



**St. Bernadette Elementary School**  
13130 65B Ave. Surrey BC V3W 9M1

T: 604.596.1101  
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February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**RE: Conflict in the Ukraine**

Dear Parent(s),

St. Bernadette's community is built on a foundation that honours and teaches to the whole child, spiritually, academically, physically, socially and emotionally. Lately, there has been a need for greater focus on the mental health and well-being of our community. Our school has made tremendous efforts to attend to the mental health needs of your child since the beginning of this pandemic and will continue to address their mental health needs in all areas of concern for the indefinite future.

Over these past few years there have been many events and issues that may have caused strain, anxiety, stress or other mental health issues for you, and/or members of your family. Our school staff understands that the current invasion of the Ukraine may be triggering for you and/or for members of your family. We encourage you to be mindful of how these events, compounded by other issues we may be experiencing, may impact you and those around you.

Having conversations and addressing questions about the pandemic, politics, war and other major events can be challenging. It is important to remember that at all times, but most especially now, children depend on the adults around them to help make sense of the world and to feel safe. It is our collective duty and responsibility to be extra mindful of our words, body language and context of our information when talking to our children about such issues.

During these times of uncertainty, children and youth react in a variety of ways. How your child reacts is natural. To help you make sense of the world while making your child feel safe, we suggest the following:

- Acknowledge and honour the feelings and concerns that arise and reassure your child that they are in a safe place. It is important to not be dismissive of your child's feelings.
- The compounding of issues we are seeing, both on a local and global scale, may be triggering for you as well. Recognize your own feelings first. This will allow you to be more supportive and it will give your child a model of how to express their own feelings.
- Pray with your children. We are about to head into lent. This is a perfect opportunity to create more prayer time in your household to allow for family prayer for those in need, for yourselves, and to offer prayers of thanksgiving.



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- Allow your child the opportunity to express their concerns and ask questions. Take the time to listen and to listen with intention. Responding as objectively as possible makes the issue(s) clear and easier to understand. If you don't know the answer, it is ok to share that with your child. Your child needs to know that their concerns and questions are being heard and taken seriously.
- It is important to be aware of the potential impact of "media overload". This is not just from social media sites, but from traditional sources as well. Give yourselves breaks and quiet times. For older children, talk to your child about the importance of limiting their exposure to this coverage.

Our school is here to support you and your child's needs and concerns. We understand that this is an uncertain time for everyone. We will continue to prioritize the mental health and well-being of our students, the teachers, staff and everyone in our St. Bernadette community. This is our moment to step up and be that foundation our children need.

If you have any questions, need additional information or require further support, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Christ,

Michael van der Pauw  
Principal