

Honouring Heroes of Past & Present in the 'Big Picnic for Hope'

A number of the nation's cathedrals are uniting this VE Day in a project to remember heroes of the past and present as part of the Big Picnic for Hope.

To mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May 2020, Cathedrals around the country had events planned to form part of the national celebrations. These events would have brought together communities, friends and families in gatherings and streets parties around the UK. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, such gatherings are no longer possible. Most major events have been cancelled or postponed, but 8 May 2020 is still a national bank holiday and an opportunity for us to reflect on past events and those we are all currently experiencing.

The Big Picnic for Hope is an opportunity for households to be part of a virtual get together on 8 May. The project asks people to stay at home, to picnic indoors or in their gardens, and to join friends and families virtually.

At the same time as something fun to take part in with other people around the country, the project affords us a unique way to remember heroes who have kept our country safe in the past and those on the new home front. It gives the nation another way of saying thank you for the incredible effort and sacrifice being made by our key workers from carers, delivery personnel, grocery workers and public transport workers to medical researchers and frontline NHS staff. We must also not forget the remarkable collective effort of the nation to play our part and stay at home. The project also serves an opportunity to recognise that these times are difficult for many people and aims to raise £5000 towards The Trussell Trust, a charity supporting a network of foodbanks and helping those in need in the UK.

The Very Revd Adrian Dorber, Dean of Lichfield, said: "During the current pandemic we have all been inspired by a different national mood: there has been a great outpouring of neighbourliness, practical support and care for one another. We have been inspired by the selflessness and dedication of the NHS staff and so many other key workers. VE day in 1945 celebrated not only the defeat of an enemy but the solidarity and resourcefulness of the whole nation; its hopes for a secure and more settled world.

"Although big public plans for celebrating the 75th anniversary of VE day 2020 have had to be put on hold, it seems really appropriate to use the date to remember the experience of World War II and to think about the humanity and care we have seen right now. The aim of the Big Picnic for Hope is to have a shared occasion when, whether sitting at home, or in your garden, by sharing a meal and a conversation we can swap our stories, memories and experiences. We hope people right across the country will be taking part, talking about what's moved them, inspired them, made them grateful or got them thinking new kinds of things. People from the past and people in the present spark our hope for the future. It will be good to name those people and hopes on 8 May"

At the heart of the Big Picnic for Hope is a reflection that many people will be finding life particularly difficult, many struggling to put food on the table. The #feed5000 hashtag reflects the project's aim to raise £5000 for the Trussell Trust, who support a nationwide network of food banks and provide emergency food and support to people in poverty. With a rise in the number of people needing to access foodbanks, and the future uncertain for many, the Big Picnic for Hope asks those who can afford it to donate towards providing another individual or family having food in their house today.

Samantha Stapley, Chief Operating Officer at the Trussell Trust, said: "As the coronavirus outbreak develops, more people are likely to need a food bank's help. Our teams are working tirelessly to

ensure that food banks are able to remain open and have the necessary stocks to respond to this crisis. The support of the Cathedral network means we can remain agile to respond to the fast-changing situation and ensure food banks continue to provide the lifeline of emergency food and additional support for people in crisis. Thank you.”

How can people get involved in the Big Picnic for Hope?

People can share their plans and ideas for the Big Picnic for Hope using the hashtag #bigpicnicforhope. On social media people will be able to share and see their creative ideas of what to bake, what to make, how to picnic in style. This will help everyone get ready to join together on Friday 8 May to share photos of their picnics and discuss memories and stories of their loved ones, past and present, in a way fitting of the circumstances we are living through.

To join in with the Big Picnic for Hope, find out more, or share your ideas and photos visit www.bigpicnicforhope.com also see participating cathedral social media and @bigpicnicforhope on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

The fundraising page can be found here: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/bigpicnicforhope>

Participating Cathedrals: Bradford Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral, Chelmsford Cathedral, Chester Cathedral, Chichester Cathedral, Exeter Cathedral, Guildford Cathedral, Lichfield Cathedral, Liverpool Cathedral, Manchester Cathedral, Peterborough Cathedral, Portsmouth Cathedral, Rochester Cathedral, Sheffield Cathedral, Southwell Minster, St Albans Cathedral, Wakefield Cathedral, Wells Cathedral

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Media Contact: Vicky Osborn, Senior Marketing Manager
vicky.osborn@lichfield-cathedral.org
07709 120852