

A powerful Virtual Reality service for Holy Week, inviting an online congregation to be “present” at the foot of the cross, has been released by the Church of England.

Prayers at the Foot of the Cross, filmed in the 12th Century Chapter House of Bristol Cathedral, features a mixture of prayers, music from the choir of Bristol Cathedral and moments of silent contemplation.

A replica of the Icon of the Cross from the Taizé Community, an international centre for pilgrimage and reconciliation in France, will be the central focus in the service.

The virtual congregation will be able to move their perspective to being “present” at the foot of the cross during the service as members of the Cathedral congregation come forward to pray and pause in contemplation.

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The Dean of Bristol, Mandy Ford, said: “We hope that people will join us in this powerful and simple act of silent contemplation and prayer in the beautiful surroundings of the Chapter House.

“All are welcome to join us through this service and “stand at the foot of the cross” whether they have prayed before or not.

“We hope they might experience the healing presence of Christ in a troubled world.”

During the service, the Canon Missioner for Bristol Cathedral, Jonnie Parkin, invites people to pray in solidarity with the suffering Christ and all who suffer throughout the world.

He said: “The Icon of the Cross in Taizé has for decades been the focus of prayer every Friday by groups of young people drawn from across the world.”

“It was poignant to pray around an exact replica of an Icon of the Cross that young people from Russia and Ukraine will have prayed around together in more peaceful times.

“We felt that there was a sense of solidarity, not just with each other, but with people across the world who have prayed around the cross, with Christ in his suffering, and with all those who are suffering and are the victims of violence today.”

The service, with a 360 view, includes spatial audio which allows the virtual congregation to experience the different acoustics of the Chapter House as their outlook changes.

The 17-minute act of worship uses liturgy from [Common Worship: Daily Prayer](#). It can be accessed on any computer or device, with or without special Virtual Reality (VR) equipment. The service features music from the RSCM publication [The Way of the Cross - A Passiontide sequence of words and music](#) by Peter Moger and David Ogden, including David Ogden's setting of the *Arisagion* (Holy is God) and Orlando Gibbons's hymn *Drop, Drop, Slow Tears*.

The service is the second full VR service to be released by the Church of England, following the [Blessing of the Light service](#) from St Stephen Walbrook in the City of London which has received over 400,000 views on YouTube.

A series of [Advent Carols](#) were also recorded in VR at St Martin in the Fields Church in London last year.

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