**STATEMENT FROM THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC***“Remember your Creator… before the days of trouble come.” (Ecclesiastes 12:1)*

Days of trouble have arrived. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought death, sickness, economic hardship, and great fear and uncertainty to our shores. What are we to make of such things?

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI) acknowledges the suffering being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of life and damage to national wellbeing are terrible.

In the face of it we hold out a twin message to the peoples of our island.

We speak **a word of help and hope**. To those facing illness or death, and to those filled with fear and concern, we point you to Jesus Christ. In him the Creator stepped into history to provide hope and the solution to our greatest problems: sin, sickness and death. He is not indifferent to our fear or our pain. He is loving enough to have gone to the cross so that you might have a life that extends beyond this life. He calls you to come to him with your weariness and your burdens and to entrust yourself to him as your Saviour. He will give you rest and peace. You will find he is tender enough to care and powerful enough to work all for your good.

As a denomination we mourn for those who have lost or will lose loved ones, or livelihoods, or suffered in other ways, and we call on all the members of our denomination to seek ways to *“love your neighbour as yourself”*. If any of our congregations can be of assistance to you, please contact the local minister (see www.rpc.org).

We also speak **a word of urgent appeal**. In the face of such a pandemic when God has brought our nations to a grinding halt, we would do well to consider why.

Without claiming to interpret current events, we can say with the prophet Amos, “Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?” (Amos 3:6).

In this disaster that has struck our world, we are reminded again that we are not the masters of our destiny that we envision ourselves to be. The nations of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have sought to write God out of national life. We have walked as though the God of the Bible was nothing more than an ancient myth, despite his existence being written in creation, in history, and in our consciences.

Created things have mattered more to us than the Creator. Our desire for self-fulfilment has over-written God’s good design for human flourishing. Recently we have rejected his definition of marriage, and legislated against his image bearers in the womb. To our great shame, Jesus Christ, who was crucified to pay the debt for our sin and to bring us to God, is dishonoured daily in these islands.

**We therefore call the governments and the peoples of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to humble themselves before Almighty God, to seek his mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.**

*“So rend your heart… Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing.” (Joel 2:13, 14).*

Rev. Mark Loughridge (Moderator)
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