

## Order of Service Remembrance Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020

*In these strange times I hope that you will find a sense of worship as we meet – together – apart. I invite you to set time aside to listen to God on this Special Sunday.*

### Call to worship

Come, let us turn to God,  
who is with us in all our sorrows,  
who weeps with us as we weep,  
who binds our wounds,  
and who lifts our eyes towards the eternal horizon.  
God is with us: let us turn to God  
and be people of praise in the story of our lives.  
**Amen.**

### Hymn

**Thy Hand O God has Guided**

### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God, your wisdom draws us in.  
It is the bright sun in the morning,  
and the soft moon of night.  
Your wisdom is the dawn and the dusk,  
the kind opening and gentle closing.  
We praise you for all your wisdom gives:  
strength for continuation;  
hope for consolation;  
courage for perseverance;  
joy for the journey,  
and love for all time.  
**Amen.**

### Prayer of confession for Remembrance Day.

We have come together into your presence, Lord,  
to worship and adore you, to praise your holy name  
and to marvel at your deeds.  
We have come before you to confess our weakness and folly,  
past and present, as individuals and as a nation,  
as citizens of the world and as citizens of your kingdom of love.  
Judge the world with justice and equity, Lord,  
and may your saving righteousness be seen by all the nations.

As we marvel at all you have created,  
we are mindful that what you made beautiful we have spoiled.  
We are mindful that we have ignored the checks and balances

you built into the universe and brought destruction upon ourselves  
and all that lives and all that is.

Judge the world with justice and equity, Lord,  
and may your saving righteousness be seen by all the nations.

Lord God,  
as we consider how you love us to the uttermost in Christ,  
how you have such a care for us that every hair on our heads is counted,  
we are deeply ashamed.

For we see how our lack of love and compassion,  
how our greed and selfishness and sheer stupidity,  
have brought hurt and harm and horror worldwide.  
Judge the world with justice and equity, Lord,  
and may your saving righteousness be seen by all the nations.

Lord God, on this day when we remember the fallen of countless wars,  
call all the nations to repentance,  
move in the hearts of tyrants and terrorists,  
move in the hearts of the leaders of the nations,  
move in the hearts of those who stir up hatred and division.  
Judge the world with justice and equity, Lord,  
and may your saving righteousness be seen by all the nations.

Lord God, as we move forward into this new week,  
lead us in your ways of justice, mercy and truth.  
Enable us to walk in peace and love, one with the other,  
and encourage us by your word, your presence and by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
to live by the values you expect of citizens of your kingdom  
Judge the world with justice and equity, Lord,  
and may your saving righteousness be seen by all the nations.  
For we ask it in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

## **Reading 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18**

<sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words

## **Reflection: 'And we will smile again'**

As I write this we have just learned of a new lockdown and I am sure we face it with very mixed emotions, depending mainly on our life experiences at this time. I had it described to me as an image of our all being in the same storm but in different boats. So whichever boat you are in I pray that you will know of the assurance that the one who calmed the storm on Lake Galilee is with each one of us today – walking, standing, sitting alongside each and every one of us.

Remembrance Sunday has always had a special place in my life. As a child I would be taken by my parents each year to Lincoln Cathedral. That amazing Norman building (Yes, I am biased) set on a hill (not for fun is the road leading to the cathedral named 'Steep Hill') The building can be seen for miles around. A beacon of hope and symbol of Christianity. It escaped being bombed in WWII because it was used as a guide by the planes returning to Germany. I digress – but that very beacon has held remembrance services for many years, and I was so often part of the congregation. It was so important to my parents that as a family we should always remember those who had given us so much, allowing us to live the life of freedom we enjoyed. Even in his later years when Dad could no longer get to the shops, he would always make sure that he had a poppy. That supreme symbol of remembrance. And today the quiet and empty churches serve to remind us of a new, silent threat to our normal way of life and we are called to remember in a different way. But we can and must still remember.

Our village has asked for poppies to be displayed in our houses and gardens; wreaths will be laid by individuals at cenotaphs without the usual accompanying ceremony. We will remember those who gave their lives and those who continue to do so. This year saw many of us commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE day in our gardens with teas and bunting and songs so reminiscent of the time. In August we commemorated VJ day – remembering what was often termed the 'forgotten' army and we met one of the heroes of our time – Captain Tom Moore who walked 100 circuits of his garden before his 100th birthday. Interestingly he had been part of that forgotten army. Who can forget how his spirit encouraged and gave us a silver lining amongst the fear and gloom of the pandemic? We have remembered the part played by men and women from the Caribbean, Africa and India – all areas of the British Empire that came to Britain's aid. Our minds are sent back to times when hope was needed, and silver linings became opportunities to celebrate.

The lectionary reading from Thessalonians comes from a letter from Paul where he is encouraging the Christian community in Thessalonica. Today Thessaloniki in Northern Greece. It is so apt for the times we are enduring. It assures the believers of Christ's love, praises them for their faithfulness and above all reminds them of the HOPE that comes from Christ. It challenges them in their daily living to love one another. Emphasising a relationship with Christ first and then using this same love to show to others in the community. There is practical advice for Christian living and a reminder that, when burdened by guilt and overwhelmed by the storm – there is hope in the reality of Christ's return, resurrection and eternal life.

Our passage reminds Christians of this hope. They have been mourning the loss of their members, what will happen to them when Christ returns. We must remember that in these early days of the Christian Church Christ's return was imminent. As we know we are still waiting but are urged to wait with hope, being ready as we do not know the date or time. We are called to show love and comfort to those who grieve but also to be assured of the hope that dying in Christ brings. In verse 17 we read: 'and we will be with the Lord for ever' and in verse 18 we are called to encourage one another with the words of hope.

One of the most difficult and cruel consequences of the pandemic is not being able to be with loved ones in their final days and not being able to have the usual celebration of life that gathers family and friends together. It makes these words of comfort and hope so much more pertinent. And calls us more than ever to show love, compassion and encouragement to those around us.

We are reminded that even when dark clouds loom over us we must not forget that the sun has not disappeared – it is behind those clouds and every now and then we receive a glimpse to remind us.

David and I were recently at Barrington Court in Somerset, a National Trust property. The local village church had a small but perfectly kept plaque on the gate directing us to a grave of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. We were intrigued and indeed there in the graveyard was an immaculate white grave the same as those seen in so many rows in Belgium and France. The attention to detail, the care and compassion taken over the memory of those lost in war was palpable. Remembering those heroes of the two world wars. Today we remember conflicts that continue in our world, the war to end all wars we know sadly did not achieve its aim – however well believed at the time. Just this week we are reminded of attacks in Austria and France and our hearts go out to all those suffering. I am always intrigued when service men and women so often say, 'we are not heroes – we are just doing the job we trained for' and I am incredulous at how many people are willing to put their lives at risk for their fellow men and women. This year we have seen service men and women participate in building the Nightingale Hospitals and in large scale testing and we have seen new heroes that we clapped for on Thursday nights. And again, they say 'we are just doing our job'

although they have been so pleased that people have recognised jobs that in the past may have been taken for granted.

I recently saw the film: 'Military Wives' – it tells the story of the very first Military Wives choir and came from a group of wives looking for a community activity while their partners were away on active service. There are now 75 choirs around the world. It is not, as you would expect, plain sailing. There are difficulties to overcome and different personalities to contend with but the climax of the film is the song that was sung at the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall – a song written using the words from letters they send to their loved ones and one phrase becomes the anthem for the film and strikes such a chord for today. It is a saying that one of the main characters would keep for the day they are reunited as a family 'then we will smile again'.

Today is a message of hope in dark days, a reminder that as Christians we have a duty to offer compassion, a listening ear, a phone call, a letter, prayers to remind those we are in contact with that they are remembered and with that there is a message of HOPE in Christ who overcame death and lives and walks with us and assures us that:

'And we will all smile again'

Amen

Litany of Lament

### **Marking Loss – a litany of lament**

We thought we knew how the world was meant to be.  
Day followed night, every week had a Sunday  
and that was the day for church.

#### **How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?**

We thought we knew how the world was meant to be.  
We made our plans, held our meetings,  
kept the roof on the church and the show on the road.

#### **How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?**

We thought we knew how the world was meant to be.  
We would see colleagues, friends and loved ones again,  
and we would embrace, laugh and share stories as we always have.

#### **How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?**

And now, we know something new.  
We know that the world is not ours to control,  
and that our plans are confounded by the smallest microbe.  
**God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.**

And now, we know something new.  
We know that church is not committees, agendas and buildings,  
it is us, in homes, streets, hospitals throughout the world.  
**God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.**

And now, we know something new.  
We only have today with those we love, today is the day  
to say, 'I love you', to mend an argument, to hold on tight.  
**God is teaching us a new song, for a new land.**

**Hymn:** Beauty for Brokenness This hymn is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kVHKuldZyw>

**Prayers of Intercession** God of all peoples and nations,  
we pray for communities and nations trapped in the cycle of distrust, hate and conflict,  
for those who feel they must use force to dominate others;  
for those who feel they must use violence to achieve justice;  
for those who feel they must fight to defend their homes and their families.  
May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive  
between nations and communities.

**May there be healing and peace.**

Lord Jesus Christ, prince of peace,  
we pray for individuals and families struggling with difficult relationships, feeling hurt or angry:  
for those who find it hard to admit they have made mistakes, who cannot forgive others or themselves;  
for those who have been let down by someone they trusted and feel betrayed, angry, confused;  
for those who are suffering because the people they love are continually arguing and fighting.  
May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive  
within families and friendships.

**May there be healing and peace.**

Holy Spirit, bringer of life and peace,  
we pray for our planet, where we so often fail to live in harmony with the rest of creation.  
We pray for those who make the big decisions that may poison a river or save a rainforest,  
and for those who make the small decisions about how to travel and what to buy.  
May there be a willingness to understand and to forgive  
throughout God's brilliant, incomparable world, which suffers so much at our hands.

**May there be healing and peace.**

Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen

## **Act of Remembrance**

### **The Exhortation**

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

**The Two Minute Silence is observed.**

### **The Kohima Epitaph is recited :**

When you go home, tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.

### **Hymn**

In Christ Alone

### **Blessing**

May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind be ever at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face  
And the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you, in the palm of his hand