

Farmers, lorry drivers and supermarket workers who helped keep food on our plates during Covid-19 pandemic will participate in the Church of England's national service this week.

These "forgotten" heroes of Covid-19 will illustrate the story of food from "field to fork."

The Revd Bill Durose, who is a self-supporting minister in Stoke-on-Trent while also working in a supermarket, will speak about his experience in Sainsbury's while wearing his uniform.

"We're right in the middle of it," he will say. "During this pandemic it has been tough on the supermarket industry with things like social distancing at the beginning, and what has started again now, panic buying.

"It has put a lot of strain on everyone.

"Because of self-isolating we have missed seeing our regular elderly customers who normally wouldn't see anyone else unless they visited Sainsbury's.

"They became part of our family. Colleagues were obviously concerned about their safety and were asking other customers about news of their friends. Mostly it was good news. But sometimes colleagues would ask for prayers for someone who was really, really, ill."

He will continue: "Trying to explain where God is in this pandemic to people who have just lost a loved one can be difficult. I am still humbled when someone comes to me and says their loved ones have asked 'if that vicar from Sainsbury's can do my funeral.'"

"Sometimes people forget that we are not just someone who works in supermarkets but we really care about our 45,000 friends."

The service is to be broadcast from 9am on Sunday on the [Church of England's website](#), [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

Another supermarket worker, Sharon Evans, who attends St Andrews, Wollescote, Worcestershire, and works at Sainsbury's Amblecote, will say staff "miss seeing their regular customers."

She will add that customers saying "thank you" to shop workers "brightens our day."

A supermarket worker with Sainsbury's since her children were young, Ms Evans will ask for prayers for supermarket employees – especially as Christmas draws closer.

"We have worked really hard to provide a good service during a very difficult time – if you can pray for protection for us, for our families and a smooth service, especially over Christmas when people are stressed and trying to get all their Christmas shopping done."

Sarah Spencer, Discipleship in the World Officer in the Diocese of Lincoln, and Nick Shepherd, Programme Director for the Church of England's 'Setting God's People Free' programme will lead the service.

Prayers will be said for farmers and agricultural workers, and there will be a short discussion of the work of the [Clewer Initiative](#), which helps identify modern-day slavery in the rural economy, will be included.

Other speakers include Joe Bailey, Head of Farming for RSPCA Assured, who works to raise animal welfare standards; Samuel Williams who leads Christian Aid's SALT network for business leaders, and Simon Park, managing director of Kidds Transport Haulage Firm.

Mr Park will deliver the Gospel reading from his Heavy Goods Vehicle in a lorry park.

Afterwards he will say: "The reading in Luke is very apt at the moment. We don't need to worry we can just trust God – but uncertainty does bring that kind of worry."

## Notes to editors

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