

## DOCUMENT 1 - EMAIL EXCHANGE ON DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTMAS BUBBLE MEDIA LINES – 22 DECEMBER 2020

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 22 December 2020 06:48

**To:** Wightman S (Scott) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)];

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk; Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director);

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; covid-19 Policy; Chief Medical Officer; CNOD - Covid 19; Leitch J

(Jason); DL for Outbreak Strategy; DL for Outbreak Management Internal Team; [Redacted -

38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

Sunderland RE (Rachel)

**Cc:** Communications Healthier; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -

38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -

38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Munro D (Dominic); [Redacted -

38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Subject:** RE: URGENT Media enquiry - Bubbles/ Household - BBC

Good morning

The reporter has asked us if we can have a quick look to make sure there are no glaring errors in it.

Grateful if you can cast your eyes over it and let me know.

Many thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**[Redacted – out of scope]**

### **How many people can take part in a church service at Christmas?**

Places of worship are still restricted to a total of 50 people in levels one, two and three. In level two, drive-in worship events are permitted and in level one, outdoor worship is limited to gatherings of 200.

On Christmas Day these rules for church congregations will remain, but “bubbles” will be able to attend together, rather than as separate households.

By Boxing Day, all of mainland Scotland will be in level four, reducing permitted congregation size to 20.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/pages/overview/>

**[Redacted – out of scope]**

**DOCUMENT 2 – CORRESPONDENCE ON SUBMISSION ON TIGHTENING OF RESTRICTIONS AT LEVEL 4 – 29 DECEMBER 2020**

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 13:58  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Submission - Places of Worship - Tightening Restrictions at Level 4 - 29 December 2020 - DRAFT

I agree – A in almost all occasions but D in extremis. I'm content for it to proceed.

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 29 December 2020 11:24  
**To:** Leitch J (Jason); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** Submission - Places of Worship - Tightening Restrictions at Level 4 - 29 December 2020 - DRAFT  
**Importance:** High

Dear Jason / [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

Please see attached our draft submission which we hope to finalise and send up today. Grateful for your views on options A-D and our proposed recommendations. Additionally we are seeking views from analysts and wondered if this should also go via other clinical colleagues this morning?

We had originally recommended option A (current Tier 4 restrictions – 20 cap) as the preferred option and still are, but advice from David Rogers is to recommend officials work on option D (full closure) so it can be deployed quickly if required.

Happy to discuss.

Many thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] **Faith and Belief Team Leader | Connected Communities | Scottish Government | 3H North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | Mobile: [Redacted -38(1)(b)] | work Tuesday – Friday**

**PLEASE NOTE I AM CURRENTLY WORKING FROM HOME UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE AND CAN BE CONTACTED VIA EMAIL, SKYPE OR MOBILE [Redacted -38(1)(b)]**

## DOCUMENT 3 – SUBMISSION ON TIGHTENING OF RESTRICTIONS AT LEVEL 4 – 29 DECEMBER 2020

### Attachment to email of 29 December 2020 11:24

From: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
Connected Communities

29 December 2020

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

### **COVID-19 TIGHTENING RESTRICTIONS AT LEVEL 4: PLACES OF WORSHIP**

#### **Purpose**

1. To outline options for tightening of restrictions on places of worship at protection level 4 and to seek your views on those options. Final decisions on restrictions will be taken by the First Minister.

#### **Priority**

2. **Urgent** - This work is being carried out on a **contingency** basis to enable the Scottish Government to implement additional restrictions quickly should that be necessary.

#### **Background**

3. COVID-19 cases in Scotland are rising again in parts of the country and a new variant of the virus has been identified and is circulating in Scotland.
4. From 26 December 2020, the whole of mainland Scotland will be placed in protection level 4. Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, and the other island communities areas will go into level 3.
5. The new variant of the virus is more transmissible; it spreads more rapidly. As more information about the new variant becomes available, it may be that a decisive action has to be taken quickly to tighten restrictions at level 4. The level of tightening has yet to be determined [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]. In either event [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Restrictions and Requirements\) \(Local Levels\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) will need to be amended.
6. This submission sets out the options for a tightening of restrictions at level 4 for places of worship.

