



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Right Honourable Simon Hart MP
Secretary of State for Wales
By email c/o correspondence@ukgovwales.gov.uk

LPRef: KH/74397

17 June 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Thank you for your letter of 8 June. I know the Archbishop of York has spoken to you in my absence, during this period of study leave. I'm grateful for you taking the time to speak to him and wanted to add my thanks to you for raising this.

I add my apology to those you have received from the Bishop of Bangor and the Archbishop of York, and am deeply embarrassed by the use of such language by a church leader. It is absolutely unacceptable, and I am truly sorry. I am especially sympathetic because I am very well aware of what it is to be trolled in this way (including by people of all shades of political opinion). It is intolerable, and I am determined to work with my sisters and brothers to find better ways to express disagreement.

I think you might be aware that I have identified reconciliation as one of the themes for my ministry as Archbishop of Canterbury, both within the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion of which the Church in Wales is a part. I believe this is one of the most important functions of the Church and at the heart of the life to which God calls us.

Reconciliation does not, of course, mean finding agreement. Often that is simply not possible. But, in my opinion, it does mean that we can learn to live alongside people of very different beliefs and backgrounds, and to disagree well. I know that the Church in Wales seeks to be welcoming to everyone in the nation of Wales, regardless of whether they share our Christian faith. My colleague the Bishop of Bangor and I share your concerns about the ways people often treat each other badly, online and otherwise, and we are working hard in the Church and in broader society to inspire more fruitful approaches to disagreement.

We continue to work and pray for this and thank you for all you are doing to this end.

Yours sincerely,

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury