

BBC Songs of Praise presenter and former Gogglebox star Kate Bottley is to lead the Church of England's national online broadcast this week from her home with a church service interpreted into British Sign Language (BSL) for the deaf community.

The broadcaster will welcome viewers at the start of the broadcast, especially those who have not taken part in virtual worship before, encouraging them to join in where they can, in a service with prayers offered for those suffering and bereaved as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We are as a nation conscious of the challenges and problems in the world at the moment, and the joy of the risen Christ can often feel far away," She said.

"Anyone can join us at this service and all those taking part for the first time are especially welcome. I hope that the prayers that are offered and the message of the gospel will go some way to help all those seeking comfort and support at this difficult time."

The prayers will be signed using BSL by Carolyn Denmark, of St Barnabas Parish Church in Swindon, Wiltshire, who is deaf. The rest of the service will be signed by Gill Behenna, the Church of England's National Deaf Ministry Adviser with the sermon delivered by broadcaster Chine McDonald, who is Head of Media and PR at Christian Aid, the international aid agency.

Ms Denmark will pray for strength and comfort for all those suffering as a result of the virus including those who are sick and dying and those who mourn. She will also pray for the needs of the deaf community. She will further pray that God will guide scientists, the Government and the NHS in their efforts to treat patients and stop the spread of the disease.

In her sermon, ahead of Christian Aid week next month, Ms McDonald will speak of the urgent need to support those living in poverty around the world who face dealing with the virus while lacking even basic medical care, food and water:

"People living in poverty are already facing a lack of water, food and medical care. As coronavirus infection rates speed-up in poorer countries, it will put a massive strain on already fragile health systems. This will be catastrophic."

Ms McDonald also says: "Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. Even in the darkest moments, love gives hope. Love compels us together around the table, to stand together, elbow to elbow in solidarity with our neighbours near and far."

As in previous weeks, the service will be available from 9am on Sunday on the Church's [website](#), [Facebook page](#) and on [YouTube](#).

Notes to editors

The service will be [broadcast from 9am on Sunday](#).

The Church of England's weekly online services are averaging 500,000 – 600,000 viewers each week. Explore the full range of national resources available, including daily audio of Prayer During the Day and Night Prayer, on our [church online page](#).

Christian Aid Week is to be held from May 10 to May 16. Find out more [on their website](#).

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