#### **Places of Worship and Current Restrictions in Level 4**

7. Scotland's [COVID-19 Strategic Framework](#) sets out the current restrictions for places of worship.

8. In level 4, places of worship, are permitted to open with **restricted numbers of up to 20 people in attendance** (the limit on numbers is only in guidance). This number is a departure from the other levels as set out in the framework. Apart from level 4, restrictions for places of worship are consistent throughout levels 0 – 3 (with restricted numbers of up to 50 people in attendance). As discussed at para 4, the majority of Scotland is now in level 4 - places of worship will therefore have to reduce their maximum permitted numbers from 50 to 20 (representing a reduction of 60%).
9. People can travel within Scotland to/from a level 3 area to attend their normal place of worship. However, the same is **not permitted** to/from a level 4 area. This will further impact the ability of worshippers to attend their normal service if it is the case that it is located in different local authority from their ordinary dwelling. An exception is made for Ministers of religion or worship leaders, with travel between areas is permitted for the purposes of leading an act of worship.
10. It should be noted that the restrictions on numbers in places of worship are **in guidance only**. They are not provided for in the regulations. Similarly, the guidance only details how places of worship can open safely at all levels.
11. Different restrictions are in place for the use of places of worship for funeral services and marriage and civil partnership ceremonies. **[Redacted – out of scope]**.

### **Public Health Impacts – Places of Worship During COVID-19**

12. At the beginning of the first UK-wide lockdown (March 2020) places of worship were initially closed completely for worship (both individual and communal).
13. As detailed in Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's 'route map' out of COVID-19, individual or private prayer was permitted in June 2020. In Phase 3 of the route map (July 2020) the Scottish Government allowed places of worship to reopen with a cap of 50 people, and subject to other safety precautions as set out in our Places of Worship Guidance.
14. The cap of 50 people for places of worship was then replicated in Levels 0-3 of the Scottish Government's Strategic Framework (replacing the phased approach as per the earlier 'route map'). As discussed, level 4 restricts places of worship to a maximum of 20 people.
15. **[Redacted – S30(b)(i)]**
16. In terms of the impact on public health and the spread of COVID-19, the Scottish Government has been notified of only **one small outbreak** with a Church in Lanarkshire. In this instance the case numbers totalled two individuals. Of course a caveat to this figure is that there may have been more outbreaks occurring at places of worship, of which the Scottish Government has not been notified.
17. **[Redacted – S30(b)(i)]**

## The Rest of the UK: Level 4 Equivalent

	<b>England</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
<p><b>Maximum attendance numbers*</b></p> <p>*numbers for funerals and other ceremonies will differ</p>	<p>Based on capacity of the place of worship to allow for appropriate physical distancing.</p> <p>Note that when locked down until early December, places of worship <b>were entirely closed.</b></p>	<p>Places of worship remain open. Alert Level 4, and their guidance states that the advice “particularly for level 4, is for people not to congregate whenever possible” and that “the safest option is to stay home and not socially mix at all and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable should take extra precautions to minimise their contact with others.”</p>	<p>Places of worship can remain open, but with restrictions (capacity for worship seems to be determined by a risk assessment of relevant premises).</p> <p>For other purposes aside from worship (except weddings and funerals) gatherings in a POW seem to be limited to 15.</p>

### Options for Tightening Places of Worship Restrictions

18. Should the introduction of stricter measures be necessary at level 4, the options for places of worship are set out below.

[Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

19. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

20. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

21. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

22. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

23. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

24. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

[Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

25. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

26. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

27. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

28. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

[Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

29. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

30. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

31. [Redacted - S29(1)(a)]

32. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

*Option D: fully restrict the operation of places of worship*

33. This option is the most restrictive. It would see places of worship unable to admit worshippers, even for individual prayer or contemplation only. This reflects the position for places of worship during the first phase of the pandemic. Depending on the approach taken, use and attendance at places of worship could still be permitted for funerals, marriages and associated ceremonies.

34. [Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]. Ministers would still need to take cognisance of ECHR considerations if such an approach was deemed favourable.

35. This option will require analysis of the “four harms” including (on harm 1) an assessment of the risks of keeping POW option and the potential benefits of closure to reduce transmission.

36. This option would require a change to regulations as POW are currently exempt from closure under existing level 4 restrictions. We would propose reverting to provisions in the regulations when POWs were first closed in March, set out below:

*(6) A person who is responsible for a place of worship must ensure that, during the emergency period, the place of worship is closed, except for uses permitted in paragraph (7).*

*(7) A place of worship may be used—*

*(a) for funerals,*

*(b) to broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast, or*

*(c) to provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency),*

*provided that, in each case, a distance of two metres is maintained between every person on the premises (except between two members of the same household, or a carer and the person being assisted by the carer).*

**37. This option is recommended only in the instance that there is agreement that to do otherwise would:**

- i. compromise the integrity of related ‘stay at home’ messaging; and/or**
- ii. create insurmountable inconsistencies as level 4 guidance is further tightened for similar-sized gatherings and arrangements with similar transmission risks; and/or**
- iii. run counter to the protection of public health.**

## **Recommendation**

38. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

39. [Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

[Redacted – out of scope]

40. [Redacted – out of scope] .

41. [Redacted – out of scope]

42. [Redacted – out of scope]

## **Conclusion**

43. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
 Connected Communities  
 29 December 2020

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
First Minister			X		
Deputy First Minister			X		
Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities		X			X
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport					X
Lord Advocate					
Solicitor General					

Permanent Secretary  
 Chief Medical Officer  
 Deputy Chief Medical Officer  
 Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director  
 David Rogers  
 Madhu Malhotra  
 Penelope Cooper  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
 Ruairaidh Macniven  
 Colin Troup  
 James Hynd  
 Cheryl Paris, Health Protection  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Health Protection  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Health Protection  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Coronavirus Legislation  
 Coordination  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
 SGLD Covid Legislation  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Family Law Unit  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Family Law Unit  
 Robert Marshall, Connected Communities  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Connected Communities  
 [Redacted -38(1)(b)], Connected Communities  
 CCD Logistics Team  
 Communications COVID-19  
 Burial and Cremation Inbox  
 Liz Lloyd  
 Jeanette Campbell  
 David Hutchison

## Document 4 – Email from Head of COVID Analysis regarding 4 Harms – Places of Worship – 31 December 2020

**From:** Head of COVID Analysis

**Sent:** 31 December 2020 11:17

**To:** DG Health & Social Care; Director of Population Health; Cooper P (Penelope) ; Bain MB (Marion) ; Caesar DH (David) ; Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) ; McQueen F (Fiona) ; Leitch J (Jason); Smith G (Gregor) ; Murray D (Diane) ; Steedman N (Nicola) ; DCMO Health COVID19>; CNOD - Covid 19 ; Chief Medical Officer

**Cc:** Covid-19 Director ; Head of COVID Analysis ; DG Constitution and External Affairs ; Griffin J (Joe) ; Thomson KAL (Ken) (Director-General) ; Munro D (Dominic) [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Hynd JS (James) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Director of Health Workforce

**Subject:** RE: Immediate for comments submission to FM 31.1

David et al

From a harms perspective I have tried to bring together various ideas that are on email chains and comment from a four harms perspective.

[Redacted - Out of Scope]

- **Places of worship** – reducing the numbers allowed to places of worship will make no real difference so the options considered are **private prayer only or complete closure**. – From a Harm 1 perspective the latter should have a moderate to high impact (given the 800,000 people who regularly engage in congregational worship) as it reduces the potential for meeting which could also reduce individual risk for older people and people from ethnic minorities who may be overrepresented in this category. Private prayer only will have a more modest impact on Harm 1, quite low. From a harm 2 and 3 perspective we know that the mental health detriment of restricting congregational worship or closing places of worship are potentially very significant for faith communities. Increased isolation and loneliness and a loss of community could impact on mental and potentially physical health. Alternately it may be a relief to some more vulnerable members of the congregation if they know they cannot attend and a difficult decision on whether to risk attending is take out of their hands by closure.

