

WAR IN UKRAINE! March 2022

IFW in Solidarity with Wolverhampton's Ukrainian Community



Interfaith Wolverhampton aims to work with the diverse communities living in and around Wolverhampton in order to foster and nurture mutual understanding and appreciation between the different faiths. It seeks to arrange, encourage and support dialogue between those of different faiths and no faith, communities and agencies so as to contribute to an inclusive environment of mutual respect and harmony.

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CONTENTS

- 2. Editorial
- 5. IFW visit the Ukrainian Church in Wolverhampton
 - Prayers and Solidarity with the Ukrainian people
- 7. Appeal to Donate
- 8. Reflections from Faith groups and individuals
- 16. On a lighter note......
- 17. Diary of Events for 2022
- 18. Speakers and Visits to Places of Worship for Schools

A massive vote of thanks to all contributors, Devi in the office and Paul Rayner for technical / online work associated with the Newsletter compilation. Sincere apologies from me for any inaccuracies, omissions or errors.

Yusuf Shafi (Newsletter Editor)

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Editorial

The *raison d'etre* of Wolverhampton InterFaith has been to raise awareness and understanding between the diverse religions, faith groups and organisations in Wolverhampton. At no other time has this role been of greater importance, at a time when on our doorstep in Europe, innocent civilians, women, children and unarmed people are suffering from the atrocities, violence and abuse of their human rights. The Ukrainian community of Wolverhampton need to know we are with them at this time.

Interfaith Wolverhampton have stood up to be counted, show concern and support for the innocent people of Ukraine. On the 6th of March 2022, the Board and members of Interfaith Wolverhampton joined in a special Prayer Service at

the Wolverhampton Ukrainian Church, Merridale Street West, in Pennfields. In this moving and solemn Service, we stood shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian community of Wolverhampton to assure them that they are not alone in this time of their suffering.

Members from all of the main faiths in Wolverhampton were represented and present in order to pay respects and listen to the plight of the Ukrainian people. Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, Quakers, Catholics, Protestants, Jews and people of no Faith were present and all united in their condemnation of the war. We all recognise that what is going on in Ukraine is an abomination and must stop immediately.

The Mayor of Wolverhampton Councillor Greg Brackenridge represented the city and the local authority. He commented, "The people of Wolverhampton stand side by side with our Wolverhampton Ukrainian citizens and the people of Ukraine. The destruction and death of innocents is strongly condemned and we abhor the actions of the Russian government".

These are dark days for Europe and the world; this is a time when we all focus on our respective Faiths to provide guidance and encouragement of a brighter future. The multi-faith attendance at the Service at the Ukrainian church whilst describing the calamity of the war, did also point to hope and a brighter future and an understanding that evil and inhumanity will always fail; there will always be hope and victory for peace and non-violence.

The war poses worry and threat for citizens of Western Europe; not merely due to the economic impact, but also due to the threat that the war may spread and engulf neighbouring countries in Europe and NATO. The new world order has taken a dramatic twist for the worst, and the previously assumed norms have been abrogated by the actions of Russia in Ukraine. The threat of nuclear devastation and a World War Three is again, after many decades, back in our lexicon. This is something that we as a local community, as a nation, as a global community must endeavour to prevent, by finding any possible opportunity to build bridges, to increase harmony, to reduce tensions and to create dialogue between people across the planet. This can be done at local, national and international levels by the use of dialogue, social media, the Internet, email and whatever other means, to reach out to others and ensure there will be mutual understanding, peace and prosperity.

Kyiv is an international City which has been a place of refuge for many people from all over the world. It is a place of study and a place of international business.

Many faiths have large numbers of people and places of worship within the city of Kyiv. Faith organisations in Wolverhampton have an additional concern that the Russian army is currently besieging Kyiv and similar large cities. The Faith centres, temples, churches, mosques, synagogues and various other places of worship are currently being used as bomb shelters and places of protection for people. However, these places of worship are not immune to the missiles and the shells of the Russian army, so Ukrainians and people from all over the planet are living under intolerable conditions; without water, electricity, heat, with poor sanitation, inadequate medical facilities and under food shortages. If the bombs do not kill them, these factors may well do so.

