An Observation Guide for Systems Change

Crises are, perhaps always, a call for reflection and observation. This current global crisis calls on us to reflect:

- What viruses have infected our global culture?
- How have we been distancing ourselves, based on fear or greed?
- What existing systems manifest these dark, contagious attitudes?

Dr. Jane Vella invites us all to find meaning in the metaphor of COVID-19. She sees it as an **invitation to observe and imagine *new* systems**. Below is an excerpt from a recent reflection from Jane.

I am asking my friends to select a little notebook and write in it each and every new system they see emerging from the midst of this pain.

In my eighty-eight years, I have never seen the government, the church, the academy, the marketplace focus so clearly on the marginalized, the elderly, the workers. This is a possible new system emerging!

→ *A nineteen-year-old professional basketball player plans to pay the salaries of the service people at his home stadium from his store of wealth. He is reported to have said: I hope my colleagues will take notice. That is a new system being created.*

→ *The Metropolitan Opera in New York City is closed. Now, they are offering for 20 hours each day, streaming on their web site metopera.org, a selected HD video of the opera of the day. That is a new system being created.*

→ *A young couple planning to marry in May discovered that the company they had paid to do the wedding could give them a date in the far future, but not now. Another couple, reading about this, offered their more proximate date instead. That is a new system being created.*

Notice each new system you see, as it emerges. Observe how these new systems are not based on fear, or scarcity, or greed or violence, but on honest concern for one another. They are based on love.

As we celebrate the emergence of contagious new systems, we might see this pain as the birth pangs of a healed, caring global culture.

We encourage you to start observing emerging systems, creating them, contributing to them. Let's watch how one system shifts another … and another… and another.