

## 14<sup>th</sup> November – Remembrance Sunday

Led by Rev Kate Whyman

### GATHERING MUSIC 'Da pacem Domine', Arvo Part

<https://youtu.be/wZSUAsDRKLY>

### WELCOME AND CHALICE LIGHTING

Welcome. Welcome to everyone here in the church and all who are joining us online today. You are welcome here, just as you are.

Today is Remembrance Sunday and we will be observing the 2 minutes' silence at 11am along with churches, chapels and memorials around the country, including on the Hoe.

But now, as is our custom, let's light our chalice candle as a symbol of our free religious faith. *If you're at home I invite you to light a candle with me now.*

*Words by Cliff Reed:*

Out of the fires of war  
let us kindle the chalice of peace.  
Out of the fury of battles  
Let us create a passion for peace.  
Out of the turmoil of conscience  
Let us weave the calm of peace.  
In the one Spirit that we share  
Let us celebrate the vision of a  
World made just and free – and  
Find the strength to build it,  
a little at a time.

Today it is traditional to read the fourth verse of Lawrence Binyon's poem 'For the fallen'.

*"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."*

**11.00 AM SILENCE** – 2 mins to remember all those who died in the two World Wars and all wars and conflicts since. You may wish to sit or stand in respectful silence

## **PRAYER**

Divine Spirit

Today we lift up our hearts...

For all who live in suffering in the aftermath of violence

For all who give their lives in smoke and flame

For all who go on in honour of the dead

For all who have served

We lift up our hearts.

For our country and our world

For a planet that will find peace

For the young and the innocent

For the weary and war torn

We lift up our hearts

For those who would pray

For those too angry to cry

For all of us

And for the many names of God

We lift up our hearts

Shanti, shalom, peace, salaam. Amen.

Our **first hymn** is...**192 (G) A new community**

We would be one as now we join in singing  
our hymn of love, to pledge ourselves anew  
to that high cause of greater understanding  
of who we are, and what in us is true.

We would be one in building for tomorrow  
a greater world that we have known today;

we would be one in searching for that meaning  
which binds our hearts and points us on our way.

We would be one in living for each other,  
with love and justice strive to make all free;  
as one, we pledge ourselves to greater service,  
to show the world a new community.

*Music by Joseph Barnby, words from Samuel Anthony Wright*

**STORY** from Anthony de Mello's book of stories called 'Taking Flight'

'My friend isn't back from the battlefield, sir. Request permission to go out and get him.'

'Permission refused,' said the officer. 'I don't want you to risk your life for a man who is probably already dead.'

The soldier went all the same and, an hour later, came back mortally wounded, carrying the body of his friend.

The officer was furious. 'I told you he would be dead and not to risk your own life. Now I've lost both of you. Tell me, was it worth going out there to bring in a corpse?'

The dying man replied, 'Oh it was, sir. When I got to him, he was still alive. And he said to me, 'Jack, I was sure you'd come.'

**READING Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

### **Hymn 226 (G) Song of peace**

This is my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for lands afar and mine;  
this is my home, the country where my heart is,  
here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine;  
but other hearts in other lands are beating  
with hopes and dreams and true and high as mine.

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,  
And sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;  
but other lands have sunlight, too, and clover,  
and skies are everywhere as blue as mine.  
O hear my song, O God of all the nations,  
a song of peace for their land and for mine.

*Music by Jean Sibelius, words by Lloyd Stone. Used by permission of The Lorenz Corporation, Dayton, Ohio*

**SILENCE for our own prayer/meditation/reflection**

## ADDRESS

I've come to see this Sunday as a day that highlights both the tragedy and the glory of the human condition. This is a day that reminds us, should we need to be reminded, of the tragedy that is the human capacity to suffer and to inflict suffering on others. And the glory, not of uniforms worn or battles won, but of human love freely given, and self-sacrifice willingly made.

To be honest I find poppy wearing uncomfortable – the pressure and the moral judgments that come with it bother me. But it struck me for the first time, as I was writing this service, that I could feel comfortable wearing both a red and a white poppy to remind *myself* of the paradox that sits at the very heart of our beings, which is one of loss and hope; bloodshed and healing; hatred and love, tragedy and glory; war and peace. And by wearing both, it would remind me to try to bring these seemingly opposing aspects of my own heart and soul together, into one.

They are anyway intermingled.

The red suggests to me the blood and heat of war, but then again isn't red also the colour of love and warmth? And while white may symbolize peace, doesn't it also bring to mind death and loss? So perhaps they aren't so much two sides to be chosen between, but rather two essential aspects of what it means to be alive. Our task, it seems to me, is to find a way to embrace and make sense of both of them, to channel both their energies in ways that bring us closer to each other, rather than drive us farther apart.

