

Key workers will speak of how their Christian faith has helped give them strength to serve others during the coronavirus pandemic, in the Church of England's national weekly online service to be broadcast on Sunday.

Matt Sanderson, a senior paramedic with 18 years of service in the NHS, and Robert Vassell, a bus driver, will speak about their faith as part of [a live-streamed service marking Vocations Sunday](#) – celebrating the call of people to serve in a range of different roles.



The service will be led by Dr Paula Gooder, Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, who is a licensed lay minister in London and Birmingham, with contributions from her husband, Revd Peter Babington.

Prayers will be read by Tak Muriro, a church youth leader who is taking part in the Church of England's Ministry Experience Scheme in Sheffield.

Mr Sanderson, from Oldham, Greater Manchester, who is due to be ordained as a Deacon in the Church of England later this year, will speak of how God is always with us even at the most difficult times.

He will say: "My job challenges me, every day my colleagues and I walk into the unknown, to offer hope and relieve suffering as best we can. There is no better feeling than having made a difference in someone's life and as frontline clinicians that is what drives us into work each and every day

"These are challenging times and the world has become a very scary place, fighting an invisible enemy. "

In his message, he discusses the challenges of physical distancing from family and friends.

"Yet throughout this pandemic, I am reminded by that still small voice: 'I am not alone,'" he continued.

Mr Vassell, from Wolverhampton, will speak of how interacting with passengers is the highlight of his job – and how his faith helps him to give reassurance to passengers and colleagues who are anxious and uncertain as a result of the pandemic.

“My trust and faith in God enables me to have peace, not to focus on myself but to look after my colleagues and my passengers. This enables me to go through each day with confidence that God is with me,” he will say.

In her sermon, Dr Gooder will say that God’s call to love is the same but takes ‘infinitely different’ forms in the lives of each one of us.

She will say: “At times like this, when our world feels turned upside down, living out our callings can be really hard. All those things we knew we used to be called to, feel at best fragile and at worst impossible. The ways we normally did things have fallen away and we are left feeling uncertain and often useless.

“At times like this all we can do is listen again to the voice of the God who calls, reminding us that we are loved with a love beyond measure, calling us by name and asking us to pour out this great love in any and every way we can.”

The service, for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, will be interpreted into British Sign Language with subtitles. The hymns have been contributed by singers from St Martin-in-the Fields Church in London. All contributions were recorded separately in accordance with the rules on physical distancing.

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

- Explore the full range of [online resources available](#) for Christians and people exploring faith to use.
- The Church of England, working with St Martin-in-the-Fields and the Royal School of Church Music, is providing a resource of rights-free music for **Church of England churches** to use on streamed services, via the [A Church Near You resource hub](#) providing you have a [CCLI streaming](#) licence. Read [the press release](#) for more details.
- Vocations Sunday is marked, ecumenically, on the fourth Sunday of Easter. It is a day for churches to encourage everyone to reflect, discover and recognise God's call to them. Churches mark this with special prayers, the sharing of stories and the opportunity to discuss vocations with others. It is important to note that ‘vocations’ includes the calling of all Christians - this includes vocations to the Religious Life, ordained ministry and more formal lay ministries to the gathered church whilst encompassing the wider calling of the whole people of God.
- The [Ministry Experience Scheme](#) is a year-long opportunity for young adults (18-30) to gain experience in Christian ministry whilst also exploring their own calling. Applications are open and welcome for the September 2020 intake.