

## Opening Words – Mrs Susan Pym, Vice Convener of the Assembly Business Committee

For the Church of Scotland May is General Assembly time. But for the first time in over three hundred years, the Assembly has been cancelled. In more normal times there would be the opening ceremony of the highest court of our Church here in the Assembly Hall. This would begin a week of reports, discussion, fellowship, and prayer. But not this year with coronavirus stalking the land.

Our streets are quiet and empty, and we have learnt to physically distance ourselves from each other: to greet our neighbours from two metres away, and to limit the number of times we leave our homes. Our church buildings sit empty, but the Church is still here, active, ready and willing to respond to the challenges of this time.

At no other time in living memory have the vulnerable been more isolated. Our admiration for staff on the frontline of the NHS, the carers and those carrying out essential tasks as key-workers is higher than ever.

Our Church needs a spokesperson who can be a voice of hope and comfort to our congregations and to our nation. We need someone who will remind us that a day is coming when we will gather together again, and who will speak of a God who heals and renews.

The Church of Scotland may not meet in General Assembly this year, but we need a Moderator - and that is why we meet virtually across the many communities that make up our Church.

No matter where you are, you are in the family of the Church - from Thurso to Kelso, London to Lochcarron, Jerusalem to Glasgow... all are welcome to be part of this celebration and act of worship.

May God be with us all.