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Russian Church Non-Profit to Launch 'Orthodox WhatsApp'

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Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS

A Russian non-profit organization focused on church restoration is set to launch a faith-based messaging app dubbed "Orthodox WhatsApp" this November, state media reported Tuesday.

The app, officially called "Zosima," will allow users to communicate directly with their local churches and clergy, as well as to make donations, according to a statement by the Innotekh XXI foundation to the RBC business news website.

"We'll launch it in November 2024," foundation president Alexei Agapov told state-run RIA Novosti. He described Zosima as "like" WhatsApp but did not provide further details.

Russia blacklisted WhatsApp's parent company Meta, along with Facebook and Instagram, as an "extremist" organization shortly after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, though the ban did not impact the use of the messaging service.

Zosima, named after a sixth-century monastic saint, began as a side project linked to the Innotekh XXI foundation's efforts to restore churches in the Yaroslavl region. "But [now] everyone can join in, it will be available for download on major mobile platforms," Agapov said.

The Russian Orthodox Church previously launched a messaging app in 2017, which connected more than 130,000 users with over 15,000 churches via Android and desktop platforms.

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