

Archbishop Justin Welby has joined with other Anglican leaders in Kent to call for decisive government action to support those stranded in Dover, as well local communities affected by the crisis.

In a joint statement today, the Archbishop and the Bishops of Rochester, Dover and Tonbridge said:

"As Anglican leaders in Kent, we are dismayed by the situation in Dover. We recognise the need to take urgent precautions to slow the spread of the new strain of coronavirus. But to leave seasonal workers, families and some truck drivers without adequate food and sanitary facilities is unacceptable - both for those stranded and for the people of Dover.

"For those now unable to return to their families in mainland Europe for Christmas - at the end of this year of such great suffering - the heartbreak and frustration is immense. Local councils in Kent are stretched to the limit trying to support all those who are stuck. We applaud council workers, churches, other faith groups and volunteers who are providing hot meals and other kinds of support.

"These efforts are heroic. Kent's local authorities are doing everything they can with the resources they have. But this is a national issue and the government needs to intervene decisively. The necessary provisions must be given for people to endure this ordeal with their dignity intact, making sure enough Covid tests are available so drivers and workers can return home as soon as possible.

"As we reflect on the coming of the Christ-child born in a manger, we are reminded of our responsibility to respect the God-given dignity and value of every human being. May that be the case for the people of Kent, for all those in Dover, in France and everywhere this Christmas."

Archbishop Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Bishop James Langstaff, Bishop of Rochester

Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover

Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, Bishop of Tonbridge

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