

York Minster will welcome people for remembrance, prayer and hope on Wednesday 23rd March, the second anniversary of the first Covid-19 lockdown.

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Starting at 9.30am, the Minster will open for people to come and remember loved ones who have died and those living with physical and mental health challenges as a result of the virus. Â There will be prayers and thanks for the NHS, nursing homes, workers in caring professions and all emergency and key workers who worked tirelessly throughout the darkest days of the pandemic. Â The day will also provide opportunities to reflect on the lessons learned during the pandemic.

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At 5.30pm, a special service of Choral Evensong will take place with music and readings chosen for the day. As part of the service, the Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage, will give the first reading of "Only Human" a poem specially commissioned by the Chapter of York to mark the National Day of Reflection. It is intended that a Minster stonemason will carve lines from Simon's poem into a stone bench that will be installed as part of a project to create a new, biodiverse green space at College Green.Â

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The Revd Canon Michael Smith, Acting Dean of York said: "The pandemic has reminded us, sometimes very painfully, that life is both precious and fragile and that to borrow the title of the Poet Laureate's new poem we are all 'Only Human'. Covid-19 taught us that lots of 'ordinary' jobs are actually essential jobs that hold the fabric of our communities together. It reminded us of the importance of family and friends, of simply spending time together and sharing an embrace from time-to-time.

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"As we resume our lives once again, it is right that we reflect on the last two years and the impact upon all of us. But it is also a time to begin the journey towards a hopeful future and somehow, to build on the wells of loving kindness, sacrifice and care that were also a part of the pandemic."

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The Minster's clergy team and chaplains will be available throughout the day to welcome and support visitors. People will be invited to join worship, to pray, to light candles or just to sit for quiet reflection. The day will be one of the Minster's non-charging days.

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York Minster will be open for the National Day of Reflection from 9am until 4.30pm on Wednesday 23rd March. The Evensong Service will begin at 5.30pm. All are welcome.

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