[Redacted - Out of Scope]

Setting this all out has been helpful for me if not for you. Let me know if I missed anything.

Audrey

Dr Audrey MacDougall FAcSS

Scottish Government Chief Social Researcher

**Joint Head of C-19 Analysis Division**

**DOCUMENT 5 – EMAIL EXCHANGE ON THE CLOSURE OF PLACES OF WORSHIP – 05 JANUARY 2021**

Tue 05/01/2021 18:53

Leitch J (Jason)

To [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

Cc [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

RE: Messaging - Closure Places of Worship

Sorry – day was crazy. You're position is correct and I'll join tomorrow.

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**

**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 05 January 2021 14:30

**To:** Leitch J (Jason)

**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Subject:** FW: Messaging - Closure Places of Worship

Dear Jason

Happy new year to you!

Forwarding on for clinical views regarding setting out the rationale for the decision to close POW (see email below). However we would want to make clear to our faith communities that this matter will be kept under active and regular review.

I'm intending to put out a short communication to our stakeholders this afternoon to provide clarity between now and Friday when the regulations will come into play. This will make clear that worship is not part of any exemptions between now and Friday and that the Stay at Home message is to be followed (essentially POW are closed for worship from today and the regs is a tidy up).

We have a meeting with our Faith Group tomorrow afternoon and wondered if it might be possible for you to attend? The meeting was set up to discuss another matter but given where we now are with POW closing this will be the main item for discussion tomorrow.

I hope this all makes sense but do let me know if you've any questions / need further info

Many thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] | **Connected Communities | Scottish Government | 3H North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | Mobile: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]**

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 05 January 2021 12:55  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** Messaging - Closure Places of Worship  
**Importance:** High

Hi [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

We have a couple of issues to deal with regarding the closure of Places of Worship which comes into effect in the regulations on Friday 0001hrs.

Between now and then we need to provide clear messaging today for our faith communities which provides clarity around stay at home and that attending worship is not an exception (so therefore effectively closed from now and will come into regs on Friday). Example email below from one of our stakeholders:

*It was clear from yesterday's announcement that places of worship in level 4 areas are to close from Friday. In the Christian calendar, Epiphany falls tomorrow and a number of our churches would normally have been holding services then. Whilst the government restrictions close churches from Friday, the guidance which took effect at midnight last night is clear that people are only allowed to leave their homes for certain specific purposes, and as far as I can see, that does not include attending a church service. In effect, therefore, it really appears that there is a de facto closure of places of worship already for congregational worship. If I am incorrect in that assumption, I would be pleased to be corrected. For the same reason, the opening of churches for individual prayer in level 4 areas similarly seems no longer to be possible.*

Additionally we have received the attached statement from the Roman Catholic Church which we will need to respond to and this might be best placed dealt with on a call with them separately.

Grateful for your views from a comms perspective. I've already spoken with SGLD who have confirmed the position on this anomaly.

Many thanks and happy to discuss.

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)] | **Connected Communities | Scottish Government | 3H North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | [Redacted -38(1)(b)]**

## **DOCUMENT 6 - ATTACHMENT TO EMAIL 05/01/2021 – BCOS STATEMENT - 05 JANUARY 2021**

5 January 2021

### **DRAFT BCOS STATEMENT**

Following the First Minister's statement that all places of worship will close from Friday 8 January until Monday 1 February 2021, Scotland's Catholic Bishops have issued the following statement:

"Recognising the dangers posed by the new faster-spreading variant of COVID-19, we note the Scottish Government's decision to close all places of worship from Friday 8 January 2021.

