



The Worshipful Company of Upholders Circle Of Life Press Pack

Issued by The Write Impression on behalf of
The Worshipful Company of Upholders & The Upholders Charity

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“This document serves as the approved source of truth for all Circle of Life communications.”

1. Logo usage, colour palette and imagery

The following information details the guidelines around the usage of logos, colour palettes and imagery.

1A. Logo



'Circle of Life' logo [Download files.](#)

It is essential that high-resolution files are always used, and at a minimum of 5cm wide to retain legibility.

The Circle of Life logo was designed by Emma Frith, hand embroidery and lino print artist and Team Leader at Southwell Minster. Inspired by a wax seal and cathedral rose window, the design features an embroidery needle crossing an upholstery regulator, reflecting the project's craft and heritage.

The logo is for charitable use only and must not be used commercially.

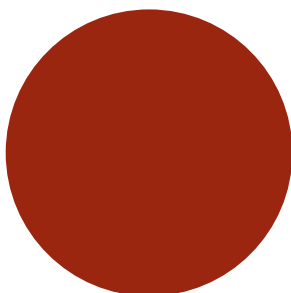


'Upholders Company' logo [Download files.](#)

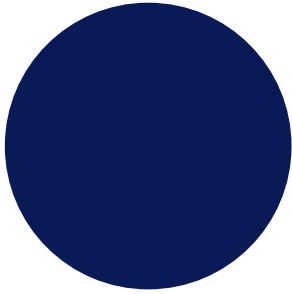
It is essential that high-resolution files are always used, and at a minimum width of 5cm to retain legibility.

1B. Colour palette

The colour palette comprises of two primary colours of blue and red. The HEX codes are to be used for digital creation, while the PANTONE references are to be used in print.



Red / HEX #9B2610 / PANTONE 484C



Blue / HEX #0A1A57 / PANTONE 281C

2. Executive Summary

The Circle of Life

Upholders Company 400th Anniversary Legacy Project

To mark the 400th anniversary of its Royal Charter in 2026, the Upholders Company has launched The Circle of Life- a national embroidery project of historic significance.

Designed by internationally renowned iconographer Aidan Hart and created using the ancient Opus Anglicanum technique, the finished work will be over two metres in diameter and represents the most significant piece of its kind produced in more than five hundred years.

The project brings together:

- Twelve English cathedrals
- Over one hundred volunteer stitchers
- The Royal School of Needlework
- Fine Cell Work, working within a UK prison
- The Upholders Company and The Upholders Charity

Each cathedral is creating a unique panel as part of a 25-panel circular masterpiece that tells the story of English craftsmanship, cathedral heritage and the Upholders' historic trades.

The Royal School of Needlework provides technical training and project oversight, while Fine Cell Work manages the prison-based stitching element, extending the project's social impact.

The completed embroidery will be mounted onto a ceremonial pall, reviving a historic Livery tradition, and unveiled at Guildhall in the City of London on 9 July 2026 before embarking on a national exhibition tour.

A commemorative book authored by Steph Hagan will document the production of the Circle of Life, with proceeds supporting the Upholders Charity.

3. The Circle of Life – Project Overview

3A. Vision and Purpose

The Worshipful Company of Upholders is one of the ancient Livery Companies of the City of London. It was formed on 1 March 1360 and incorporated by a Royal Charter granted by King Charles I in 1626. To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the charter in 2026, the Upholders and its associated charity have launched The Circle of Life – a national embroidery project designed to showcase British craftsmanship and revive the medieval technique of Opus Anglicanum. It honours the Company’s traditional trades: upholstery, soft furnishing and funeral directing by creating a ceremonial pall that can be used at funerals and displayed as a piece of textile art.

The Circle of Life will also have a practical purpose, being designed to be mounted onto a practical pall for use at funerals. It will be available to be used by all those involved in stitching and by members of the Livery. This follows centuries of tradition where most Livery Companies had their own pall for the use of their members, several of which still exist today.

3B. Design and Technique

- **Design:** The Circle of Life has been designed by internationally renowned iconographer Aidan Hart, who also designed the Royal Anointing Screen used at the Coronation of King Charles III.
- **Technique:** The embroidery revives Opus Anglicanum, the English gold and silver thread technique highly prized during the 13th and 14th centuries. The project uses gold and silver wirework and other medieval stitches. It will be the most significant piece of Opus Anglicanum since the Fishmongers’ Pall (1530).

3C. Structural Components

Overall Form

- The Circle of Life is a large circular textile artwork measuring more than 2.2 metres in diameter.
- It has been conceived as both a major embroidered artwork and a functional funeral pall, giving it ceremonial and exhibition purposes.
- When displayed, it sits within a specially engineered circular timber frame with museum-quality glass.

Dual-Purpose Design

The project has two connected components:

- **The Circle of Life:** the main circular embroidered artwork for exhibition.
- **A separate funeral pall:** a luxury wool cloth for ceremonial use, onto which detachable embroidered elements can be mounted.

Panel Structure

The complete Circle of Life is formed of **25 panels**, arranged as:

- 12 outer panels
- 12 inner panels
- 1 central panel

Outer Ring: Detachable Story Panels

- The outer ring contains 12 detachable embroidered panels.
- These panels depict scenes from the history, trades and symbolism of the Worshipful Company of Upholders.
- They represent both the life of a Liveryman and the life of the Company.
- Examples include:
 - The Upholder constructs his marital bed.
 - The Great Fire of London
 - The funeral of the Upholder
 - The Upholder at his workbench
 - The Company's history
- These panels were embroidered by the participating cathedral volunteer teams, working under guidance from the Royal School of Needlework.
- They are removable and can be attached to the funeral pall.

Inner Ring: Fixed Cathedral Panels

- The inner ring contains 12 fixed panels, each showing a gold silhouette / outline of one participating cathedral on a coloured textile ground.
- These honour the cathedrals whose volunteer teams helped create the work.
- Each cathedral team stitched its own silhouette panel, creating a direct and personal contribution to the finished work.
- These panels are fixed within the structure.

Central Panel

- The centre panel is detachable.
- It depicts the armorial bearings of the Worshipful Company of Upholders.

Fine Cell Work / Prison Contribution

- Include one panel and two crosses:
 - Two crosses
 - The Emlyn Motto panel "In morte vitum sustine" (In death, uphold life).
- These elements were created through the prison-based contribution organised by Fine Cell Work.
- They are detachable and can be mounted onto the funeral pall.

Connecting Design Features

- The panels are joined by embroidered Gothic arch pillars, reflecting cathedral architecture.
- This creates a unified circular design inspired by ecclesiastical stonework and rose windows.

Display Structure

- The frame, tripod and base were specially engineered for the project.
- The complete display weighs close to one tonne.
- It stands approximately 2.7 metres high.
- The structure allows the Circle of Life to rotate for viewing during exhibition.

Funeral Pall Use

- A separate luxury wool pall has been created for funerals.
- Selected detachable panels, the armorial bearings, and crosses can be mounted onto it for ceremonial funerals of eligible members and contributors.

4. Delivery and leadership

The project involves four principal stakeholder groups:

The Upholders Company

Project sponsor and originator of the initiative.

The Upholders Charity

Co-funder of the project and beneficiary of associated fundraising activity.

The Royal School of Needlework (RSN)

Providing technical training and project oversight, including:

- All practical training in Opus Anglicanum techniques
- Ongoing mentoring for all cathedral teams
- Technical oversight and quality assurance
- Project management of the embroidery fabrication
- Final mounting and assembly of panels

Fine Cell Work

The independent rehabilitation charity responsible for organising and managing the prison-based stitching element of the project.

5. Participating Cathedrals

The twelve participating English cathedrals are:

- St Paul's (London)
- Durham
- Liverpool
- Lincoln
- Exeter
- St Albans
- Winchester
- Salisbury
- Southwell
- Derby
- Norwich
- Lichfield

107 volunteer stitchers are involved across cathedral teams and the prison cohort.

Cathedral teams are supported locally by appointed Upholders Champions and operate within cathedral-managed voluntary groups.

6. Timeline

April 2025 – Fabrication begins

April 2026 – Target completion of embroidery

9 July 2026 – Unveiling at Guildhall, City of London

Post-July 2026 – National exhibition tour across participating cathedrals and public venues

7. Funding

The Circle of Life has been made possible through the generous support of funders and donors who share a commitment to heritage craft, education and long-term legacy. The project, with a total value of approximately £150,000, has been led by significant support from the Julia Rausing Trust, alongside contributions from The Drapers' Company, The Broderers' Company, The Upholders Charity, individual members of the Worshipful Company of Upholders and members of the public. Their backing has enabled the revival of Opus Anglicanum embroidery, the training and participation of volunteers across England, and the creation of a major new work of national significance for future generations.

To ensure accurate and consistent information is provided, all media enquiries regarding project funding should be directed through the central press office team.

8. Quick Reference: Stats & Facts

Statistic / fact	Details
Company origins	The Worshipful Company of Upholders was formed on 1 March 1360 and received its Royal Charter in 1626
Anniversary	400th anniversary of the charter falls in 2026
Project size	Circle of Life will be over two metres (approx. 2.3 metres) in diameter
Stitching technique	Opus Anglicanum — medieval English embroidery using gold and silver threads
Participants	Twelve cathedrals, 107 volunteer stitchers, and Fine Cell Work prisoners
Managing partner	Royal School of Needlework (founded 1872; based at Hampton Court Palace)
Designer	Iconographer Aidan Hart designed the embroidery
Project start	Production began April 2025
Completion	Scheduled for April 2026
Unveiling	9 July 2026 at the Guildhall, City of London
Project cost	Approximately £150,000
Legacy	<p>The work will tour cathedrals after unveiling.</p> <p>A commemorative book by Steph Hagan will record the project.</p> <p>The Circle of Life initiative will take part in this year's Lord Mayor's Show (14 November), also being marked as the 'Lady Mayor's Show', featuring on an open-topped bus as Lady Mayor Dame Susan Langley DBE joins the traditional procession to pledge her loyalty to the King.</p>

9. Spokespersons

Circle of Life – Approved Media Representatives

Upholders Company Spokespeople:

Julian Squire

Past Master, Upholders Company

Project Lead – Circle of Life Initiative

Role in Project

Julian Squire is a Past Master of the Upholders Company and is leading the Circle of Life initiative. He has been visiting the participating cathedrals and working closely with their volunteer embroidery teams.

Julian serves as the **primary spokesperson on:**

- Vision and purpose of the Circle of Life
- National coordination across cathedrals
- Long-term legacy of the project
- Livery relevance and modern role

Biography

Julian Squire is Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Upholders, having served as Master in 2010 to 2011. He is the originator and driving force behind the Circle of Life, the major commemorative project marking the Company's 400th anniversary of its Royal Charter in 2026. Over a three-year period, Julian conceived the Circle of Life as a sacred artwork and funeral pall, bringing together two of the Upholders' most historic trades: upholstery and funeral directing. He has led the project from concept to delivery, including the appointment of designer Aidan Hart and the Royal School of Needlework, the funding strategy, cathedral partnerships, volunteer coordination and plans for its national tour.

A former senior business leader with a background spanning corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and the leadership of major public and private companies, Julian's corporate success enabled him to take early retirement some years ago. He now lives in the Cotswolds with his wife, Susan, and enjoys family life, restoring ancient buildings and spending part of each year at the couple's farm and vineyard in France.

Stephen Tanner

Master Elect (from April 2026)

Role in Project

Stephen Tanner took office as Master in April 2026 and will therefore be Master at the time of the unveiling at Guildhall.

Stephen serves as **spokesperson on:**

- The 400th anniversary celebrations
- The future direction of the Upholders
- Continuity and leadership

Biography

Stephen Tanner became Master of the Worshipful Company of Upholders in April 2026, taking office during the Company's landmark 400th anniversary year of its Royal Charter. A Liveryman since 2001 and a member of the Court since 2009, Stephen has played an active role in the governance of the Company, including service on its Finance and Charity

Committees, drawing on his experience as a Chartered Accountant before retiring from practice in 2024.

As Master, Stephen is leading the Upholders through a significant year of celebration, including the unveiling of the Circle of Life to mark the Company's 400th anniversary. Having personally visited every cathedral team involved, he has seen first-hand the dedication of volunteers helping create one of the most ambitious projects in the Company's modern history.

Roger Wates

Current Master, Upholders Company

Role in Project

As current Master during the fabrication phase, Roger Wates provides institutional leadership and oversight during the production period.

Roger serves as **spokesperson on:**

- Support and fundraising around the initiative
- The Upholders' trade and education work
- Bursaries, awards and practical support for craftspeople
- The modern relevance of historic standards and training
- The prison stitching element and social impact through craft
- The wider charitable role of the Upholders and associated partners

Biography

Roger Wates is the Immediate Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Upholders and served as Master from April 2025 to April 2026. With a lifelong background in furniture, restoration and soft furnishings, he played a leading role in supporting the fabrication phase of The Circle of Life, the Upholders' national embroidery project marking the 400th anniversary of the Company's Royal Charter in 2026. He remains actively involved with the Company's trade and education work, with a particular interest in training, bursaries, standards and the role of craftsmanship in rehabilitation and opportunity.

Roger served as Master during an important stage of The Circle of Life's production and was fully engaged throughout the project's planning and fabrication phases. He is also closely connected to the project's charitable and social impact strands, including support for Fine Cell Work, The Clink and the Upholders' bursary and awards programmes. Within the project, he has acted as champion for the prison-based stitching element.

Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE

Past Master

Champion of Cathedral Champions

Role in Project

Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE acts as Champion of Cathedral Champions and maintains close relationships with the cathedral teams. She has visited multiple cathedral sites and is actively engaged with volunteer groups.

Wendy serves as **spokesperson on:**

- Cathedral engagement
- Volunteer experience
- Collaboration across sites
- Community and heritage impact

Biography

Wendy Shorter-Blake MBE is a Past Master of the Worshipful Company of Upholders (2020-2022), an award-winning upholsterer, and a long-standing advocate for traditional craft training. Awarded an MBE in 2020 for services to upholstery and heritage crafts, she has spent much of her career passing on specialist skills through teaching, mentoring and bursary support. For the Circle of Life project, she serves as Champion of Cathedral Champions, working closely with the volunteer teams across the participating cathedrals and supporting collaboration across the national project.

Aidan Hart- Iconographer and Designer

Role in Project

Aidan Hart is the designer of the Circle of Life embroidery.

Aidan serves as **spokesperson on:**

- Artistic vision
- Iconographic symbolism
- Theological and visual narrative of the panels
- Historical continuity of sacred art

Biography

Aidan Hart is an internationally recognised iconographer and the designer of the Circle of Life embroidery. He is widely known for designing the Royal Anointing Screen used at the Coronation of King Charles III. For the Circle of Life, he has created a design that integrates cathedral heritage, Livery history and traditional Opus Anglicanum techniques.

Anne Butcher- Representative from the Royal School of Needlework

Role in Project

The Royal School of Needlework provides:

- Practical training
- Technical oversight
- Project management of embroidery fabrication
- Panel mounting and assembly

The RSN representative serves as **spokesperson on:**

- Technical complexity of Opus Anglicanum
- Training of over one hundred stitchers
- Preservation of historic embroidery skills
- Quality control

Katy Emck OBE – Representative from Fine Cell Work

Role in Project

Fine Cell Work manages the prison-based stitching element of the project.

They serve as **spokesperson on:**

- Rehabilitation through craft
- Prison training
- Social impact
- Safeguarding and compliance

“Who Speaks On What” Matrix

- Julian Squire – Vision, coordination, legacy, cathedral network
- Stephen Tanner – 400th anniversary, civic ceremony, future direction
- Roger Wates – Sponsorship, governance, funding
- Wendy Shorter-Blake – Volunteers, cathedral engagement
- Aidan Hart – Artistic design and symbolism
- RSN – Technical execution and training
- Katy Emck OBE, Fine Cell Work – Prison rehabilitation element

10. Approved Quotes – [download here](#)

11. Tone of Voice

The Circle of Life communications should reflect the authority of a 665-year-old Livery Company while remaining accessible and clear for today’s audience.

The tone should be **authoritative, confident and clear**, and expressed in **contemporary language**. It should be **craft-focused, inspiring in its outlook**, and consistently **professional** in its presentation.

Tone Attributes – Do & Don't Guide

Our voice is:	Do:	Don't
Authoritative and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the project as “national in scope” or “of historic significance.” • Use clear language, e.g. to explain Opus Anglicanum: “Opus Anglicanum is an historic English embroidery style that uses fine silk and gold threads to create detailed designs.” • Use clear statements about the project. E.g. “The Circle of Life marks the 400th anniversary of the Upholders’ Royal Charter.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belittle the scope of the project and use phrases such as “heartwarming little project.” • Overload copy with ceremonial language. E.g. “The Court of Assistants approved the initiative before presentation at Common Hall.” • Be too technical. E.g. “The embroidery employs underside couching and polychrome silk shading characteristic of high medieval Opus Anglicanum.”
Collaborative and craft-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight volunteers’ dedication. • Describe skill development and learning. • Acknowledge the time and precision involved in stitching. • Use shared language. E.g. “Participating cathedral teams are creating their panels as part of the national collaboration.” Or “Our Cathedral is proud to be one of twelve participating in the national Circle of Life project led by the Upholders Company.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portray the project as being delivered <i>by</i> the Upholders alone. E.g. “The Upholders are producing a national embroidery across twelve cathedrals.” (This removes the volunteers from the story.) • Focus on speed, efficiency or deadlines in a way that undermines craftsmanship. • Use possessive language. E.g. “Our cathedral teams are delivering our panels.”
Respectful and professional regarding Fine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe Fine Cell Work’s role clearly and professionally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensationalise imprisonment. • Use phrases such as “offenders getting a second

Cell Work's contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use neutral language such as “prison-based stitchers.” • Focus on rehabilitation, training and skill-building. E.g. “Through Fine Cell Work, participants receive professional embroidery training that supports skill development and rehabilitation.” 	<p>chance through needlework.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imply that the prison element is a publicity hook. E.g. “The project even includes prisoners.”
Inspiring in its outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise continuity: “Reviving a historic English craft for a modern audience.” • Reference modern relevance of Livery Companies. • Link heritage to present-day skill preservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame the project as purely commemorative rather than forward-facing. E.g. “The embroidery celebrates the Company’s past achievements.”

Maintaining a consistent tone across the Upholders Company, The Upholders Charity, the Royal School of Needlework and participating cathedrals ensures:

- Credibility with media outlets
- Clarity of stakeholder roles
- Respectful treatment of the prison element
- Confidence in fundraising messaging
- A unified national narrative

For images, interview opportunities or further information, please contact the press office.

A free public exhibition celebrating the people, craft and story behind The Circle of Life- a landmark embroidery artwork will take place on Thursday, 9 July prior to the official unveiling at a ceremonial luncheon at The Old Library, London Guildhall. For more information on tickets to these events, please visit: <https://circle-of-life.eventbrite.co.uk>