



THE BISHOP OF LEEDS
The Right Reverend Marcus Stock

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The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing Street
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1st November 2020

Dear Prime Minister

I begin by expressing my recognition of the very intense pressure and workload that you and the government ministers supporting you are experiencing as you seek to guide our country through this resurgence of infections resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

I know that, in addition to the welfare and health of our country's citizens, you are anxious to restore the economy of our nation for the sake of the common good. Underpinning the wellbeing and the spirit of a great portion of the populace is the comfort and strength that is rooted in the practice of their religious faith. Indeed, the motivation for the service which is given by a great many people in the interests of the common good is rooted in their religious faith and the virtues and values it promotes.

Since the beginning of July, our churches have introduced measures which have enabled the faithful to gather safely for acts of worship. Indeed, many people who have been able to return to their regular place of worship have commented that the rigorous safety measures which we have introduced have made our churches some of the safest places for people to be. There is no evidence that our churches have in any way contributed to the recent rise in the rate of Covid-19 infections.

What will be vital to sustain people in the weeks ahead is the gift of hope. Our human nature is comprised of body and spirit, and the spirit is sustained by hope. It is in the heart that hope is born and builds within us the resilience we need to face the challenges in our lives. What I ask you is, please help places of worship to sustain hope in the hearts of a great many of the people of our country.

I ask you, therefore, to amend the proposed national restrictions guidance (effective from 5th November 2020) to enable places of worship to remain open for acts of public worship and religious services. This truly will help to sustain the hope of many people.

Please be assured of my prayers for you, your family and the Government during these unprecedented times. With every blessing, I remain

Yours in the hope offered by Our Lord Jesus Christ

+ Marcus Stock

✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds