

Jane Hutt AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Members of the Faith Communities Forum

23 March 2020

Dear Members of the Wales Faith Communities Forum,

In these uncertain and unprecedented times, I want to thank you for all you are doing to address the challenges we are facing in halting the spread of Covid 19 and the support and leadership you provide to our communities.

Thank you very much for all you have done as Faith leaders and Forum members in taking swift and pro-active steps to ensure that Governmental and Public Health advice is adhered to. The way in which this was co-ordinated by Faith leaders across Wales is a testament to the strength of both the Faith Communities Forum and the Interfaith Council in Wales. Your actions in ensuring large gatherings in undertaking worship were averted and in providing guidance to your communities on alternative ways in which to safely do so is greatly appreciated and will undoubtedly have helped to save lives. It is imperative these closures remain in place for the foreseeable future.

The First Minister and I hugely value the support and guidance the Faith Forum provides to Welsh Government. This strong relationship will continue to serve us and our communities well in the coming weeks and months. My officials are in contact with you and there are mechanisms in place to capture information and emerging issues you share with them. These will then be considered in the decisions and actions being taken by Welsh Government. It is also very helpful to be aware of any action being undertaken or guidance being given across your communities and I and my officials appreciate the information you have shared so far. By ensuring good communication continues we will be able to share and disseminate information and advice quickly.

I recognise in these difficult times, people will be feeling very worried about a number of different aspects of the impact of this virus and many will be feeling particularly vulnerable. We have been mobilising and reprioritising resources to respond quickly and appropriately to support our communities and, in particular, the most vulnerable within them.

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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.

No person should have to tolerate prejudice or hate crime and I am saddened to hear of incidents being on the increase in recent weeks. I encourage community members to report any incidents. If anyone in the community witnesses, or are made aware of, any threatening behaviour or hate crime incidents, they can report these by contacting the police or the National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre run by Victim Support.

Victim Support has specially trained staff and volunteers who can provide tailored support for people who have experienced incidence of hate. They can be contacted by phone or by e-mail. The service is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The service can be contacted by phone: 0300 3031 982 or by e-mail:

Hate.CrimeWales@victimsupport.org.uk. Or <https://www.reportheate.victimsupport.org.uk/>

The Welsh Government is taking all possible steps to prepare Wales for Covid 19 – we are working with the three other Government administrations across the UK, with public services, private and third sectors across Wales, to plan the response and support around its impact. The NHS in Wales is working hard and preparing to look after and treat people who become seriously unwell as a result of this virus.

For latest advice and guidance, please refer to the Public Health Wales website <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>;

To be kept informed of Welsh Government developments and advice you can visit our dedicated webpage at <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>.

For anyone wishing to volunteer to offer any support in any capacity during this time, they could either contact their local Community Voluntary Council or register on the Volunteering Wales portal

<https://volunteering-wales.net>

The Faith Communities Forum plays an essential part in ensuring that we are able to convey accurate messaging to all of our communities and I thank all members again for your support in such unprecedented times. I would be grateful if you could also pass on my gratitude to those in your faith communities who are also working to ensure they and others remain safe whilst able to still undertake worship.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

Jane Hutt AC/AM

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