

## “Silence and Light”

By Karen Lieneke

It became so quiet. Uncomfortably quiet at first, still disbelieving the reality that was unfolding all around. So unsettling. A stillness—inside it time looming large and small, all in the same hour. I got lost in it.

But I learned to listen to the quiet, to not be afraid of it. To find, somehow, my place in it. And it helped me find the light in the room. I would stand, looking out the window at a world I knew and didn't know. Looking out, looking back. Not much looking forward . . . where do you look for that?

I started washing windows, an act so small, so easy to dismiss. (I'll get to it later.) Inside and out, scrubbing each pane until the old windows came clean (nearly) and the act of washing—bucket, soap, water—scrub and scrub again—and again— reminded me of my mother, and my grandmother, and all the windows they'd washed. The light they brought.

It is still difficult to see what's ahead, at this end of the pandemic, where it takes us, if it takes off. Again. Even standing in the light.

John Prine said it best:

“Broken hearts and dirty windows  
Make life difficult to see. . . .”

It got even quieter in April, 2020 when we lost him to covid. It feels like a death in the family. Still.