

Scottish Church Leaders Forum
18th June 2020

On behalf of the churches in Scotland which we represent, we welcome the announcement by the First Minister that Scotland can enter into Phase 2 in terms of the Scottish Government's *Covid 19: Framework for Decision Making*.

We are mindful of the impact of Covid 19 in terms of the loss of life and of livelihood and are conscious of the continuing toll upon our community. Alongside this, we are conscious of our indebtedness to those in the medical, nursing and care professions for their contribution in facing the continuing challenges of our time. Equally, we recognise the extent to which so many people contribute to the building of social cohesion and the sustaining of our common life. Further, we recognise the fact that there are some members of our society who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid 19 and we have much to learn as a consequence.

The closure of our places of worship over the past twelve weeks due to the impact of Covid 19 has been unprecedented. The immediate consequence of this was that we were no longer able to gather for worship in the manner to which we were accustomed. The challenges that we faced in the light of this were, once more, unprecedented. However, we have learnt much during this time, especially with regard to the centrality of the relationships that lie at the heart of what it is to be members of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In normal times, the relational dimension of what it is to be members of the body of Christ is given expression in our physically gathering for worship. In these recent times, we have been unable to do so. This has resulted in a profound longing for spiritual communion and a desire to see our physical gathering renewed and, at the same time, a realisation of the creative opportunities offered in terms of enabling relationships through technology. This deepening of spiritual longing and the creative possibilities inherent in technology are part of the legacy of the past weeks.

Our desire is to serve the people of Scotland through our witness to the love of God made known through Jesus Christ. In the re-opening of places of worship for individual prayer, we see a sign of the renewal of our shared life and of our witness to that enduring love, albeit that we do not expect that every church will choose, or be able, to reopen its buildings at this time.

Signed by:

- Rt. Rev. Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, Church of Scotland
- Most Rev. Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Roman Catholic Church

- Most Rev. Mark Strange, Primus, on behalf of the College of Bishops, Scottish Episcopal Church
- Rev. John Fulton, Moderator, United Free Church of Scotland
- Rev. May-Kane Logan, Chair, Congregational Federation in Scotland
- Adwoa Bittle, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
- Rev. Dr David Pickering, Moderator, United Reformed Church (Scotland)
- Rev. Martin Hodson, General Director, Baptist Union of Scotland
- Rev. Mark Slaney, District Chair, Methodist Church (Scotland)
- Lt. Col. Carol Bailey, Secretary for Scotland, Salvation Army