



offer prayers as the country marks the first anniversary of lockdown

The words *Reflect, Support and Hope* will be projected in yellow on the front of Lichfield Cathedral, while Blackburn and Leicester cathedrals will light thousands of candles to mark lives lost, to mark the National Day of Reflection.

St Edmundsbury Cathedral will suspend two hundred tear drops above the altar and Chelmsford Cathedral will be transformed into a vibrant space of colour and light.

In Portsmouth churches will deliver more than 50 boxes of chocolates along with cards to GP surgeries, care homes and schools in the area as a gesture of thanks to key workers for their contribution during the pandemic.

Area Dean of Portsmouth, Revd Canon Bob White, said: “We are very aware of the stresses and pressures they have faced over the past year and want to thank them and let them know that they are in our prayers.”

Yellow ribbons have been tied to hedges, trees and railings at the three churches in the benefice of Gloucester City and Hempsted as a sign of support and prayer for all who have been bereaved. A small socially-distanced service will be held in the churchyard of St Swithun’s in Hempsted tomorrow which will be livestreamed to the village Facebook page to mark the day. The churchyard hosts an outdoor ‘memorial cairn’ where more than 100 stones have been placed since All Souls Day in November to remember those who have died.

Rector of Gloucester City and Hempsted, Revd Canon Nikki Arthy, said; “The cairn has become an important focus for grief, reflection and prayer. People have been very creative in finding different ways to mourn during the pandemic, but nevertheless I think there is still a huge amount of unexplored grief. It is really important for the Church to work in partnership with other organisations to help people process this and move forward.”

Prayers, posters and cards have also been made available for downloading by the Church of England.

The National Day of Reflection comes as the Church of England released new research on funerals and bereavement showing that the majority of people want churches to provide both indoor and outdoor spaces for quiet reflection, prayer and places to light candles for those who have died.

The online survey of more than 2,000 adults, also showed that a majority of people want the Church of England to provide a listening ear for those who want to talk about death and dying and help for people to talk about grief.

The survey showed that nearly three quarters of people – more than seven in 10 - who wanted to attend a funeral over the past year were unable to do so because of the pandemic.

The vast majority of mourners, 89%, said that people had not been able to say goodbye properly to those who have died, while a similar proportion, 84%, said that people had not been able to fulfil the funeral wishes of the person who died. Overall four in 10 people said they had lost someone close to them since March 2020 from any cause, including Covid-19.

The National Day of Reflection has received backing from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of Portsmouth, who is chair of the Churches Funeral Group.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said: "This Day of Reflection is an opportunity to pause and remember all that's happened over the past year, to mourn those who have died but also to give thanks for those who have looked after us and our communities. It is a moment to pray together to our Father in Heaven to comfort us in our grief and to lead us into the hope of the risen Christ and the eternal life he promises.

"As we reflect on the pandemic, may He strengthen our resolve to rebuild a kinder, fairer and more compassionate society, may He be with those who are struggling and may He guide us in honouring those we have lost over the past year."

### **Notes to editors**

The online survey was conducted by 9 Dot Research in January 2021 of a representative sample of 2008 adults in England aged between 18 and 75 years old. The research findings can be found [here](#).

Prayers and other resources for churches to mark the day can be found [here](#):

AtaLoss.org the UK's signposting website for the bereaved, directs the bereaved and those supporting them to information and services appropriate to their loss.

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