



Auckland Unitarian Church  
Love beyond belief

## *Living La Vida Lockdown*

John DiLeo © 17 October 2021

Well, it finally happened. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, New Zealand joined the rest of the world in dealing with an outbreak of the Delta COVID variant in the community. Our government's "short, sharp" response announced that afternoon turned out not to be all that short...and, recently, has lost a great deal of its sharpness, as well.

The Prime Minister's announcement, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, that Auckland's restrictions under Alert Level 3 would be eased in a series of "steps" surprised many, particularly given many experts were publicly advocating for a return to Level 4 as new cases continued to arise. It came as no surprise – at least, to me – when we heard last Monday that we couldn't move into "Step 2" of the plan, or that schools would not, in fact, be returning to in-person teaching tomorrow.

Since I haven't spoken with many of you in recent weeks, I'll pause here to recount a bit of the timeline for my family's lockdown experience.

As some may recall, Tess and I bought and moved into an apartment in Newmarket, in mid-July. Several months earlier, while I still worked for the airline, we'd booked a trip to Queenstown for the week of 16 August. So, after having gotten only *mostly* settled into our new place, we found ourselves in a hotel in Queenstown when the lockdown announcement came.

I spent the rest of that Tuesday, and much of Wednesday, trying to secure new flights, so we could get back to Auckland before the travel ban went into effect Thursday night. We managed to get a flight back on Thursday, making it back to our apartment that afternoon...and we've been here ever since. We took advantage of the fact we were already scheduled to be off on Friday and used that day to get things sorted – unpacking, grocery runs, laundry, and so forth.

Fortunately for us, both Tess's and my jobs can be done remotely. In many ways, they can't be done as well or effectively, but they *can* be

done and we can continue to work and get paid – this is important, considering our freshly obtained and very large mortgage.

Both of the girls' schools, having honed their craft in earlier lockdowns, transitioned pretty smoothly into learning-from-home mode. So, on Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the four of us started operating in this “new normal” mode, with four people, on four devices, in four separate rooms all day.

But, now...well, now, it's been more than seven weeks. My last haircut was around the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, and it shows. Somewhere around the middle of September, the last vestiges of the kind-of-good diet and exercise habits I'd been working toward finally disappeared. At this point, every morning I tell myself I'll definitely get some exercise today; and every night, I tell myself I really should have gotten some exercise.

Three of the four members of our family have had birthdays during this lockdown. The girls' plans to have parties with their friends were cancelled. Many of their birthday presents had to be ordered online, since non-essential items couldn't be purchased locally in Alert Level 4. This resulted in their presents' arrivals being spread over more than two weeks. Despite their disappointment, they took it in stride, and got to celebrate a little more every time another parcel arrived.

Tess's employer, whose engagement with their membership and financial wellbeing depend heavily on their annual conference, have already postponed the event from October to November, and are now contemplating a move to early 2022.

As part of my day job, I present training, participate in and help organise conferences, and spend a lot of time socialising and networking with current and potential customers. Nearly all of that has stopped, or shifted to Teams and Zoom calls, a pale imitation of the engagement achieved in face-to-face interactions.

The first half of November is normally “security conference season” in New Zealand, with three conferences in two cities over two weeks. Supporting and participating in these conferences are a core part of my team's public outreach and networking for the year. So far, of those three conferences, one has been postponed, a second has gone fully online, and the third is (as at now) going forward with a hybrid format.

This means my being “at” those conferences will be no different than any other day “at” work for me. I’ll be sitting right here, looking at the same camera – livin’ *la vida* Lockdown.

Our younger daughter has been, so far, the most resilient of our bunch. Her primary school sets a varied collection of tasks for students to do, and she completes all – or nearly all – of them each day. Her class gets together on Google Meet calls two or three times a week, and she always takes part.

She’s energetic, inventive, and playful. Over the past few weeks, she’s gone from just *barely* able to ride her bike to a confident rider. She’s constantly repurposing the boxes from our mail-order shipments for new craft projects. We’ve watched her strategic skills at family favourite games, like *Settlers of Catan*, grow continually.

On the other hand, she’s bored *a lot*. Her schoolwork takes her *maybe* three hours a day, while Tess and I try to put in eight (or more) hours of work. Her older sister, now officially a teenager, isn’t all that interested in “child’s play,” so she doesn’t get much interaction there, either.

There’s one big way in which our family is living the memes – there has been *a ton* of baking done in this apartment since August. Tess’s most recent ginger slice attempt was excellent, *and* she’s been working out a peanut butter slice recipe through trial-and-error. For my birthday, she made an amazing carrot cake cheesecake that we polished off in less than 72 hours. Add in the batches of cookies and brownies, and we’ve definitely done our part to contribute to the flour and sugar shortages at local supermarkets.

Looking at myself, well, hmmm...my sleep schedule is completely screwed up – I wrote this at 2:00 a.m., which is a time that I’m *usually* up and working these days. My day job keeps me in this chair and on calls from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. every day, and my conference planning responsibilities chew through a few more hours many nights.

Despite these demands, though, we’ve managed to carve out a family routine every evening. After dinner, we play a game and/or watch a movie or some episodes of *Doctor Who* with a big bowl of popcorn.

The bills get paid, the dishes and laundry get done, the girls and the guinea pigs get fed, and our most essential work *is* getting done.

So...are we coping well? At times, not so much. But we *are* coping and I expect we'll continue to do so. It won't be pretty, but we'll manage.

**Meditation / Conversation Starter:**

What strategies are you using to cope with the continuing lockdown?

Are any working particularly well?

Are there others, where you think we can learn from your mistakes?