Kyiv is a city of many great institutes of Education; students from all over Europe, the Indian subcontinent, the Arab world, and Africa have for many decades travelled to Kyiv to embark on further and higher education. Despite international efforts to evacuate students and provide them with refuge in neighbouring countries, many thousands remain stuck in basements and campus buildings unable to evacuate out of a city surrounded by tanks and being bombed by air strikes.

Our hearts go out to all the women, children, innocent civilians, the weak, the elderly, the disabled, the students, the refugees, the migrants, and the many millions who through no fault of their own have become embroiled and made pawns in a proxy war between superpowers. A war that is driven by geopolitics, the market, global capitalism, greed of natural resources, international imperialism and need for global supremacy. All of these have no basis in any religion, in any faith, in any peaceful and humane school of thought, and there is no basis for this in atheist / Humanist traditions.

Many of the atrocities and abominations that we are witnessing in Ukraine 'are textbook'. The process of media propaganda, creating fear of the other, demonization, dehumanisation, followed by invasion and air supremacy, followed by artillery and missile attacks, mass death, then regime change and subjugation. Often in the name of democracy. We have seen this sequence of destruction repeatedly, especially in the recent 21st and the second half of the 20th century, and now in Ukraine. We should ponder on who may have written this 'textbook' - certainly it would not be written by people inspired by God conscience.

God fearing and peace-loving people from over the world condemn all such wars, and always seek to promote harmony, understanding and love between people. Yet the fog of war, lies and this greed are inspired by the belief that 'might is right'; there is a lack of faith in God as our Provider, as though the provisions and resources afforded to us in this life are only due to our endeavours and actions.

This overlooks the raw truth that we came to this world naked and without any possessions, and everything is provided to us by our Creator, and we will leave this world naked and without possessions. Therefore, the love of this worldly wealth, and the desire to accumulate from and dominate over the weak and the voiceless, and deny them their needs and rights, is the driver for the xenophobia, war, imperialism, colonialism, hegemony and destruction.

And those who through 'an act of God' are habitants of lands where the resources required are abundant, are then the victims of this destruction. This is often their only crime for which their punishment is so great. This is a time to remember that the central tenets of all faiths are peace, understanding and the principle of love thy neighbour - The Golden Rule.

War is an evil perpetrated by the minority on the majority; it often brings out the worst in humankind and shows us to be the worst of creation. It can however through our efforts of peace, charity and peaceful protest, show us as the best of creation; as a true reflection and an inspiration of our Creator.

God is Peace and loves the peace makers
God is the Provider and loves those who provide
God is Merciful and loves those who show mercy
God is Forgiving and loves those who forgive
God is Truth...

Yusuf Shafi (IFW Newsletter Editor)

IFW and Civic leaders visit the Ukrainian Church in Wolverhampton to show support, and pray with the Ukrainian community.

The Mayor (Wolverhampton Councillor Greg Brackenridge) and Rev Fr David J Senyk from the Ukranian Church, meeting at the end of the Service.

The Mayor presented his message of support.







IFW members at the Service:



The Mayor, Cllr. Greg Brackenridge

Bhajan Devsi

Chair of IFW, Cllr. Jas Dehar



Dr Harun Rashid

Satya Sharma

Martin Gomberg





Paul Rayner
Rob Marris

Erik Pearse

Mike Smith

and Ganesh De



APPEAL TO DONATE

The Ukrainian Catholic Church, Merridale Street West, WV3 0RJ, are undertaking a massive operation to collect food, clothes, toiletries and other items of use for the people of Ukraine. These donations from Wolverhampton residents to the Ukrainian Church are being processed in the Church Hall opposite the Church in Merridale Street West (Near the junction with Zoar Street / Upper Zoar Street, next to the small park area), and will be shipped out to support Ukraine. Please support Greg and other volunteers from the Ukrainian community, in their hall where the donations are piling up:







Wolverhampton City Council recommend:

Some local organisations are reporting difficulties in arranging transportation to get physical donations over to Eastern Europe quickly. People who wish to provide support to the Ukrainian people are being encouraged to make a financial donation via the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, https://www.dec.org.uk/.

