**FROM PANDEMIC TO ANTHEMIC – creating a song for our times, “Help One Another (We All Can”:**

**By Dennis Kole & Laurie Raveis**

**Raveis Kole**

**We stand as a nation interrupted, yearning to return**

**to the familiar, uncertain of the future we face.**

While it has only been four plus months since the novel coronavirus began to establish a foothold in our communities, it seems more like an eon ago as new challenges have continued to sprout up like mushrooms after a thunderstorm! The novel coronavirus is no longer “novel,” and facial masks are no longer something you get at a spa. Shelter-in-place doesn’t refer to the Humane Society and social distancing no longer suggests that you are taking a temporary break from Facebook!

For Laurie and me, the early days of uncertainty and isolation evolved to offer an opportunity to go inward and to spend time and attention with our thoughts and feelings about both our individual experience, and what we could observe occurring across our communities and the world at large. There was an initial sense of wistful melancholia – a yearning for a return to a time when grocery shopping did not feel like entering a war zone and when other people were just people – not potential disease vectors. A sense of uncertainty and the potential for loss pervaded the atmosphere like smoke from a sodden campfire. The heroic actions and selflessness of many stood in stark contrast to some whose behaviors could only charitably be described as foolish.

As these themes have continued to play out, and as we have transitioned through feelings of denial, anger and bargaining before finally arriving at acceptance, we came to realize that while this would be a marathon – like all marathons, there will also come a time when it ends. In the meantime, we all can help one another to get through this together.

**THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN – AGAIN!**

On a personal level, these times remind me (Dennis) of growing up in the late 60's and early 70's: a time when the existential overtones of the Cold War and the turbulence and social unrest of the Vietnam War were overlaid by the social activism and tension of the Civil Rights movement and the youthful activism of the 70's. A time when our society faced some similar challenges to those which we are currently experiencing. Unfortunately, the recent increased levels of rancor, partisanship, and racial, economic and social marginalization have gravely weakened our present ability to find common ground and common cause in our nation and in our communities.

Great songs rise up in times of adversity to comfort and inspire. “We Shall Overcome,” “People Get Ready,” and “What’s Going On” reached out across divisions within our society to deliver a positive message of hope and comfort. Laurie and I are songwriters, and what do songwriters do when they feel deeply connected to something? – They write a song about it! Our new song: “**Help One Another (We All Can)**” is our effort to capture the mood and spirit of these difficult times, accompanied by a positive theme of hope and community: “**be a part of the love…be a part of the solution**!”

Usually when we write a song, it starts with something inside of us that we want to bring out into the world. This song is different: instead of coming from us it feels like the song came through us.

As we recently celebrated our nation’s birthday, I found myself thinking about our national motto: “E Pluribus Unum: out of many - one.” It graces our coinage and currency, but seems to find scant purchase in our hearts.

**Words matter** - they provide structure and context to our thoughts and feelings; they engender and communicate emotion; and they form the foundation of our internal narrative and sense of self. We choose words to define ourselves, but the words that we choose also carry with them a context and meaning that serves to further define us. At a time when so many are focused on using words to increasingly differentiate between “**Us**” and “**Them**,” we think that it is important to use our words to convey a context of connection and community: “…**join together, help one another**…”

A Swedish proverb reads:
"Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow"

Temporarily being able to perform has at least given us an ample opportunity to reflect on the meaning of music as a way to both connect our inner worlds with the outer world, and a way to create, foster and expand our sense of connection with others and our musical family. As summer approaches, in years past we would typically be looking forward to meeting friends – both old and new – at various music related events and performances. The “new normal” and the ongoing importance of social distancing means that we now all face the challenge of how to reconcile physical/social distancing with maintaining social connection and the sense of community.

Within this context, “**Help One Another (We All Can)**,” has been a joy for us to create and we want to “double the pleasure, double the fun” by sharing this positive message of hope and community with you, along with our hope and best wishes that better days will soon lie ahead for all of us! We have created a lyric video that further helps to capture the spirit and mood of the song. Here is a link to it to make it easy for you to listen to!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiReIOMr0S8

PS – the double chorus at the end of our song includes the voices of family members: William and Candy, Chris and Ryan, and Eleanor, Conor and Dane! From our family to yours:

“Alone we are strong, together we are stronger!”