

RUMOURS OF HOPE 2020: A VIGIL FOR OUR TIMES

More than 50 priests, bishops, lay leaders and ordinands will come together on Easter Eve to lead a virtual vigil.

Rumours of Hope 2020: A Vigil for Our Times will offer creative reflections, poetry, art and prayers throughout the night. The purpose is to help people weep, watch and pray together as we yearn for Easter light amidst the darkness of our coronavirus-hit world.

Each hour, a different voice will explore Old Testament stories of God and his people, pointing participants toward the 'rumour of hope'. The reflections will be followed by shared silence, designed to be kept in watchful prayer. The night will end with the arrival of dawn, celebrated with the lighting of the Easter fire in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral.

Thought-provoking reflections will be offered by the **Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell** (Bishop of Chelmsford and Archbishop of York-designate), **Paula Gooder** (New Testament scholar and Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, London), **Joanna Collicutt** (Karl Jaspers Lecturer in Psychology and Spirituality at Ripon College Cuddesdon) and the **Rt Revd Helen-Ann Hartley** (Bishop of Ripon).

Poems are being recorded by two much-loved poet-theologians, **Malcolm Guite** (*Sounding the Seasons, The Singing Bowl and After Prayer*) and **Christopher Southgate** (*A Gash in the Darkness, Chasing the Raven and Rain Falling by the River*).

Ally Barrett (Chaplain of St Catharine's College, Cambridge) has written a new Easter Eve hymn; and music will be provided by a range of talented musicians, from Kent parish priests, **Mike and Karen Nelson**, to the **Back Row of Bristol Cathedral Choir** (Quirentine), to former Mediaeval Baebe and now London diocese ordinand, **Emily Kolltveit**.

Other contributions come from **Duncan Dormor** (CEO of USPG) and **Kt Tupling** (co-founder of Disability & Jesus), students at **CMS** and ordinands from **St Mellitus, Ripon College Cuddesdon** and **Trinity College, Bristol**, as well as a host of cathedrals and minsters from York to Canterbury by way of Oxford, Winchester and Chelmsford.

The journey through the long hours of the night will begin with members of the Community of St Frideswide in Oxford, one of the country's newest monastic communities, commissioned in September 2018. It will end in the precincts of the oldest English cathedral, Canterbury, founded in 597. There the new fire will be lit and the Easter candle blessed, as Christ's resurrection brings hope to even the darkest places.

Each contribution seeks to be a faithful improvisation on a Bible story – theologically rich and artistically creative, yet grounded and genuine, facing with honesty the reality of suffering in the midst of this pandemic.

The separate sections will be released as a series of online videos (www.rumoursofhope.co.uk) on Holy Saturday (11 April 2020), allowing worshippers to participate as they wish. However, the project organisers hope that most people will watch them together on the suggested schedule, sharing in a great virtual vigil across the country.

The Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell says: “I have always thought of that part of the Easter Vigil service where we hear stories from the Old Testament leading up to the revelation of God in Christ, as being like the people of God gathered round the campfire, telling their stories and singing their songs.

“This year we gather in our separate homes and in isolation from one another, but brought together by our stories and united in our prayerful hope that God will do a new thing to bring peace and hope to our world.”

Project curator, Canon Grant Bayliss (Oxford’s Diocesan Canon Precentor) says, “I have simply been overwhelmed by the response. So many people from all parts of the country and traditions of the Church have been willing to get involved.

“In these days when we are so afraid, when we see such daily suffering and yet such bravery in the face of it, the sense of the need for a night of prayer, of waiting for hope, even a rumour of hope, seemed to strike a chord.”

While the worship format is modern, with videos and downloads, it draws on rich aspects of ancient Christian tradition. The idea of a vigil (from the Latin ‘keeping awake’) dates back to the earliest days of the Church and has long been a night set aside for deep prayer for a particular purpose, whether for help against persecution or plague, or to prepare for a festival.

The Easter Vigil was the most significant of these annual nights of prayer. Christians were often baptized then, as St Augustine was by St Ambrose in Milan in 387. The theology of vigil is rich with themes of longing, waiting and hoping as Christians prayed in the space between Good Friday and Easter Day.

To take part in the vigil go to www.rumoursofhope.co.uk.