

## PN - Leadership in Lockdown Webinar

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020

### Things to consider when responding and dealing with new church restrictions in Scotland

- **Beware of wider frustrations with government:** Don't load Covid frustrations on top of wider frustrations with our governments. This will lead to heightened animosity that is unhelpful.
- **Don't lose sight of priorities:** There is a danger of becoming so focussed on lockdown. There is a need to care for one another and continue the ministry that we have in our communities.
- **Expect it to last longer:** It is likely this phase of lockdown will continue for some time and may continue for a couple of months. Be governed by principles and not knee jerk reactions.
- **Expect different views amongst Christians:** Some believe the government has no right to close churches. These convictions are sometimes constitutional, theological or based upon a particular ecclesiology. Some believe we have a duty to gather physically. Some believe the restrictions are unnecessary and others that the cost of lockdown outweighs the benefits and government policy is simply wrong. Others believe it is reasonable and we have a Christian duty to obey the government. Some believe we should submit to the government even if we do not support the decision in principle. Division of opinion amongst Christians is inevitable and should be expected.
- **Keep Perspective:** We are in a national crisis. There is a new variant of the virus spreading quicker. Hospitals are overwhelmed with 33,000 people now in hospital with Covid. The effects of winter are still to be fully realised.
- **Options to respond – A.) E-mail your MSP:** If you are writing be clear about what you are arguing for and why. Show appreciation for the massive challenges that the government is facing. If you feel compelled to write the aim is to persuade. If you're writing to simply make a point then it is unlikely to have much of an impact.
- **Options to respond B.) Petition:** Some have pursued legal action which is a right as a citizen. Some argue that lockdowns infringe upon human rights. However no case has won in the UK courts on these grounds and the government have a strong case for public closures and pursuing lockdown measures in the interest of public health.
- **Options to respond – C.) Protest:** In reality very few churches have protested. Most churches have been overwhelmingly compliant and believe they should be. There have been some voices about protest but very few have actually put it into practice.

- **People are fearful:** Many within churches are fearful and need care and support. (Those we have visited as part of our Neighbourhood Chaplaincy in recent months have expressed a similar fear). This should steer us in our response and dealings with one another.
- **People are now personally affected:** More people have now experienced Covid personally or have experienced the impact through a friend or relative. Some have had to deal with the passing of loved ones. This should shape our response.
- **Pray:** Continue to pray for governments and remember those Christians who are involved at the highest level of decision making on our behalf.
- **Preserve peace:** You will have to work hard to preserve unity within churches and between churches when there is a difference of opinion. Don't always do what you want but what best serves the church.
- **Public witness:** Be aware that the church is a public witness during this time. Think about how you will be perceived. Will the church be viewed as a help or a hindrance during this time? Will the church be a blessing or self-serving? Do things in a way that commends the gospel.
- **Respect others:** Think the best of others even if you disagree. Be careful about making judgements on how other people think and why they think it.
- **Restrictions are an expression of democracy:** The decisions being made are by elected governments who have an overwhelming support in UK parliaments. The evidence suggests there is also widespread public support for the action.
- **Social media is a public forum:** Remember this when commenting and contributing online.
- **Time and energy:** Disunity is inevitable so be careful of spending too much time and energy trying to change people's minds on either side. If people have not changed their mind by now it is unlikely to make a difference.
- **Vaccines offer a way out:** Although another lockdown is disappointing there is also a way out perhaps making it a bit more bearable for another period.