Michael Palin's 'Thing' is Peace and Quiet. '50 Things to do in a Church' celebrates the many uses of church buildings.

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PRESS RELEASE FROM THE NATIONAL CHURCHES TRUST

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'50 Things to do in a Church' celebrates the many and diverse uses of church buildings and asks the public to share their favourite things to do in a church or chapel.

Launched by the National Churches Trust, the UK's church repair and support charity, '50 Things to do in a Church' highlights some of the activities and events that take place in and around church buildings and the many different ways that people use and experience churches and chapels**.**

As well as being places of worship, church buildings play a vital role in activities for the benefit of the wider community. It is estimated that nearly 90% of churches are used for community purposes as well as for regular worship. (1)

Included in '50 Things to do in a Church' are activities and things to see and do linked to music and the arts, the spiritual, helping the community, art and architecture, food and drink, history, nature and wildlife, and sport and leisure.

The National Churches Trust is asking anyone with their own favourite things to do in a church to share them online on the National Churches Trust website at www.nationalchurchestrust.org/50things, on the National Churches Trust Facebook page at www.facebook.com/nationalchurchestrust or on Twitter using the hashtag #50thingsinachurch.

Full details at www.nationalchurchestrust.org/50things

Photos of all the '50 Things to do in a Church' at www.flickr.com/photos/50things/albums

Michael Palin's Favourite 'Thing to do in a Church'

Watch a video of Michael Palin talking about finding peace and quiet in a church at https://vimeo.com/175322636

Michael Palin said:

"Once asked to declare my religious beliefs I described myself as 'an agnostic with doubts'. However my interest in and fondness for churches is undiminished."

"Churches and chapels are important for all sorts of reasons. Where some are notable for inspirational architecture, others are commended for their community role and the work they do in bringing local

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people together."

"Two years ago I was being cross-questioned in a court case in London and during a lunch break in which I was not permitted to talk to anyone, I desperately wanted somewhere to sit quietly and get myself together. And yet there was nowhere where the price of a seat didn't involve eating, drinking or some commercial transaction.

Then, out of the blue, at the very heart of Fleet Street, I discovered the church of St Dunstan-in-the West. I was never so grateful for a place of repose, an oasis of peace and quiet in the midst of the mayhem."

"There are, of course, many other uses for churches and chapels and the National Churches Trust's '50 Things to do in a Church' – which includes everything from finding the Green Man to helping out at a night shelter - shows clearly why churches are such important local buildings."

"Our churches speak to all of us, even just as a tower on the horizon, a spire amongst the trees. We must do all we can to pass them on to future generations. They are part of our landscape and part of our national heritage. We have to do all we can to make them part of our lives as well."

Watch a video of Michael Palin talking about finding peace and quiet in a church at

https://vimeo.com/175322636

'50 Things to do in a Church' includes

The entertaining

- Enjoy a beer festival
- Have a night out at the opera

Find the church cat

Go to a comedy night

Watch a film

The mind-expanding

- Discover a rood screen

Research family history

See the tomb of someone famous

Go star gazing

- Try out the organ

The unusual

- Abseil down the spire
- Go skateboarding

Find a stag beetle

Camp out for the night

Sit on a misericord

And the traditional

- Sing a hymn
- Enjoy a cream tea

Go to a flower festival

Climb the tower

Meet a vicar

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust said:

" '50 Things to do in a Church' makes it clear that churches, chapels and meeting houses are a tremendous asset to local people and communities throughout the UK."

"The use of church buildings as 'community hubs' has the strong support of the public. 83% of British adults think that churches, chapels and meeting houses play an important role for society as they provide a space in which community activities can take place, as well as worship, according to the findings of a 2016 ComRes opinion poll on attitudes to church heritage."(2)

"Of course, '50 Things to do in a Church' is just a small selection of activities that take place in and around church buildings. We'd love to hear from the public about some of their favourite things to do in a church or chapel. People can add to our list and post photographs on our website at www.nationalchurchestrust.org/50things or by visiting our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/nationalchurchestrust."

"I hope **'50 Things to do in a Church' will encourage** more people to discover some of the great things that it is possible to do in a church or chapel and explore some of their amazing history and architecture. There is no better place to find a Green Man, light a candle, find the tomb of someone famous or get involved in helping the community."

The full list of '50 Things to do in a Church' is:

Music, the arts and entertainment

- Go to a comedy night
- Have a night out at the circus

Sing in a choir

Have a night out at the opera

Watch a film

Paint a picture

Spiritual

- Light a candle
- Go to a wedding

Meet a vicar

Find peace and quiet

Sing a hymn

Say a prayer

Art and Architecture

- Discover a rood screen
- Sit on a Misericord

See historic wall paintings

Marvel at stained glass

Find the green man

Nature

- Watch the bats
- Go to a flower festival

Go stargazing

Discover an ancient yew tree

Find a stag beetle

Go birdwatching

Sport and leisure

- Ring the bells
- Take part in Ride+Stride

Go skateboarding

Abseil down the spire

Go to a Yoga class

Camp out for the night

Community

- Give blood
- Use the free Wi Fi

Learn English

Go to the post office

Volunteer at a night shelter

Vote

Food and drink

- Visit a Farmers 'Market
- Have a cream tea

Buy Fairtrade chocolate

Enjoy a nice cup of tea

Enjoy a beer festival

Explore

- Find the church cat
- Visit the crypt

Climb the tower

Stand in a triple decker pulpit

Try out the organ

History

- Honour the fallen
- Discover a tomb of someone famous

Research your family history

Take part in a historical re-enactment

Discover medieval graffiti

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The National Churches Trust Survey - www.nationalchurchestrust.org/publications/national-churches-trust-survey

2. ComRes Opinion Poll – www.nationalchurchestrust.org/2016poll

Photos of all the '50 Things to do in a Church' at www.flickr.com/photos/50things

3.. **About the National Churches Trust**

The National Churches Trust is the leading national independent charity concerned with the protection and welfare of churches, chapels and meeting houses throughout the United Kingdom. We aim to:

a) Provide grants for the repair, maintenance and modernisation of church buildings

b) Act as a catalyst to improve and bring more resources to the management of church buildings

c) Promote the value of church buildings to the community at large

More information at www.nationalchurchestrust.org

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