The Scottish Government believes that such measures are necessary to curtail the spread of this new strain during the roll-out of the vaccine. We appreciate the difficult choices facing the Scottish Government at this time and we have shown ourselves ready both to cooperate with and to support its efforts in protecting the common good. This has included curtailing public worship in extreme circumstances and for a limited period.

However, we are also perplexed by the decision, given that the stringent measures taken since last March to ensure public safety in our churches have been effective. No evidence has been forthcoming to justify the inclusion of places of worship as sources of infection. Without such scientific evidence these restrictions will appear to Catholics to be arbitrary and unfair. Moreover, significant number of other sectors similarly restricted last March alongside public worship – such as construction, manufacturing and elite sports - have now been left free to continue in operation. We also note that, in England, the essential contribution of public worship to the spiritual welfare of all citizens during this crisis has now been endorsed by the decision not to close places of worship while the Scottish Government has apparently retreated from this view, causing dismay and confusion.

We are very aware of the disappointment these closures will cause not only to our own Catholic community, but to many of our fellow-Christians and those of other faiths in Scotland. We wish to emphasise again the spiritual, social and psychological benefits provided by continuing public worship, and we ask for these to be taken into full account in future decisions. Public worship is a human right and is a duty humanity owes to God. More concretely, Catholics need the Eucharist and the Sacramental encounter with the LORD as necessary to their spiritual wellbeing and their ultimate salvation.

While we unequivocally share the common goal of protecting public health, we urge the Scottish Government, when the present measures are reviewed later in January, to reconsider these restrictions in the light of the above concerns."

**DOCUMENT 7 - CONNECTED COMMUNITIES CORRESPONDENCE AHEAD OF THE MEETING WITH FAITH AND BELIEF REPRESENTATIVES - 06 JANUARY 2021**

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:00  
**To:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** Faith Meeting 6 Jan 2021 - relating questions

Dear Jason

Ahead of this afternoon's meeting with our faith group I thought I'd share with you the main areas concern and queries that have been arising since Monday's announcement on enhanced restrictions at level 4 (lockdown):

**Q. Can we continue with congregations until Friday**

A: It is now a legal requirement to **stay at home** unless it is essential. The Stay at Home guidance is now in regulations and came into force at 0001hrs today and there is no exemption to attend a place of worship between now and Friday. This effectively means that POW should be closed for both congregational worship and individual prayer with immediate effect. Additionally given the current position in relation to the pandemic the Scottish Government would also discourage more than 5 (or 6, if an interpreter is required) from attending a marriage in a level 4 area before Friday. All associated guidance is being amended now to reflect what will be the regulatory position from Friday. We apologise for the degree of inconsistency in messaging from government but hope that this clears this anomaly up.

**Q: What are permitted uses of a POW when closed for worship from Friday?**

A: The regulations are currently being finalised but is likely to include the following: A POW may be used for (a) funerals (b) weddings – max 5 capacity (or 6 if an interpreter is required), (c) to broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast. (d) to provide essential voluntary services or urgent public support services (including the provision of food banks or other support for the homeless or vulnerable people, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency). There may be a couple of other permitted uses which we can discuss at tomorrow's faith meeting

**Q: Can POW continue to provide regulated childcare services for key workers during lockdown?**

A: As far as we are aware yes. But need to seek clarity.

**Q: Imams/ certain staff are key workers based on their role**

A: I think yes – but need to seek clarity.

**Q. Is it still possible to proceed with a baptism provided the numbers do not exceed 5, as per a wedding and that only the parents hold the child?**

A: Under the enhanced restrictions at level 4 mean that baptisms cannot take place.

Additionally you are already aware that the RC Church issued a statement yesterday [Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland \(bcos.org.uk\)](http://bcos.org.uk) . **[Redacted – S30(b)(i)]**

Any questions or further information required let me know.

