

The Bishop of London and the Chief Nursing Officer for England are to take part in a national online service this Sunday celebrating the work of nurses and healthcare workers and marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

Bishop Sarah Mullally, the most senior female bishop in the Church of England, and a former Chief Nursing Officer for England, will lead the service, with the Gospel reading from St John read by the Chief Nursing Officer Ruth May.

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



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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9am on Sunday
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In her sermon, Bishop Sarah will speak of the cost that has been paid by nurses and midwives on the frontline of tackling coronavirus and the

need to support them now and in the long term. She will say that the nation is ‘enormously grateful’ for their work.

“This year is the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife. It would have been filled with events to celebrate their contribution to health and society,” she will say.

“Instead, Covid-19 means that this year is filled with acts of compassion done by nurses and midwives, for which we are enormously grateful.”

Bishop Sarah will add that Florence Nightingale, who was in the front line in the battle to save lives and control infection during the Crimean War, knew of the long-term cost of her experiences - and that the ‘hardest of challenges’ could only be overcome with the support of others.

“If we are going to really celebrate nurses and midwives this year, we need to support them through the cost that they have paid, and to continue to support them when all this is over,” Bishop Sarah will say.

Earlier in the service Bishop Sarah will speak about her ‘two careers’ – as a nurse and a priest – and how they come from one vocation – to follow Jesus Christ.

“People often ask me what it is like to have had two careers, one as a nurse and one as a priest,” she will say.

“I will often respond saying that I have had one vocation, to follow Jesus Christ and to make his love and compassion known. I have sought to live my life in the service of others, like so many others do.”

Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer for England, said: “The NHS is a diverse, international family and I believe part of our core strength to deal with the challenges we face comes from across all beliefs and faiths. COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on nurses, midwives and all our health and care staff – they have put in extra hours to provide expert care for many thousands of patients and their families, for which I pay heartfelt thanks.”

The service will feature contributions from nurses who will speak of their experience of working throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Community palliative care specialist Rachel Mead and Felicia Kwaku, Associate Director of Nursing and Head of Nursing Planned Medicine at King’s College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in London, will speak of how their Christian faith has helped them during the pandemic.

Ms Kwaku, a nurse for more than 30 years, will speak of the ‘honour and privilege’ of caring for patients and working alongside ‘amazing’ staff. She will add that the loss of her beloved uncle three weeks ago to coronavirus has deepened her personal reflection on the impact of the pandemic.

“This biggest challenge has been seeing the pain and suffering during this pandemic,” she will say.

“I have seen suffering for both patients, their loved ones and staff.

“On some occasions, the staff have also had to cope with the loss of their own loved ones or people they know

“I experience God’s presence by starting the day with thanksgiving to God but also I pray for patients and staff all across the world.

“I see every day as a blessing and my faith as a Christian has enabled me to cope with this unprecedented time.”

Ms Mead, from Weybridge, Surrey, with 33 years of experience as a nurse, will speak of how the prayers of friends and of her church, St Peter’s in Chertsey, Surrey, have been ‘vital’ in recent weeks, in giving her peace and strength to cope with the challenges of the pandemic.

“The prayers of faithful friends and my church community have been vital in recent weeks, giving me peace and strength in challenging times,” she will say.

Intercession prayers will be read by Gladys Ekpo-Daniels, a former nurse and midwife and treasurer of the Lewisham NHS Retirement Fellowship with a reading from Jasmin Archibald, a retired nurse and midwife, from London.

The service, for the Fifth 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

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 they have a [CCLI streaming](#) licence In the first week the music has been downloaded more than 4,000 times. Read [the press release for more details](#).
- Everyday Faith is part of the work of the Setting God’s People Free initiative, which aims at enabling the 98% of the church who don’t have formal ministry roles to better identify how they can 'find and follow God' in in everyday life. This work includes a number of initiatives nationally and in dioceses. For further details see <https://www.churchofengland.org/SGPF>

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