Dear Colleagues

We hope this finds you and yours well and safe in this most challenging of times.  Please be assured of our continued support and prayers for you all and for everything you are navigating at this time.  It has been wonderful to hear and see how everyone is responding to this crisis in their own context, and that means, just like all things in ministry, there is no “one size fits all”.  It has been good too, to have honest conversations that allow our more vulnerable selves to be known.

On behalf of the Support Team can we encourage you to do what is right for you and your family at this time.  It is extremely important that you do not take any unnecessary risks to your own health and that of your family.  Only you will know what that exactly means for you, but it is absolutely right and appropriate that you make these decisions.  Thereafter, respond in the way you know best, because you know your own folk and community, but do not feel obligated to do anything that puts you at risk.

Please don’t feel the pressure to be everything and do everything, and we know these words are easy, but take care of yourself in the midst of everything.  This isn’t just a difficult time for our churches, congregations and communities – it’s a difficult time for us.  We are only human after all, and we can feel all the same anxieties and worries that are around at this time.  If you can, keep in touch with your local colleagues to be a support to one another too.  In some ways, this crisis is a great leveller – we’re all in this together in every respect.

We are still here in Support to respond to your queries, calls and concerns.  We might take a little longer to respond that we would hope, but please know we are with you and will do what we can to support you.  Just drop us an email to pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk for more general support enquiries or contact myself or Gabby directly by email or phone.  The [Ascend](http://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/) website is being updated with helpful resources too.  Please look out for an email from the Ascend Team in due course.

We are continuing with our Recruitment processes virtually at this time, so Discernment Conversations, setting up placements, and conducting virtual Reviews are all progressing.  Thanks so much to those of you who are helping us with all of this.  Our Assessment Conferences are on hold for now, but we are keeping folks moving forward as best we can.  For those who are Interim Moderators in Vacancies, there is still the opportunity to progress applications and interviews creatively, but please follow the advice from the Presbytery Clerk and Principal Clerks Office as to what is and what isn’t possible.

So, the last thing we want to do is bombard your email inbox, so just be in touch if and as helpful to you, and let us offer you a reflection on this time which is a prayer for peace for you in the midst of everything, and for all those we serve.

**Locked down**

There were other doors

once locked in fear,

in a time of waiting

and distress.

It was an uncertain,

questioning time -

longing for what had been known

and treasured before.

Into that space,

calming and soothing,

came these welcome words -

“Peace be with you.”

Peace be with you in every worry,

in every sleepless night,

in every loss experienced,

in every comfort now distant.

Peace be with you in every certainty,

in the shared burden of these days,

in the unexpected connections,

in the gift of another sunset and sunrise.

Peace be with you and yours,

the deepest peace,

the strongest peace,

the peace that passes all understanding.

Christ is our peace

and is in our midst.

His words echo again -

“Peace be with you.”

*Lezley Stewart*

Rosemary Frew (Rev)                Lezley Stewart (Rev Dr)                         Angus R. Mathieson (Rev)

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