



A family from Wakefield, West Yorks, will lead the Church of England's national virtual service from their living room this Sunday.

The Rev Canon Leah Vasey-Saunders, the Canon Precentor of Wakefield Cathedral, West Yorkshire, will be assisted by her husband the Rev Dr Mark Vasey-Saunders, Academic Tutor at St Hild College, and their children Miriam, 9, Elias, 12, Jude, 14 and Reuben, 16.



The service for Low Sunday – the second Sunday of Easter – was recorded in the living room of their home in Wakefield and includes prayers, hymns and a family game. It explores what they have learnt about faith through the challenges of living in lock-down.

It is the latest in a series of national “Church online” services from the Church of England since the closure of church buildings last month in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Last Sunday, the Archbishop of Canterbury swapped the traditional setting of Canterbury Cathedral for the kitchen of his flat in London to lead a unique Easter Day service. More than 600,000 people joined in online to the service, which was trending on YouTube UK's top 10 throughout the day. One third of people watching on YouTube were under the age of 34. It was also broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Sunday morning.

Canon Vasey-Saunders said: "It's quite daunting to be the first family to lead one of these lockdown services for the nation/national church but we were excited to be able to offer something of our own eclectic expression of faith at home in this way.

"We've had so much fun with the planning and preparation – some of our outtakes were hilarious.

"We have also come to a new understanding of what it means to seek and find Jesus when we find ourselves stressed, tired (occasionally grumpy) and stuck at home together 24/7.

"We've been left wondering where we might encounter Jesus next during this lockdown and what new opportunities and future he might be calling us to step into."

This week's service includes hymns led by the choirs of Wakefield Cathedral and St Martin-in-the-Fields church in London as well as the Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir.

The gospel reading, from John Chapter 20, recounts how Jesus came to meet his scared and confused disciples behind closed doors after the resurrection and how Thomas, in particular struggled to accept it until he had physically seen and touched him.

In her reflection Canon Vasey-Saunders will explore how God can come among us bringing comfort and peace while we are physically apart during the current pandemic.

"When Jesus comes to find the disciples, and meets this bunch of scared, doubting, guilty, angry people, his words to them are 'Peace be with you,'" she will say.

"And then he breathes the Spirit on them. Jesus comforts, inspires and empowers his church to be a people who, in the light of the resurrection, change the world.

"He does this, meeting them where they are – in the shadow of the cross, behind closed doors, in their homes.

"From there the resurrection changes everything.

"From here the resurrection changes everything.

"Peace be with you."

The service will premiere on the Church of England's [Facebook page](#) at 9am on Sunday and can also be viewed through the [Church of England website](#).

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