



The Prime Minister
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Friday 9 April 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you as CEO of a charity that represents tens of thousands of Christians across the UK. Firstly, can I thank you for permitting churches in England to open during the most recent lockdown. This has been an immense encouragement to Christian believers. The ability to meet, pray and worship together is a source of great comfort at this challenging time.

It was a real encouragement to me, and I know many other Christians across the country, to see that you visited Jesus House in London recently and recognised their efforts in the capital, particularly in reassuring others about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. I hope you know that Christians in that congregation and across England are praying for you, your Cabinet and your family.

As we begin to emerge from the coronavirus pandemic, it is clear the government faces huge challenges. How quickly should society open? What restrictions, if any, should remain in place? And how can we balance the need to safeguard citizens from the virus with other freedoms: the right to meet, socialise and go about the normal patterns of life. I recognise the heavy weight on your own shoulders and that these are not easy questions to answer.

My focus is, as I intimated previously, our Christian supporters across the country. At present, a big question being posed by our supporters is: what kind of restrictions will we see on churches in the coming months? The idea of vaccine certificates has been mooted for certain places including pubs, cinemas, sporting events and, when asked about it, Vaccine Minister Nadhim Zahawi hinted this could include churches.

The imposition of vaccine certificates on churches would be most unwelcome and would represent a fundamental undermining of basic freedoms. The idea that access to a church should require some special certification is antithetical to the very nature of the church as a place of refuge for the most vulnerable in our society. Others have highlighted the prospect of a 'two-tiered system'. On the one hand, citizens who are vaccinated would be free to go about their lives. On the other, those who are not vaccinated would be barred from certain entitlements.

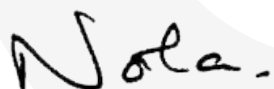
I would also draw your attention to the recent judicial review overturning the Scottish Government's decision to ban public worship in Scotland. The court held that this move was a disproportionate interference with the right to worship enshrined in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). I put it to you that a decision to effectively ban non-vaccinated citizens from participating in public worship would also represent an unwarranted infringement of Article 9 rights.

As the church, we cannot view people in this way. As you said in your Easter message just weeks ago: Jesus Christ is The Way, The Truth and The Life. As His followers, we need to obey his command to love our neighbours, whether they have received a vaccine or not. This is not to say that churches should adopt a careless approach to the virus. Indeed, throughout the pandemic congregations have been careful to abide by government regulations and ensure that steps are put in place to make churches as covid-secure as possible. This responsible approach will, I am sure, continue.

Can you offer Christians some assurance on these matters? I would appreciate confirmation that vaccine certificates will not be required for churches in England.

Please be assured of my continued prayers for you, Carrie and Wilfred and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Nola Leach
CEO of CARE