

Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH3 3DG

17th April 2020

Dear First Minister (cc Cabinet Secretary Communities, Cabinet Secretary Finance)

We are writing to you as leaders of Scottish Christian charities to offer our support to you and to stand with the Scottish Government at this time.

Our organisations and networks across Scotland are used to stepping up and finding solutions, creating community, and inspiring and resourcing people to act compassionately. Right now, in the most difficult of times, we are doing what Jesus told us to do: to love our neighbour. We very much appreciated your Easter message at the weekend acknowledging some of this work.

The Church has an army of highly motivated and experienced volunteers, on the ground in our cities, towns and villages. Equipped by our charities they are currently:

- Helping communities manage their money and deal with personal debt
- Informing and supporting those needing government help
- Delivering food parcels to vulnerable people
- Ensuring children in poverty are prioritised
- Supporting people in recovery from addictions
- Positively intervening in homelessness and rough sleeping
- Building communities and supporting families
- Providing befriending and support to prison leavers
- Reaching those who are not online and ensure they are cared for
- Helping people stay healthy and positive, especially those with poor mental health
- Connecting those who want to give and volunteer with those in need
- Bringing hope and addressing loneliness at a very local level

We are working locally in communities across Scotland and we stand ready to work strategically in partnership with the Scottish Government and agencies at every level to ensure the best possible national response at this time. Please let us know how we can best work with the Scottish Government to direct our specialist resources and volunteer networks to most effective use.

We also recognise that we will need to increasingly work together in the coming months as the country begins to face the reality of a significant economic downturn, when charities and the Church will be more needed than ever. We ourselves will not

be immune to this downturn and anticipate reductions in our own income, as across the whole charity sector.

We are committed for the long haul, but with this changing landscape we will also need the Scottish Government to stand with us in the coming months – not for our own sake but for those we serve – to ensure this valuable work can meet the growing need of the coming months and years. We are grateful for the steps the Scottish Government has already taken to support the sector and we look forward to positive engagement over the coming months as we work together for the benefit of Scotland.

Thank you for your leadership and be assured of our prayers for you and the Scottish Government at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Fred Drummond, Director, Evangelical Alliance Scotland, Chair, Serve Scotland

Emma Jackson, National Director, Christians Against Poverty, Scotland

Viv Dickenson, CEO, CrossReach

Alasdair Bennett, CEO, Bethany Christian Trust

Charles Maatz, CEO, Glasgow City Mission

Duncan Cuthill, CEO, Edinburgh City Mission

James Campbell, CEO, Blythswood Care

Jo McIlwaine, Scotland Programmes Leader, TLG

Diane McWilliam, Scotland Advisor, Cinnamon Network

Graeme McMeekin, Scottish Director, Tearfund Scotland

Dez Johnston, Scottish Director, Alpha Scotland

Jennifer Cornfield, Director, Soul Food Edinburgh