



## Leaning on Each Other

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Rachel Yates

From time to time, I suffer from vertigo. When it gets out of hand, I need to hold onto walls to navigate, and any head movement makes my brain spin. Several years ago, I had a particularly acute and ill-timed bout on the day of a presbytery meeting. My pastor and I were scheduled to speak about our congregation on a property issue requiring the vote of the assembly. I spent most of the day on the couch, laying as still as I could.

My pastor drove me to the church, and we walked slowly, arm in arm, into the meeting. When it came time for us to speak, we approached the podium as one, holding onto each other and moving in synch so that I didn't spin out of control. So long as I was holding onto the sides of the podium, I was able to address the assembly without assistance. After we both spoke and answered questions, we walked together back to our seats.

Days later, people called me with their concerns, "Is your pastor okay? Was she having trouble walking?" It turns out, people couldn't distinguish which one of us was ill. We walked together; we leaned on each other. It wasn't clear to anyone whether she needed the help or I did.

In these days of the coronavirus, we all might be experiencing a version of head-spinning vertigo. We reach out for support – something sturdy and unchanging to hold us upright and help us navigate. When the call to ministry propels us off the couch, we rely on each other. We lean on each other. We walk together.

Because this virus spreads from person to person without our awareness, one of the ways we support each other is to wear masks and maintain social distance. I wear a mask because I don't want to catch anything and I don't want to spread anything I already have. In the same way people at my presbytery meeting couldn't distinguish whether my pastor or I were ill, a mask does not mark those with the virus and those without. It protects both. You support me, and I support you. We lean on each other; we walk together.

Even if you feel personally that you're healthy enough to weather the virus or you doubt its deadliness or you feel that the pandemic warnings are overblown, would you be willing to show care for others anyway by wearing a mask and maintaining your distance? Out of love for others in your church family, would you do this not because you were forced to, but because you wanted to give to them every chance for good health and life? Your selflessness would be a gift of compassion -- and could be a gift of life -- to those who aren't strong enough to survive contracting the virus, even if you can. The church, at its best, does this. We love one another even when it means we're inconvenienced or when we must sacrifice a bit for the sake of others. That's how we move in synch and keep things from spinning out of control.

I pray for you, for your safety, and for your energy in ministry. I long for the day when we can walk together arm in arm. Until then, I'll keep my distance, for your sake and for mine.

