



The United Reformed Church

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Church leaders united in response to coronavirus pandemic

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In an unprecedented move, church leaders came together on 1 April to listen to and support each other during the coronavirus pandemic.

Topics discussed by the leaders, who met by video conference, included online worship, pastoral care in hospitals, funeral arrangements in various places, along with information on furlough arrangements being considered by some churches.



Supported by churches in membership of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, along with Churches Together in England, Cytun, ACTS, and the Irish Council of Churches, the leaders issued a joint Holy Week statement:

God's world is in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. In the nations that make up Britain and Ireland the Covid-19 virus continues to affect people at an alarming rate, health services along with many of our institutions and organisations, both local and national, are under extreme pressure and people are getting used to living in a very different way, many in extreme isolation. As with all such crises, there is a danger that the most vulnerable in society will be most badly affected.

Christians the world over are entering an important time in the church year as we look to the events of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. At the centre of our common faith are both the depths of despair and the heights of joy. In the Bible and in the songs and liturgies of the Church, we see Jesus entering fully into human suffering. In His rising again, that suffering is redeemed and transformed into hope and joy. After Jesus' death his disciples were afraid and all seemed lost and hopeless, but the risen Christ met them in their despair and restored hope through his victory over death. We pray that the world today might know this hope in place of despair.

In the Book of Daniel we read about God's people being taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel could not pray in the Temple in Jerusalem, but he continued to pray in exile – opening his window to face Jerusalem. Though he was on his own he joined with the prayers of the people wherever they were. Now we too are separated from each other physically, but when we pray in our homes we join in with this ancient tradition of our home as a place of prayer. Wherever we are, whenever we pray, when we speak and think of Christ, there he is in the midst of us. We join our prayers with all those who pray in our own churches and communities and around the world.

As church leaders from across the many and varied churches of these Islands we urge all people to join us in prayer this Holy Week and Easter; to pray for those who suffer, those who face untimely death and all those who care for them; to celebrate our common faith at a difficult time; to help and support our neighbours in need; and to observe all the safeguards in place to slow the spread of disease.

Our Prayer

Loving God, in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our salvation, cast out the darkness of our anxiety, fear and mourning, enfold us in your love and give us joy and hope this Easter. Amen.

Signed by:

Archbishop Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
 Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of General Assembly, United Reformed Church
 Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
 Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus, Scottish Episcopal Church
 Very Rev Dr William Henry, Moderator General Assembly, Presbyterian Church of Ireland
 Rt. Revd Colin Sinclair, Moderator General Assembly, Church of Scotland
 Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh
 Commissioner Anthony Cotterill, The Salvation Army
 Archbishop-elect John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh
 Bishop Hugh Gilbert, Bishop of Aberdeen
 Revd Dr Barbara Glasson, President Methodist Church of Great Britain

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His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain
Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary Baptist Union of Great Britain
Archbishop John Davies, Archbishop of Wales
His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Archbishop of London
Pastor Agu Irukwu, Redeemed Christian Church of God
Mr Rheinallt Thomas, President Free Church Council Wales
Revd Hugh Osgood, Moderator Free Church Federal Council
Revd Brian Anderson, President Irish Council of Churches
Gavin Calver, CEO Evangelical Alliance
Revd Sam McGuffin, President Methodist Church in Ireland
Paul Parker, Religious Society of Friends

Picture: A Bible and a rosary, James Coleman/Unsplash

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It is with deep sadness that the #URC announces the death of the Revd Robert Waters. Mr Waters, widely known as Bob, died peacefully in his sleep at home on 3 July, just four days shy of his 90th birthday. His funeral takes place on 16 July. Details here: bit.ly/URCrevdwaters



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The United Reformed Church
Church House
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT
United Kingdom

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