

Worsening Covid situation: Church decides to close

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This afternoon the Northern Ireland Executive’s ‘Faith Leaders’ Forum’ was convened by Junior Ministers, Gordon Lyons MLA and Declan Kearney MLA. In light of the advice that church leaders and other faith leaders received during the meeting from Dr Michael McBride, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), and Professor Ian Young, Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA), regarding the worsening Coronavirus situation, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has decided that all in person Sunday gatherings for worship, along with most other in person church gatherings, should cease in all PCI congregations from midnight tonight until Saturday, 6 February 2021.

Speaking on behalf of the denomination, the Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said, “Our churches are part of the local community and we recognise the very serious situation that Northern Ireland finds itself in today. With the extremely high level of transmission of the Covid-19 virus, combined with the numbers in hospital and intensive care, the very clear warning from the CMO and CSA this afternoon was that over the next number of weeks this situation is going to worsen significantly.”

Mr Gribben continued, “In light of our ongoing consultations and the current serious and worsening situation, and in line with unequivocal public health guidance that people should stay at home, we have written to our congregations in Northern Ireland, informing them that all in person Sunday gatherings for worship, along with most other in person church gatherings, should cease in all PCI congregations from midnight tonight until Saturday, 6 February 2021.

“It is of course regrettable and disappointing that over these next few weeks our congregations will no longer be physically gathering for worship. However, because of the alarming rise of Covid-19 infections in the community, this is the right decision to take, both for the safety and protection of people and also to contribute to the overall reduction of inter-person contact in line with the government’s ‘stay at home’ message.”

The Clerk concluded by saying, “In these difficult days, as we continue to look to God, and encourage others to find their hope in Him, let us help and pray for one another, lifting up all those on the frontline, those in authority making difficult decisions and especially all who mourn and miss loved ones.”

Colleagues in the Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland, and Roman Catholic Church, are making similar statements at this time.