



Ein cyf/Our ref FM -/01275/20

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair
Petitions Committee
Senedd

petitions@senedd.wales

23 July 2020

Dear Chair

I am writing in response to your letter of 6 July regarding petition P-05-994 *Permit the reopening of church buildings etc for communal worship*.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt MS has chaired meetings of the Wales Faith Communities Forum, which has discussed the safe opening of places of worship. I was pleased to attend the forum meeting on 3 June.

A task and finish group was set up, with membership from the Faith Forum, to consider feedback received from faith communities to develop a protocol for safely re-opening places of worship. We had committed to develop a Wales approach to unlocking faith practice in partnership with the Wales Faith Communities Forum. We are grateful to faith communities across Wales for their engagement.

Officials are in regular contact with Forum members as well as with members of the Funerals, Burials and Cremations group, who have also been involved in discussions about reopening of places of worship.

On 19 June, I announced the reopening of places of worship for private prayer and marriages.

On 10 July, I announced a further easement to enable indoor services and ceremonies to resume, subject to social distancing. I also announced up to 30 people could meet outdoors to worship where that was organised by a religious or belief body.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

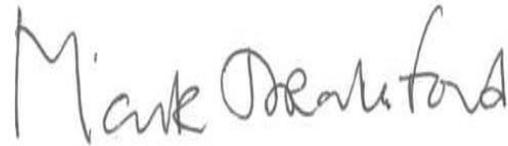
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the risk of spreading coronavirus.

The Welsh Government is continuing to work with the faith communities in Wales to review the situation and plan for the further reopening of places of worship as the advice around risks of transmission allows.

The guidance relating to places of worship is available at: <https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus>

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Drakeford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK DRAKEFORD