Coronavirus: Trump urges churches to open in challenge to governors

‘We need more prayer, not less,’ says US president as places of worship ‘essential’

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[**Suzanne Lynch**](https://www.irishtimes.com/profile/suzanne-lynch-7.1837435)

* **Video**
* **Images**

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US president Donald Trump identifies places of worship as "essential services" and demands that states reopen churches, synagogues and mosques this weekend, threatening to "override" governors who refuse. Video: Reuters

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US president [Donald Trump](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_person=Donald+Trump) on Friday urged churches to open this weekend, setting up a potential battle with governors across the country who have maintained strict social distancing measures to combat the spread of coronavirus.

“The governors need to do the right thing and allow these very important essential places of faith to open right now, this weekend. If they don’t do it, I will override the governors,” Mr Trump said in the [White House](https://www.irishtimes.com/topics/topics-7.1213540?article=true&tag_organisation=White+House). “In America we need more prayer, not less.”

Declaring that houses of worship should be deemed “essential places that provide essential services”, he said it was an “injustice” that off-licences and abortion clinics had been allowed to open but not churches, synagogues and mosques.

“These are places that hold our society together and keep our people united,” he said, adding that “many Americans embrace worship as an essential part of life”.

The question of churches reopening has become an important issue for conservative groups in recent weeks, with several churches taking legal action against local and state officials for prohibiting in-person meetings.

The president had previously said he wanted the US to reopen before Easter Sunday in April, predicting “packed churches all over our country”.

***Do you think Donald Trump is correct? Should churches be open for people around the world, including Ireland? Write an opinion piece on what your view is.***