Another charity recommends that while donations of goods will be accepted, "large quantities of clothing and other essential needs are already being provided by countries neighbouring Ukraine, and so shipping similar items from the UK may be expensive, time consuming and not always necessary. Cash donations are usually more helpful to groups on the ground."

Reflection and prayers on the Ukraine war from various Faiths in Wolverhampton......

As Christians, we often refer to Jesus as the Prince of Peace and, in loyalty to his teachings, we are called to work and to pray for peace. We are also called to see the image of God in every human being and to treat all people with equal respect. The Russian attacks on Ukraine run counter to our Christian calling and so we must pray for a ceasefire, the return of peace in that land and God's guidance for all those with key decisions to make in bringing that about. Our prayers are also needed for those who have been the victims of this war and our practical support is required for those still in Ukraine, and those who have been forced to flee as refugees.

The prayer is one offered to us by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York:

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children,
at-risk and in fear, that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

The Rev'd Preb. David Wright, Team Rector of the Parish of Central Wolverhampton, Rural Dean of Wolverhampton.

Psalm 31(30): 21-24

Blessed be Yahweh who works for me

miracles of his faithful love

(in a fortified city)!

In a state of terror I cried,

'I have been cut off from your sight!'

Yet you heard my plea for help

When I cried out to you.

Love Yahweh, all his faithful:

Yahweh protects his loyal servants,

but he repays the arrogant

with interest.

Be brave, take heart,

All who put your hope in Yahweh.

A Prayer for Ukraine By Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah

Eternal One, Rock of our Existence, the Source and Sustainer of Life, as President Putin wages war on Ukraine and the forces of autocracy wreak havoc and attempt to instil terror and fear in every heart, we call on You to strengthen the people of Ukraine in their collective will to muster the courage and the fortitude to withstand the onslaught.

Meanwhile, as ordinary people everywhere, like ourselves, witness the horror and feel helpless and hopeless in the face of overwhelming events beyond our

control, we ask You to enable us to understand that we are not powerless to help, that our deeds, however small, matter, and that above all, knowing that despair is the dearest friend of tyrants, we have the obligation to hope and to demonstrate our constant fidelity to the enduring values of peace and freedom, equality and justice. May this be our will. And let us say: Amen

From Liberal Judaism Today, March/April 2022. Contributed by Martin Gomberg, IFW Treasurer.



Like most religions, Hinduism includes both teachings that condemn violence and war, and teachings that promote it as a moral duty.

Our thoughts are with the victims of the war. We stand together to support Ukraine.

"Peace is its own reward", said Mahatma Gandhi.

Contributed by Parveen Brigue, IFW former Chair. Hindu Faith.



What is happening in Ukraine is horrendous, inhumane, heart-breaking, and cruel against humanity. Guru Nanak Dev Ji (the founder of Sikhism) said, "Before being a Hindu or a Muslim, be a human being", thus behind these labels and masks dividing us, based on ethnicity and faith, we are all children of one God. Sadly, humans are the only species on this planet that kill its own kind on a mass scale, they are not happy with bow and

arrow, but need nuclear and hydrogen bombs. Animals do not do this, who is more intelligent? You may have seen on social media and in TV news, that 'Khalsa Aid', a Sikh charity, is providing Langar (free food) to the needy in different parts of Ukraine, risking their lives. Similarly, a Sikh Gurdwara in Poland is providing shelter, accommodation and food to foreign students escaping from Ukraine across the border.

Sikhs in Wolverhampton also like to join all the people from Ukraine with solidarity in their hour of need. Sikhs would like to offer this prayer for peace, in Panjabi and its translation in English.