Many thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] **Connected Communities | Scottish Government | 3H North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | Mobile: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]**

**DOCUMENT 8 – EMAIL EXCHANGE AROUND OUTBREAK DATA IN PLACES OF WORSHIP – 06 JANUARY 2021**

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 13:26  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Chief Medical Officer <CMO@gov.scot>; DCMO Health COVID19; McQueen F (Fiona); Bain MB (Marion); Murray D (Diane); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Places of Worship

Yes helpful [Redacted -38(1)(b)], for future conversatiosn even. Thanks.

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:41  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Leitch J (Jason)  
**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor) [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Chief Medical Officer ; DCMO Health COVID19 ; McQueen F (Fiona) ; Bain MB (Marion) ; Murray D (Diane) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Places of Worship

Jason

It was flagged to us early December that colleagues in North Ireland were dealing with a large number of church outbreaks. Some quite substantial.

[Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

We don't have any more details but can ask colleagues in NI if this if helpful? Can't promise we will receive anything by 3pm though.

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)] COVID-19 Outbreak Management  
Community Surveillance Division  
Directorate for Covid Public Health  
Scottish Government  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:32

**To:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]>; Chief Medical Officer; DCMO Health COVID19; McQueen F (Fiona); Bain MB (Marion) <Marion.Bain@gov.scot>; Murray D (Diane); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David) <David.Caesar@gov.scot>; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Places of Worship

Jason

OK, not much I am afraid.

Table 13 of the attached PHS report says "Worship and Prayer" – 45 cases for week ending 20 December but it's tenuous as it points out. Updated figures for that are due out later today.

Just before Christmas we had been asked by policy colleagues for what information we had relating to outbreaks associated with funerals/churches which is also attached, but again is very small in numbers.

Regards

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
Directorate for Covid Public Health  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)]Mobile: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
SG Outbreak Response Team: [DLODOPSOR@gov.scot](mailto:DLODOPSOR@gov.scot)

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:12  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]Chief Medical Officer; DCMO Health COVID19; McQueen F (Fiona) ; Bain MB (Marion); Murray D (Diane); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: COVID-19 Outbreak Management Incident Summary - 29/12/20

Cheers...

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:08  
**To:** Leitch J (Jason)

**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Chief Medical Officer; DCMO Health COVID19; McQueen F (Fiona); Bain MB (Marion); Murray D (Diane); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: COVID-19 Outbreak Management Incident Summary - 29/12/20

Jason

Will check what we have now. Don't recall being sighted or invited on many outbreaks to do with places of worship I must admit.

Will come back to you ASAP with what I can find.

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] Directorate for Covid Public Health  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
Mobile: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
SG Outbreak Response Team: [DLODOPSOR@gov.scot](mailto:DLODOPSOR@gov.scot)

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Sent:** 06 January 2021 12:05  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Chief Medical Officer; DCMO Health COVID19; McQueen F (Fiona); Bain MB (Marion); Murray D (Diane); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Caesar DH (David)  
**Cc:** Smith G (Gregor); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: COVID-19 Outbreak Management Incident Summary - 29/12/20

Andy, stealing the copy list. [Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]. We're closing places of worship and England are not. [Redacted – S30(b)(i)]

J

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

[Redacted – out of scope]

## DOCUMENT 9 – EMAIL EXCHANGE ON RESPONSE TO MEDIA ENQUIRY – 10 JANUARY 2021

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)  
**Sent:** 10 January 2021 15:49  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Higgins K (Kate); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Munro D (Dominic); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director); Hynd JS (James); DG Health & Social Care <DGHSC@gov.scot>; Chief Medical Officer; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Higgins K (Kate); News Desk  
**Subject:** RE: Media enquiry - Mail - Free Presbyterians in revolt against Covid rules

These lines are fine. [Redacted – S30(b)(ii)] but we have regular contact with the leaders of Scotland’s faith groups, including this week. There is evidence from test and protect that positive cases have been in places of worship during their infectious periods. With community transmission as high as it is just now we believe this advice is proportionate.

