

A MESSAGE
from the Ukrainian Churches
and the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Friends!

At this very difficult time, we are all united in thought and deed to do all that is necessary to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, COVID-19.

The far-reaching effects of the challenges facing us cannot be underestimated or ignored.

We support the Prime Minister and his advisers who have issued clear and unequivocal instructions to stay at home. Everyone must play their part - in our Ukrainian parishes and communities throughout the country - to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone.

In keeping with the advice and guidelines set out by the Government, which are being updated daily, our Churches have taken the unprecedented step of ceasing to hold open religious services for the faithful, including baptisms and weddings, until further notice. Funerals are currently permitted at the graveside only with just immediate family present.

The unfolding crisis will also have a major impact on our traditional religious services during Holy Week, Easter and beyond. This year, for example, we will not be able to congregate in our churches for the traditional Good Friday Burial Shroud Vespers, or for the Easter Sunday Matins with the blessing of baskets, or indeed, the Easter Sunday Resurrection Liturgy. However, over the coming days we will be sharing information on our social media sites on how our Holy Week services and Paschal celebrations can be accessed and followed by the faithful – all in their own homes. Please look out for our further notifications.

As with the churches, our AUGB community centres were also closed last week when it became clear that social distancing to prevent the coronavirus from spreading was a life-saving measure rather than a mere precaution.

Such circumstances have undoubtedly saddened and affected us all, and perhaps frustrated many of you. However, we have a duty to comply with Government guidelines, which are based on the fundamental principles of protecting and saving people's lives through sensible safety-conscious actions and medical advice.

We ask for your support and cooperation with the religious and community leadership who are implementing these vital steps.

Please remain vigilant, not only in relation to the coronavirus, but also to the needs of others, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable living in our parishes and communities. We should allay their concerns, provide guidance and information on protecting themselves and provide any help that they might need – always in keeping with government guidelines on social distancing which, sadly, includes not entering people's homes.

It may not just be the elderly that need our support. Some may be feeling fearful, lonely, or in isolation and we must do all that we can to bring comfort to them, in the form of a simple

telephone call or contact through electronic media. Above all else, we should not sit back and expect that it is the duty of others to show such compassion.

We are conscious that there will be further difficult days ahead of us. However, we are as one in spirit and mind: we must all pull together, heed government advice, adapt and assist each other as much as possible.

Together, by preventing the spread of the coronavirus, and caring for ourselves and each other, we will help to save people's lives.

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Great Britain

Protopresbyter Bohdan Matwijczuk
Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Great Britain

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27 March 2020