director Sam Mendes' **1917** is unique for using a technique as challenging as it is immersive: the entire film is shot in two continuous "takes," where the camera never cuts away from its focus. Both equal parts war film and horror film, **1917** is a nerve-wracking cinematic powerhouse—one just as uncompromising in its demand for attention as it is in showing the psychological toll of battle.

The narrative of **1917** takes place over one day in World War I. On April 6, 1917, two British soldiers—Lance Corporal William Schofield (George MacKay) and Lance Corporal Tom Blake (Dean-Charles Chapman) are ordered by General Erinmore (Colin Firth) to deliver a message across enemy lines to Colonel Mackenzie (Benedict Cumberbatch), warning that the German army's recent retreat is actually a strategic ambush. With their telegraph lines cut, the two soldiers are the British army's only hope in saving the lives of 1600 British soldiers, including Blake's brother, from being wiped out by the better-organized and better-armed Germans. Schofield and Blake's mission takes them from their company camp through their own trenches and across an apocalyptic no-man's-land riddled with craters, corpses, smoldering wrecks and barbed wire. The camera pivots around the men to showcase their surroundings as they move, and in terms of set design, it's a dreamlike and dauntingly-crafted experience. Watching the film, I continuously found myself in their shoes, torn between an awareness of their own positions and searching for dangers on the ground and in the smoky mists beyond. Yet the most serious threats to their survival happen completely by surprise. One scene at a dilapidated farmhouse featuring a downed German aircraft pilot is breathtakingly well-executed and acted, and both Schofield and Blake are never the same men for the rest of the film.

The "long take" is a cinematic trick that's not used very often in American cinema: two of the most recognizable examples are Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) and Alejandro Iñárritu's *Birdman* (2014). It's both a blessing and a curse when faced with the practicality of a real-world theater experience. The technique can easily get audiences invested in the narrative from the opening frames just to see what happens next, however, "blink-and-you-miss-it" moments are abundant, and in the theater, there is no convenient time to use the restroom without missing an important chunk of the plot—especially in **1917**. The luxury of the pause button has never been more useful, yet it almost feels like a betrayal to stop in the middle of a film whose entire plot is a desperate race against time. Stop, and the tension of the film's momentum evaporates. Yet the performances of both main characters are raw, magnetic and commanding enough to demand audience investment, even if you need to get more popcorn.

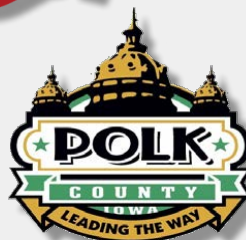
It's clear that **1917** is a passion project for Sam Mendes; in interviews, he relates how the film is an adaptation of a war story told by his grandfather, a British WWI veteran who was also a battlefield messenger. The film, like the messengers, is always moving—an irony when compared to trench warfare revolving around immobility and stalemate. Yet its characters are so vulnerable, heroic, and human. It's an accomplishment in itself that so much is packed into just under two hours. Visceral as it is haunting, **1917** is an investment to watch, but an immensely rewarding one.



COVID-19 Recovery

By Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy

FFBC Friends,



I hope this newsletter is finding you and your loved ones well. As Polk County experiences COVID-19 I have been attending a daily briefing at the Polk County Emergency Management Center. Our team is headed by AJ Mumm who is employed by Polk County as our Emergency Manager. Polk County Health Department is headed by Helen Eddy.

Each day we meet with all of the member governments in Polk County including Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services. We have the three metro hospitals represented, Mercy, Unity Point, and Broadlawns. We also have members who represent Mental Health Community, volunteers and staffing for our 211-information system.

Our daily topic can include discussions of Personal Protective Equipment, housing those experiencing homelessness, or working with our senior care facilities. Each day a report is given to us by Governor Reynolds which indicates the number of new positive cases. We report on the number of beds available including Intensive Care Units beds.

I am pleased to report that your community is working very well to protect and serve our residents during this unprecedented pandemic. While every system can stand improvement, I am pleased to report that we are doing an excellent job to assess our strengths, weakness and opportunities.

