

A person is shown from the chest up, holding a lit candle in their right hand. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved garment. The background is dark with several out-of-focus circular light spots (bokeh) in shades of blue and purple. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

ANNUAL SERVICE OF
REFLECTION FOR PEOPLE
AFFECTED BY SUICIDE

HELD AT TRURO CATHEDRAL,
CORNWALL

Since 2016, a Service of Reflection for People Affected by Suicide has been held each year at Truro Cathedral on the closest Sunday to World Suicide Prevention Day (10th September).

Co-ordinated by Cornwall's Suicide Liaison Service in collaboration with the Cathedral and members of the County's Multi Agency Suicide Prevention Group, the service is advertised widely on social media, inviting those of all faiths or none, to come together in a "safe" space to reflect and remember those they have lost, and to share the ritual of lighting a candle in memory of the person who has died.

Cornwall has a strong tradition since the early 19th century of male voice choirs, influenced by Methodism. For those attending who may not be familiar or comfortable with the Anglican liturgy, the contribution of a male voice choir which has shaped Cornish identity, provides a link between music, place and culture. Readings are selected carefully, sensitive to the language used, and representatives of agencies providing mental health support across the County are invited to read a Lesson or a poem especially chosen for the service; with a personal reflection provided by someone with lived experience. The service is a moving and meaningful occasion, bringing together those members of our community who share a common bond. There is an opportunity to meet after the service, or to speak with a member of the Cathedral's clergy or one of the Samaritans volunteers, who are available.

In 2020, restricted by the pandemic, it was not possible to hold the annual service. Instead, the Cathedral remained open for the day on 10th September, inviting those affected and bereaved by suicide to visit the Cathedral to light a candle in memory of a loved one, have a space for reflection, or speak to a member of Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's chaplaincy team or the Suicide Liaison Service. A local representative from the Compassionate Friends was also on hand to talk privately with bereaved parents. The day provided a welcome opportunity to so many who have been bereaved and isolated during the days of lockdown.

We are hopeful we can hold the annual service again this year in September 2021 as it is an important community postvention event, offering healing and support to those affected by suicide.

ADDITIONAL COMMENT

If your organisation wants to hold a similar event, consider approaching your local faith community, sensitive to the cultural demographics of your area. When inviting people to be involved, try to reflect diversity. Be very careful and sensitive about the language used to describe the event so that it is neither celebratory nor implies judgement.