ਸਲੌਕ ਮਃ ੩ ॥

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ॥

ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਉਬਰੇ ਤਿਤੇ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥

ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਵੇਖਾਲਿਆ ਸਚਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਅਵਰੂ ਨ ਸੁਝਈ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੂ ਬਖਸਣਹਾਰੂ ॥੧॥

Shalok Mohala 3

The world is going up in flames – shower it with Your Mercy and save it! Save it, and deliver it, by whatever method it takes.

The true Guru has shown the way to peace, contemplating the true word of the Shabad. Nanak knows no other than the Lord, the forgiving Lord.

I wish to end this message with the final term in the Sikh prayer, meaning, "Nanak, with *Naam* comes positivity, buoyancy, optimism and with your blessings, and peace, may everyone prosper". This prayer is repeated by all practising Sikhs at least twice daily as part of their prayers. God bless everyone.

Contributed by Bhajan Singh Devsi



The Muslim Community of Wolverhampton condemn the plight and suffering of the people of Ukraine. May Allah protect and bless all the citizens of Ukraine, and those from all parts of the world where there is war, injustice, suffering and tyranny.

The Holy month of Ramadan is upon us in April. The idea of fasting is not simply to abstain from food and drink, but it is a time for believers to reflect on their life, and ponder over how insignificant is the time we have on earth compared to the time of our hereafter - eternity. So the fast is a short training period of abstinence, humility, self-deprecation and a time to focus on the One God. His Praise, His Glory and His Greatness.

The Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) has said:

"Shall I inform you of something that holds a higher status than fasting, praying and giving charity? Making peace between people, for verily sowing dissension between people is indeed calamitous." [Kenzul Ummal, no. 5480]

The Holy Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) has said:

"Anyone who believes in God and the day of judgement should not harm his neighbour. Anyone who believes in God and the day of judgement should entertain his guest generously and should say what is good, or keep quiet." [Sahih Bukhari: Vol. 8, book 73, no. 47]

Contributed by Yusuf Shafi Newsletter Editor.



Words of the Buddha on World Peace

'Karanīya-mattha kusalena Yantam santam padam abhisamecca Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca Sūvaco cassa mudu anatimānī.

Na paro param nikubbetha Nāti-maññetha katthaci nam kañci Byāro-sanā patigha-saññā Nāñña-maññassa dukkha-miccheyya.

Mettañ ca sabba lokasmim Mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam Uddham adho ca tiriyañ ca Asambādham averam asapattam.'

'He who is skilled in good, and wishes to attain peace, should act like this:

Let one not deceive nor despise another person, anywhere at all. In resentment and ill-will, let him not wish any harm to another.

Let him cultivate boundless thoughts of loving kindness towards the whole world; above, below, and all around, unobstructed, free from hatred and animosity.'

The spirit of tolerance and understanding is highly practiced in culture of Buddhism. Practice of non-violence is highly recommended in Buddhism in every situation. Buddha's teaching promote to the safety, peace, happiness, tranquillity, and attainment of nibbana or enlightenment.

Contributed by Ven. Tejwant



A prayer from the heart

Dear God, we pray for all persons suffering from war in Ukraine. May they be held in your loving care and protection and given the strength to endure great suffering and hardship.

Please transform the hearts and minds of all those who perpetuate this violence and oppression.

Grant wisdom to our world leaders who are working toward world peace. Allow all faiths to come together united as one.

Dear lord we pray for your protection for those who cannot protect themselves.

In view of the current unrest in Ukraine and across the world, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation UK are encouraging members to offer their prayers for the people in Ukraine.

The Gayatri mantra is a Universal Prayer:

Om Bhur Bhuvah Swah Tat-savitur Vareñya Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi Dhiyo Yona Prachodayāt

Our Prayers, Thoughts and Donations are with the people of Ukraine.

Contributed by Sunil Patel, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation UK.



On behalf of the Rotary Club of the City of Wolverhampton, President Richard Green fully endorses this statement from Rotary International:

It is a tragic and sad time for the people of Ukraine and the world.

At Rotary, we are deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the escalating loss of life and humanitarian hardship there. Continued military action against Ukraine will not only devastate the region, but also risk spreading tragic consequences across Europe and the world.

As one of the world's largest humanitarian organizations, we have made peace the cornerstone of our global mission. We join the international community in calling for an immediate cease fire, withdrawal of Russian forces, and a restoration of diplomatic efforts to resolve this conflict through dialogue.

In the past decade, Rotary clubs in Ukraine, Russia, and nearby countries have transcended national differences and have actively engaged in peace-building projects to promote goodwill and to marshal assistance for the victims of war and violence. Today, our thoughts are with our fellow Rotary members and others in Ukraine coping with these tragic events. Rotary International will do everything in its power to bring aid, support, and peace to the region.

Contributed by Rotary Club Wolverhampton.

A contribution from Rob Marris:

My heart goes out to you and to the people of Ukraine. As the great Taras Shevchenko wrote in *Calamity Again*:

Dear God, calamity again! ...
It was so peaceful, so serene;
We but began to break the chains
That bind our folk in slavery ...
When halt! ... Again the people's blood
Is streaming! Like rapacious dogs
About a bone, the royal thugs
Are at each other's throat again.

Мій Боже милий, знову лихо!..

Було так любо, було тихо; Ми заходились розкувать Своїм невольникам кайдани. Аж гульк!.. Ізнову потекла Мужицька кров! Кати вінчані, Мов пси голодні за маслак, Гризуться знову

Rob Marris, Former MP for Wolverhampton SW, and IFW member.



We at The King's CE School work to live and learn within a unified, respectful and harmonious community. We work hard on a daily basis to try to achieve harmony in our relationships with one another, believing that everyone is unique and created in God's image and that each one is deeply loved by God, our heavenly

Father. Our prayers and thoughts go out to the people of the Ukraine at this distressing time and to the young people there whose lives have been thrown into turmoil.

Living God, we pray for peace and harmony among the people of the Ukraine and Russia. We pray that the Spirit of your transforming love might touch every heart. We pray for hope, that the Ukraine's young people might soon be able to study in peace; grow, learn, aspire and flourish. Amen.

A contribution from Neville J. Collins:

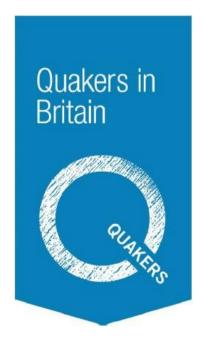
Teach us Good Lord
To serve Thee as Thou deservest
To give and not to count the cost
To fight and not to heed the wounds
To toil and not to seek for rest
To labour and not to ask for any reward
Save that of knowing that we do Thy will
AMEN

A contribution from Mgr Mark Crisp:

It is a great tragedy that once again in Europe, some have resorted to violence to try and resolve conflict. History has repeatedly shown this never works and always leads to more violence. Jesus said "Blessed are the peacemakers" and Pope Francis on Feb. 27th again pleaded for peace, saying "those who make war forget humanity."

Almighty God we turn to you in our need. Touch the hearts of all those who govern, may they listen to the cries of those who are suffering. Enlighten them with your gift of healing to guide their decisions as they seek to restore peace to the people of Ukraine. Amen.

Mgr Mark Crisp, Parish Priest, The Parish of Blessed Carlo Acutis.



"Our belief in the preciousness of all human life leads us to oppose all war", said Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of Quakers in Britain.

Quakers have always held peacebuilding as a core principle for life:

'All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.'

Quaker declaration in the year 1660.

This sentiment applies as much today, in a world of nuclear weapons, as it did then.

Continued......

Quakers call for a cessation of fighting and for all parties to observe international law, including international humanitarian law. This prominently includes the Geneva Conventions, which regulate the conduct of war, and to which both Russia and Ukraine are states parties. All sides should take the earliest opportunity to halt hostilities and to resume negotiations.