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 10 January 2021 15:38  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Higgins K (Kate) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Munro D (Dominic) ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) ; Hynd JS (James) ; DG Health & Social Care ; Leitch J (Jason) ; Chief Medical Officer ; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Higgins K (Kate) ; News Desk  
**Subject:** FW: Media enquiry - Mail - Free Presbyterians in revolt against Covid rules  
**Importance:** High

Apologies, bringing in more colleagues for clearance / awareness due to the fact that services went ahead this morning in breach of the regulations.

Draft lines below.

**A Scottish Government spokesperson said:**

“We know how tough this decision will be for many people. However we must take action across society to stop the virus spreading further, so we can protect public health and save lives.

“The virus transmits when people come together and therefore we have to reduce, as far as possible, the places where they do so – this involves the decision on places of worship, just as it does schools, and workplaces so we can keep the country as safe as possible. We don’t want places of worship to be closed for a moment longer than they have to be.”

Thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**COVID-19 Communications – Education & Justice**

Scottish Government | St Andrew’s House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [Working from home](#) - M: [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 10 January 2021 15:16

**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Higgins K (Kate)

**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk

**Subject:** Media enquiry - Mail - Free Presbyterians in revolt against Covid rules

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] / [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has written to the FM (attached), challenging the decision re allowing attendance for worship. The following line was issued on SpAd clearance on Friday (as it mirrored what FM said in the briefing last week), to the Mail on Sunday who were covering a campaign by Canon Thomas White to raise money to challenge the SG’s decision to close places of worship.

Content for this to issue to the Mail?

**A Scottish Government spokesperson said:**

“We know how tough this decision will be for many people. However we must take action across society to stop the virus spreading further, so we can protect public health and save lives.

“The virus transmits when people come together and therefore we have to reduce, as far as possible, the places where they do so – this involves the decision on places of worship, just as it does schools, and workplaces so we can keep the country as safe as possible. We don’t want places of worship to be closed for a moment longer than they have to be.”

Thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)] **COVID-19 Communications – Education & Justice**  
Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | **Working from home** - [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]@dailymail.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 10 January 2021 14:33  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]>  
**Subject:** FW: Free Presbyterians in revolt against Covid rules

Hi [Redacted -38(1)(b)], here's the letter. Wee Free services took place today as normal.

Thanks

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

#### **Disclaimer**

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**DOCUMENT 10 – EMAIL EXCHANGE – MEDIA ENQUIRY – CHURCH LEADERS  
LETTER TO THE FIRST MINISTER – 11 JANUARY 2021**

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:28

**To:** Leitch J (Jason); Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); Ingebrigtsen R (Ross); McAllister C (Colin); Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser

**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Communications CSSE ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)] ;

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)];

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit Briefing Unit

**Subject:** RE: SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

---

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Media Manager | Newsdesk](#)  
[Scottish Government](#)

\*

Please contact me on [Skype for Business](#) in the first instance

\*

**From:** Leitch J (Jason)

**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:21

**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); Ingebrigtsen R (Ross); McAllister C (Colin); Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser

**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Communications CSSE ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)] ;

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)];

[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit

**Subject:** RE: SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**

**National Clinical Director**

@jasonleitch



**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)];  
**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:19  
**To:** Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) ; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) ; McAllister C (Colin) ; Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser  
**Cc:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Communications CSSE ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)] ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk ; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit  
**Subject:** RE: SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

[Redacted -38(1)(b)];  
**m:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)];  
Media Manager | Newsdesk  
Scottish Government

Please contact me on **Skype for Business** in the first instance

**From:** Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser)  
**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:17  
**To:** Ingebrigtsen R (Ross); [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; McAllister C (Colin); Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser  
**Cc:** Communications CSSE; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit  
**Subject:** RE: SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

**From:** Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)  
**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:06  
**To:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); McAllister C (Colin); Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser  
**Cc:** Communications CSSE; [[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit  
**Subject:** RE: SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

[Redacted -38(1)(b)];

Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

Thanks

Ross

*Please note Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot) for information.*

**From:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)];

**Sent:** 11 January 2021 17:03

**To:** Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser); McAllister C (Colin); Nicolson S (Stuart) Special Adviser; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)

**Cc:** Communications CSSE; [[Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; News Desk; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; [Redacted -38(1)(b)]; First Minister Covid Briefing Unit

**Subject:** SPAD VIEW PLS - LINE TO REISSUE: Media Query - church leaders letter to FM on places of worship - Scotsman

### **Afternoon SpAds,**

The *Scotsman* seek our response to the below / attached letter from church leaders to FM which calls on Ministers to rethink the decision to close places of worship. It cites the European Convention of Human Rights as one reason to challenge the decision, and claims there is no evidence of transmission in churches.

