

The Clergy Support Trust Festival Service, held at St Paul's Cathedral for almost four centuries and featuring the massed voices of three cathedral choirs, will be broadcast on 11 May 2021.

In 1655, a group of City merchants held the first Festival service to raise funds for clergymen, and their families, who found themselves increasingly destitute under Oliver Cromwell. Over the decades, the Festival has grown to become an annual highlight of the Anglican calendar, attended by Archbishops and Bishops, by the Lord Mayor of London, and by the many supporters and beneficiaries of the charity which became Clergy Support Trust.

Like its annual Festival, Clergy Support Trust has evolved with the times and is now the largest benevolent charity for Anglican ministers and their families. In 2020 the Trust supported thousands of individuals across the UK, Ireland and Europe, including through financial grants and specialist services.

As well as being a joyful celebration of all that clergy do for our nation and its communities, the Festival is a beautiful act of worship which, for many years, has included three cathedral choirs singing together in St Paul's. The Covid-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the 2020 Festival, for the first time in the charity's history, and its staff and Trustees were adamant that 2021 would go ahead. As such, 11 May will see the online broadcast of a truly unique Festival – which, thanks to the blessings of technology, will still feature three choirs and other participants from across the country.

Ben Cahill-Nicholls, the Trust's Chief Executive, said, "Throughout the pandemic, clergy and their families have done a huge amount to support and serve their communities. To support and serve them in that ministry is a great privilege. With colleagues at Liverpool, Southwark and St Paul's Cathedrals, and the outstanding team at Livewire Pictures, we have created a memorable and moving service which pays tribute to clergy. Producing the Festival online has been a mammoth undertaking, but we hope it will introduce the charity and its amazing beneficiaries to a new, wider audience, and enable those further from St Paul's to enjoy our Festival together."

The Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, The Very Revd Dr David Ison, said, "Covid-19 restrictions have meant that St Paul's Cathedral has been closed for many months over the past year. The Clergy Support Trust Festival is a wonderful opportunity to sing together in a special act of worship. We hope that many people across the UK and beyond will watch the service from home on 11 May, to enjoy the iconic setting of St Paul's and celebrate clergy through this special choral experience."

The Festival can be viewed from 6pm on 11 May at www.clergysupport.org.uk/festival

Notes for Editors

1. Clergy Support Trust is the oldest and largest charity supporting Anglican clergy and their families. In 2020, it made grants totalling £2.4m, and supported a record number of individuals across the UK, Ireland, and Europe. Its annual Festival has taken place in St Paul's Cathedral since 1655. Further information is at www.clergysupport.org.uk
2. St Paul's Cathedral is the mother church of the Diocese of London and the seat of the Bishop of London, The Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, who also takes part in the online Festival on 11 May 2021. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren, it is one of the UK's most recognizable and loved buildings, and home to the world-famous St Paul's Cathedral Choir, directed by Andrew Carwood. Further information is at www.stpauls.co.uk

Resources

Logos, images and figures <https://www.clergysupport.org.uk/press>

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