



Province of Yorkshire, West Riding
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My dear Friends and Companions,

It is with a sad heart that I write to you at a time when the whole world is in such a state of turmoil. We are facing an enemy that we cannot see or touch.

We received a notification dated 17th March 2020 from His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent that all Lodge and Chapter meetings within England and Wales were suspended for a period of four months with immediate effect.

This was followed by the “Lockdown” announced by the UK Government on 24th March 2020.

Dramatic and worrying times indeed. These worries are now a part of daily life.

We are all facing many challenges that none of us could have possibly imagined just a few short months ago; the concerns for our families, for our friends, for our neighbours, for the wider community and for those on the front line of the NHS who are performing an invaluable service under extremely difficult conditions.

Many of us are self-isolating which increases the feeling of helplessness and frustration. There is no doubt that this is an experience that none of us have faced in our lifetimes.

As a result of this truly horrendous pandemic our much-loved Freemasonry has been put on hold. During this trying time our Masonic principles are, without doubt, coming to the fore. Many of our Brethren and Companions are in the frontline in the NHS and many others are among the thousands who have applied to be volunteers.

My underlying and very great concern is the well-being of all our Companions and their families, many of whom are isolated and vulnerable. We have a large number of older Companions who, because of their age, are particularly at risk both from the Coronavirus and from loneliness. We must also not forget our younger Companions who, although fitter and stronger, also are at risk.

My plea to each and every Companion – it is our collective responsibility to look after one another. Please take some time out each day to contact Companions in your own and other Chapters, whether it be by a telephone call, email or via any social media platform. I am new to WhatsApp and Skype, to name but a few, but to actually see the person you are talking to is that much more gratifying and personal. The joint weekly bulletins which are issued in conjunction with the Craft and the Mark will keep everyone up to date and these will continue throughout this trying time.

Remember Companions, we are a family and we are here to support one another. Masonic charities are always there to help when needed so please remember that.

I have been touched by the number of Companions and Brethren who have contacted me to see if Jean and I are well and in need of anything. Freemasonry has existed for hundreds of years no matter what obstacles have been thrown at it and this current problem will not extinguish the light of Freemasonry.

I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at some stage in the hopefully not too distant future when we can renew our friendships at our Masonic meetings

To all my dear friends – stay well and keep safe.

With my very best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

Stewart Carley
Grand Superintendent