

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local
Government
Aileen Campbell MSP
Chief Medical Officer
Dr Catherine Calderwood



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Dear Faith Leaders,

The Chief Medical Officer and I are taking the unprecedented step of writing to you in relation to the Government's response to COVID-19.

Firstly, let us state that we respect the great value our faith institutions contribute towards our society. This will undoubtedly be in great need in the months ahead.

These are unprecedented times – never before have any of us experienced the ask of society to shift their behaviour and change their social interactions for the greater good of the vulnerable and those at most risk, and also for their own health and that of their families. Urgent action is now required to protect the capacity of our public services during this time. For this reason, we need your help as communities and as leaders in supporting and respecting the advice on social distancing and mass gatherings.

Public health advice is pragmatic: reduce social contact wherever possible, don't go out to shops during busy periods, don't travel unless essential and work from home wherever possible. The purpose of these measures is to prevent further spread of the virus in Scotland and importantly to protect the most vulnerable. We know that those over 70 and those with underlying medical conditions are at the highest risk of hospital admission, serious lung infection caused by coronavirus and sadly at a much higher risk of dying. Our advice is that communities should be doing all they can to follow the advice given as this will reduce the strain on our NHS and will save lives across Scotland.

It is with this in mind that we strongly urge all places of worship to suspend congregational acts of worship during this difficult time.

We are aware that many faith communities have already taken such unprecedented measures in response to the current climate and we know that you all will continue to play an important role in supporting our communities in the weeks and months ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aileen Campbell". The script is cursive and fluid.

AILEEN CAMPBELL MSP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Calderwood". The script is cursive and elegant.

DR CATHERINE CALDERWOOD