**Archbishop leads calls for faithful to join the Big Help Out at a multi-faith Iftar**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY 25 MARCH**

The Archbishop of Canterbury is leading calls for Britain’s faithful to get involved with the Big Help Out this 7-9 June from an interfaith iftar at the Eritrean Muslim Community Association. Last year more than 7 million people took part in the Big Help Out – Britain’s biggest volunteering opportunity – and this year it’s even longer, across a long weekend from 7-9 June.

The Archbishop will be making the call at volunteer-led preparations for an Iftar hosted by the Eritrean Muslim Community Association (EMCA)  on Wandsworth Road, where he will have the opportunity - along with representatives of other faiths including Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Co-CEO of Progressive Judaism and Professor Jagbir Jhutti-Johal, Professor of Sikh Studies, University of Birmingham - to meet volunteers from across the EMCA’s work and hear about the impact that faith-based volunteering has on communities struggling with poverty.

Faith organisations provide the backbone of British volunteering – the Church of England alone accounts for more than 23 million hours a month. In recent years churches have seen a 44% increase in demand for community services thanks to the cost of living crisis with one in four reporting a shortage of volunteers.

Backing the Big Help Out, the Archbishop of Canterbury said,

***“I am delighted to endorse the 2024 Big Help Out, a wonderful opportunity for us to get together and make a difference in our communities.***

***“Volunteering is not just for some people; it’s something we can all do. When we befriend an elderly neighbour, make a meal for someone who would otherwise be hungry, or pack up nappies and babygrows to help a new parent, we make a meaningful difference and are changed ourselves in the process. There are countless ways, both big and small, that we can give our time and talents, loving our neighbour as Jesus calls us to do.***

***“Millions of us embraced this spirit of service through the Big Help Out to mark the King’s Coronation. A year on, I urge everyone to give volunteering a go: paint a wall; meet someone new; tend to a community garden. Whatever you do, I hope and pray that you experience the joy of being part of something bigger than yourself, contributing to your community, and witnessing the transformational impact it can have in the world.”***

Adel Negash, General Manager of EMCA

***"Volunteering is giving back and appreciating God’s givings. The concept of religion is to spread goodness and to help others. In reality, volunteering is the most rewarding work ever because your reward is from God Almighty, and you will be rewarded in a way that you don’t understand: in your health, in your safety and your security, in the well-being of your family and the satisfaction that you get when you see another human being has been helped by you and you become part of something good."***

Jewish Volunteering Network via Nicky Goldman, CEO:

***“JVN is delighted to support The Big Help Out and encourage those charities in our network in the Jewish community and wider charity sector to participate. There are many ways to volunteer and we hope that people will be inspired to find their own.”***

Rabbi Charley Baginsky, Co-CEO of Progressive Judaism said:

***“Volunteering alongside our friends and neighbours of all faiths and backgrounds is a key Jewish value and needed now more than ever. It not only directly benefits those being supported, but also helps to strengthen relationships and friendships between our faiths. We encourage all our members and communities to take part in the Big Help Out 2024.”***

Brendan Cox said,

***“Faith organisations are the backbone of British volunteering – and the Big Help Out is a unique opportunity to connect the faithful with their wider communities.***

***“In recent years we’ve seen faith groups play an invaluable role in supporting families through the cost of living crisis, providing services like food banks, warm spaces, skill sharing and much more.***

***“Now, through the Big Help Out there are countless ways to get involved all over the country. So whatever you want to do – whether it’s the church foodbank, supporting care in the community through your local mosque or working with local children at your synagogue, the Big Help Out is your chance to start volunteering. It could be one of the best things you ever do.”***

**ENDS**

For more information call Peter Starkings 07740 347 362

**The Big Help Out** 2024 takes place on the 7-9 June. It is being backed by thirty well known volunteering charities who are in  the ‘Shaping the Future with Volunteering’ group: AgeUK, Barnardos, British Red Cross, Canal & River Trust, Cats Protection, Citizens Advice, CPRE, Cruse Bereavement Support, Girl Guiding, Guide Dogs, National Trust, NCT, NSPCC, Papworth Trust, Ramblers, RNIB, RNLI, Rotary, Royal Voluntary Service, RSPB, RSPCA, Samaritans, Sea Cadets, Scouts, St John Ambulance, Stroke Association, TCV, Trussell Trust, Volunteering

Matters, YHA

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[https://together.org.uk/](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftogether.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cruth%40religionmediacentre.org.uk%7C7b973137d8464dc79cba08dc49b904ce%7Cda88c6fc1cf243e4a0ccd5c95fc9af46%7C0%7C0%7C638466306208766599%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3hFt7LLGC5p4dsF%2FYQ4qfwzVdbWvtpuQIrzBv9fygmU%3D&reserved=0)Thanks to National Lottery players, /together has received £1 million over three years from The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK.