

Covid-19 Public Inquiry
By email.

18 January 2024

Dear Covid-19 Public Inquiry

Christian Concern and its sister organisation the Christian Legal Centre were very active during the covid pandemic helping and advising dozens of Christian ministers of various kinds who found themselves prevented by law from carrying out their Christian ministry.

The lockdown measures instigated during the pandemic marked the first time in hundreds of years that gathered Christian worship was criminalised. While bicycle shops and off-licences were deemed 'essential', Christian ministry was made illegal.

The criminalising of Christian ministry was manifestly unjust at a time when people were desperate to gather for prayer, worship and fellowship, and could have done so in ways that carried little to no risk of spreading the virus. Other forms of ministry such as foodbanks and vaccination centres were allowed to operate, sometimes in church buildings, while Christian worship was banned.

We sought to help enable Christian church leaders to carry out their vital ministry by helping them to bring a legal challenge to the government's decision to enforce the criminalisation of Christian worship. I present a timeline of the various legal proceedings below and attach various legal documents and expert witness reports to aid your important work in the inquiry.

While in England and Wales churches were allowed to open before court hearings could commence, in Scotland churches were forced to close for longer and this enabled the case against the Scottish government to reach court. On 24 March 2021, in a historic judgement, Lord Braid ruled that the enforced closure of churches was illegal in that it breached both human rights and the constitution. A copy of this judgment is included in the attachments. The news that the ban on worship was ruled unlawful was the front-page headline of the Scottish edition of *The Daily Telegraph* on 25 March 2021. It was one of very few successful legal cases against lockdown measures.

I hope that your inquiry will take into account this important judgment and the accompanying legal arguments and expert witness reports attached to this letter. It is our view that the government was wrong to criminalise Christian worship and that it acted illegally in doing so. I hope that you will reflect this conclusion in the determinations of your important inquiry so that the government learns that it should not criminalise Christian worship again.

Christian Concern and the Christian Legal Centre will be very happy to discuss these issues or present evidence to the inquiry about these issues. Do be in contact if we can be of any assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Williams
 Chief Executive, Christian Concern

CC: The Right Honourable Baroness Heather Hallett DBE, Inquiry Chair

Timeline of Events

23 March 2020	First national lockdown begins.
28 May 2020	Pre-Action letter sent to the government on behalf of twenty-five church leaders (attached).
23 June 2020	Relaxing of restrictions and 2m social distancing
19 October 2020	Welsh 'firebreak lockdown' begins.
26 October 2020	Pre-Action letter sent to the Welsh government on behalf of 37 Welsh church leaders (attached).
3 November 2020	Pre-Action letter sent to the government on behalf of 71 church leaders (attached).
5 November 2020	Second national lockdown begins.
2 December 2020	Second national lockdown ends
6 January 2021	Third national Lockdown, English churches permitted to open but not Scottish.
15 January 2021	Pre-Action letter sent to the Scottish government on behalf of Scottish church leaders (attached).
24 March 2021	Lord Braid rules that enforced closure of churches was illegal (judgment attached).