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Parliamentary Prayers:

As constituents may know, every sitting day in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords begins with prayers offered by clergy of the Church of England. Attendance is voluntary for Members, but participation is a means of reserving a seat in the Commons chamber. However, I note that it is also usually possible for MPs to reserve a seat via cards issued under the auspices of Committees of the House of Commons. This method does not require Members to be present during prayers.

With regards to the issue of reserving seats in the House of Commons, I am aware a Point of Order was raised by an MP back in 2020 about alternatives to attending prayers. In response, the Speaker said he believed the issue could be taken up by the House of Commons Procedure Committee. To date it has not done so, but it remains open to the Procedure Committee to examine this matter if it chooses to.

Moving forward, I would like to see us have a wider conversation about our entire democracy, one that includes the public as well as politicians. However, while political reforms – such as modernising the House of Commons and reforms to the House of Lords – are important, I believe our principal focus needs to be restoring our country's economic stability, lifting our living standards and rebuilding our public services.

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