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

[Redacted – S30(b)(ii)]

### **A Scottish Government spokesperson said:**

“We know how tough this decision will be for many people. However we must take action across society to stop the virus spreading further, so we can protect public health and save lives.

“The virus transmits when people come together and therefore we have to reduce, as far as possible, the places where they do so – this involves the decision on places of worship, just as it does schools, and workplaces so we can keep the country as safe as possible. We don’t want places of worship to be closed for a moment longer than they have to be.”

**ENDS**

### **LETTER TEXT**

Dear First Minister,

We write as ministers and leaders of churches in Scotland, supported by colleagues across the United Kingdom, to raise our profound concerns at the

measures to suspend public worship in Scotland as part of the currently increased restrictions.

We understand entirely the exceptional difficulties of leading the country at the present time, and we and our churches have prayed for wisdom and clarity for your government repeatedly. But we strongly disagree with the decision to prevent the gathering of the Church at this time, which we believe is profoundly unhelpful and may be unlawful.

As pointed out by Sir Edward Leigh in his letter to you of 4 January, Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights prohibits governments from interfering with religious practice unless demonstrated as essential for public health because church services were proven a significant source of spread of disease. We know of no evidence of any tangible contribution to community transmission through churches in Scotland; to the contrary, since churches re-opened in July we have demonstrated that places of worship and public worship can be made safe from Covid transmission. It is for such reasons that legal challenges in other jurisdictions have overturned prohibitions of the freedom to gather for worship.

However, above all we are dismayed because there seems to be a failure in the Scottish Government to understand that Christian worship is an essential public service, and especially vital to our nation in a time of crisis.

Last November the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and other national Faith Leaders wrote to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government clearly demonstrating that public worship is essential to millions: essential for sustaining their service to the community at large, which is urgent at a time like the present; necessary for social cohesion and connectedness, a vital lifeline in the present climate of uncertainty and fear; vitally important for the mental health of our nation, which has been battered by nine months of lockdown-related stress and strain; and above all essential as a sign of hope in the face of despair.

The United Kingdom Government has rightly heeded these important and persuasive arguments, and has since, even in the face of a national lockdown, preserved this essential contribution to the wellbeing of the nation by allowing public worship to continue in England. We urge you not to disadvantage the people of Scotland by failing to recognize both the moral and legal arguments for the priority of public worship, and also the weight of scientific evidence for its essential contribution to the public good.

As Christian leaders we are witnesses to much tragedy in our communities through the dehumanizing effects of the protracted disruption to life brought by the responses to COVID19. Like the NHS, we too have been engaged in a host of ways seeking to bring help and healing to many, and we must not be prevented from continuing to do so. For we also know that, especially in the face of the presence of disease and death, the greatest light of hope for all comes from a higher place than any earthly institution: not health services, however skilled, or Governments, however wise, but from the Divine hope that is in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In national times of crisis past, governments have looked to the church and sought leadership in a call to national prayer to the Living God. We urge you not to be the government which denies our nation the collective prayer of the churches of our land in days when it is most greatly needed.

We echo the words of the Archbishop and other leaders to the Prime Minister and call on Scottish Government to recognise and support this, and enable us to continue to worship safely, as part of the essential fabric of the nation.

Many thanks,  
[Redacted -38(1)(b)]

**m:** [Redacted -38(1)(b)]  
Media Manager | Newsdesk  
Scottish Government

\*

Please contact me on **Skype for Business** in the first instance