Protection of human life should be of primary importance. "We know war leads to unimaginable suffering. In particular, exposing children to violence can have lifelong damaging effects", said Paul Parker.

"All sides should commit to establishing and respecting humanitarian corridors allowing civilians to flee the fighting. We also appeal for conduct that avoids embedding grievances and injustices that will become the seeds of future violent conflict. Crucially, this means doing everything possible to avoid and resist the creation of enmity between peoples. It also means persevering with efforts to engage in dialogue and preparing the ground for the return of people to their homes."

Although war makes dialogue and peacemaking far more difficult, it does nothing to diminish the need for courageous peacemaking efforts. We know there are people in both Russia and Ukraine working tirelessly for peace. We continue to uphold and stand in solidarity with them at this violent and perilous time.

[Quakers have since their beginnings refused to kill in war, or prepare to fight in war. Instead, they have searched out and engaged in non-violent methods of conflict resolution to avoid war, served in ambulance units and refugee relief in time of war, and put their resources into work for reconciliation between communities at the end of war. Quaker worship and prayer tends to be short on words - Quakers gather in silence (whether face to face or on Zoom) to listen to the Spirit and be guided and changed, to better serve.]

Contributed by Paul Rayner, on behalf of Wolverhampton Quaker Meeting.

On a lighter note.....

A priest was taking a shower when the door bell rang. He yelled "Who is it?"

And the person ringing the door bell yelled, "I'm the blind man."

So the Priest got out of the shower, and didn't bother putting a towel around himself because the person outside the door was blind.

He opened the door and said, "What do you want?" and the man said, "I'm here to check your blinds."

And another one.....

A priest and a taxi driver both died and went to heaven. St. Peter was at the Pearly gates waiting for them.

"Come with me", said St. Peter to the taxi driver.

The taxi driver did as he was told and followed St. Peter to a mansion. It had anything you could imagine from a bowling alley to an olympic size pool.

"Wow, thank you", said the taxi driver.

Next, St. Peter led the priest to a rugged old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set.

"Wait, I think you are a little mixed up", said the priest, "Shouldn't I be the one who gets the mansion? After all, I was a priest, went to church every day, and preached God's word".

"Yes, that's true", replied St. Peter, "But during your sermons, people slept. When the taxi driver drove, everyone prayed".

Diary of IFW Events for 2022

April

19th (Tuesday)

"Bring and Share" 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Zoom. Speaker: Details to follow. If you do not receive an invitation by email, please request the Zoom link from admin@ifwton.org.uk, or by phoning 0785 325 1929. Participation is possible on Desktop, Laptop, Tablet, SmartPhone, or even a landline telephone (audio only). You can test your Zoom connection HERE. If you want detailed technical help, try

https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-How-Do-I-Join-A-Meeting-

May

17th (Tuesday)

"Bring and Share" 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Zoom. Speaker: John Howard. Zoom details as above.

June

21st (Tuesday) "Bring and Share" 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Zoom. Speaker: Elisha

Frimpong, Ethnic Minority Community Worker with Compton

Care. Zoom details as above.

July

19th (Tuesday) "Bring and Share" 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. on Zoom. Speaker:

Deacon Linda Gilson, of the Methodist Church City Centre

ministry. Zoom details as above.

For up-to-date details, see the Interfaith Wolverhampton website:

http://ifwton.org.uk/diary.html

Members' subscriptions are due from 1st April for 2022-2023 membership. If your subscription for 2021-2022 is overdue, please send both your renewals as soon as possible!

School visits to Places of Worship, and Interfaith Speakers for Schools

As COVID restrictions ease, we are pleased to be able to restart School visits to Places of Worship, and to provide Speakers to Schools. Children are our future, and Interfaith Wolverhampton can do its part to help with knowledge, tolerance & understanding. Please contact admin@ifwton.org.uk for further information. If you are not already a School Member of Interfaith Wolverhampton, then please also use the School Membership Application Form available at http://ifwton.org.uk/membership.html.

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Staff, Officers and Volunteers are all working from home at present, but post and emails are being dealt with.

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