In that light, we have begun to discuss what a transition will look like moving from response to recovery. There are three areas we are focused on:

- 1) **Physical Health**—How do we return to normal while trying to protect the public from further outbreaks? What will expanded testing and tracking look like? Will we continue to advise against groups of more than 10?
- 2) **Mental Health**—How do we serve individuals who have experienced loss, anxiety and depression? What types of support systems will we continue for telehealth counseling?
- 3) **Financial Health**—How will we deal with high periods of unemployment? What federal and state programs will we be able to offer to residents who have experienced loss of employment? How will we assist families with food needs, rent assistance and utility payments?

I know that the needs of this community will be great. I happen to believe that we are at our best when we are serving others. I know that many of you have donated to causes over the years and have very generous hearts. Our recovery will require that individuals give of their time, talents, and treasures. As you consider ways that you could aid our community in this recovery, think about those that you might know who have been impacted by job loss, loneliness, or depression. Reach out and make comfort calls to individuals you know and care about. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 515-286-318 or at matt.mccoy@polkcountyiowa.gov I know that I can put you in touch with people in our system who have resources to be helpful to you and those that you encounter that need help along the way. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Matt McCoy
Polk County Supervisor, District 5
111 Court Avenue, Room 300
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Stay Positive: Better Days are On Their Way



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The Ugly Renaissance: Sex, Greed, Violence, and Depravity in an Age of Beauty By Alexander Lee

A Book Review by Steve Person

Alexander Lee is an academician who lectures at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and he is an expert on the Italian Renaissance, having written three previous books on the subject. In the epilogue to this treatise, he states, "While not everything about the Renaissance may be praiseworthy, or even particularly pleasant, it is far more impressive that artists and literateurs should have created works that can still be admired for their brilliance and beauty, despite their having lived in an age of ghastliness, suffering, bigotry, and intolerance."

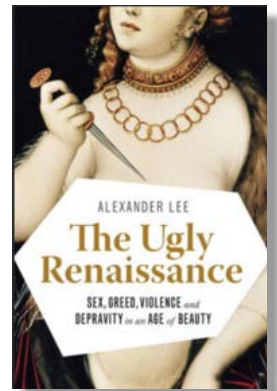
Lee divided his book into three sections with each section stressing a major work of Renaissance art that helped to prove his assertion of the corruption that led to such outstanding works.

Section One, "The World of the Renaissance Artist," followed Michelangelo's creation of his masterpiece sculpture of **David**, one of the most iconic works of the era. The statue took Michelangelo four years to complete (1501-04) and originally was supposed to be one of twelve that would grace the east end of the Florence Cathedral. Upon its completion, however, the sheer weight of it prohibited it from being hoisted in place. It became the dominant sculpture in the plaza of the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence's seat of government. It remained there until the middle of the 19th century when it was moved inside to the Academia. Lee details not only the carving of the statue, but also chronicles the life of its creator. Michelangelo was 26 when he began carving the **David**. At the age of 57, he met the young man with whom he would spend much of the rest of his life: Tommaso de Cavalieri. Lee described him as "a true Renaissance heartthrob." It was never an easy relationship, however.

Section Two, "The World of the Renaissance Patron," emphasized Benozzo Gozzoli's **Journey of the Magi to Bethlehem** as the principle example of the power held by the artist's patron. This work decorated the chapel of Cosimo de Medici's palace. Cosimo, though not the ruler of Florence, might as well have been given the immense power that bankers held in that Renaissance city. The frescoes, "showed the three kings traveling 'in truly royal state through a smiling landscape.'" The frescoes portrayed the enormous wealth and power of its patron who, oddly enough, appeared in a smaller group accompanying the three kings, but nonetheless positioned so no one could escape his presence. Since the belief at the time that moneychangers and lenders were sinners, the elite of the Italian city-states hired artists to create these masterpieces as a sort of penance, including various popes of the period.

Section Three, "The Renaissance and the World," traced the roots of bigotry that pervaded all of Italy. Fra Filippo Lippi's the **Barbadori Altarpiece** demonstrated that the wealthy of the various states—including the papal ones—knew that trade with the burgeoning Islamic and Sub Saharan states was vital to the retention of their wealth. Yet, consorting with these heathen non-Christians, led to an undercurrent of superiority among the Italians resulting in gross characterizations of the people with whom they traded. Furthermore, with the exploration of lands west of the Atlantic Ocean, very little "art" came from these discoveries. Rather it was the exploitation of the native peoples and their riches that interested the Renaissance rulers.

Lee's is a truly scholarly read, and if you are interested in the great art of the period, I highly recommend it.



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