We always say we want peace, not war, don't we? It sounds simple and obvious enough. Yet I wonder how will we ever create peace on earth unless we are able to face and acknowledge that the war out there in the world - those terrible, brutal conflicts and atrocities that have taken place throughout history, and in our living memory, and which still go on and continue shock and sadden us today...that they all have their origins within our own ordinary human contradictions. Denying that this is so surely only pushes the darkness underground when what we need to do is to bring it into the light.

Last year a friend gave me a book called 'Human Kind: A hopeful history' by Rutger Bregman. It's taken me a while to get round to reading it – I have a pile of books waiting in the wings – but what Bregman argues is that we are essentially good and kind, which I agree with, and then explores why we nevertheless do bad things.

And he shares some interesting research that's been carried out on the psychology of those who have found themselves caught up in war, whether it's the British or the Germans, the Americans – or even terrorists. It seems that there's something they all share which paradoxically contributes to conflict, which is that we are indeed all programmed to care and to be kind, *but* primarily only to people we *know*. Humans, it seems, form extremely strong loyalties. We're familiar with this, of course – family loyalty, loyalty to a football team, to our hometown, to our country, to our religion. It's partly driven by wanting to belong to something bigger than ourselves. And so what researcher found motivates soldiers most is not so much the ideal they're apparently fighting for, but instead their solidarity with their comrades, with that band of brothers and sisters with whom they feel such strong allegiance and loyalty. These are the people who above all they don't want to let down and are even willing to die for. But this extraordinary love and loyalty – the glory, if you like – can also have a shadow side – the tragedy – which is that it can allow them to de-humanise those they perceive as being 'against them', those they don't know, which sometimes – in war, particularly - leads people to do things they would never dream of doing to anyone they'd actually met, or whose eyes they'd looked into, or whose families they were aware of.

And so here lies a contradiction. To be human is to be someone who can be at the same time red and white, good and bad, kind and cruel, at war and also at peace.

So if we genuinely want a peaceful world – and I *think* we do – then somehow we have to recognize that contradiction, and find ways to mitigate it or even transcend it. How might we, for example, channel the energy to fight into speaking out rather than shooting out? How might we manage to extend our remarkable capacity for compassion beyond merely our own families, friends, comrades, neighbours, towns, countries. Of course we can't possibly *know* everyone in the world, but we *can* know that everyone in the world is driven by needs and fears similar to our own. Perhaps we can remember, on this day at least, something we already know which is that everyone wants to belong, and everyone wants to be loved; that loneliness and loss are universal, and that every human being, deep down, feels alone and afraid.

George Orwell described a day when he found himself overpowered by empathy during the Spanish Civil War. He wrote:

'At this moment a man jumped out of the trench and ran along the top of the parapet in full view. He was half-dressed and was holding up his trousers with both hands as he ran. I

refrained from shooting at him. I did not shoot partly because of that detail about the trousers. I had come here to shoot at 'Facists'; but a man holding up his trousers isn't a 'Fascist', he is visibly a fellow creature, similar to yourself, and you don't feel like shooting at him'.

It's so hard to hold on to this knowledge of shared fellowship, and to know it at a deep enough level. The distractions of everyday life mean we get lost, and forget, and caught up in conflicts of our own. We start to think things that don't matter at all, somehow matter a lot and are worth defending. Or we are easily offended, and irritated, and sometimes want revenge. We can be quick to judge, and slow to forgive. Isn't it exactly these everyday kinds of insecurities that are at the root of conflict? It's not that we're *bad*, we're not, we're good! It's just that we're fearful. We fear strangers, we fear we won't have enough, we fear someone else is getting more, and we fear we don't belong ...I believe it's fear and forgetting, not evil, that causes us both to suffer and also to inflict suffering.

Religions tell us that we can do better than this, that we can become more compassionate, and we can. Though we may never be willing to die for someone we've never met, we can surely be willing not to harm them. We can learn to listen better, to understand more, to engage in meaningful dialogue. We can encourage each other to reach out across divisions, and build bridges, not burn them. And the more each of us do this, the more we will encourage others to do the same, and the more we will - together - keep on contributing to making this world a more peaceful place for everyone.

If we want peace in the world we must find it in our own hearts, and then let it ripple out, way beyond the limits our own tribes, and out further and further still towards the outer edges of creation.

I'd like to close with words that will, I'm sure, be familiar to many of you from Lao Tzu.

"If there is to be peace in the world,  
There must be peace in the nations.  
If there is to be peace in the nations,  
There must be peace in the cities.  
If there is to be peace in the cities,  
There must be peace between neighbours.  
If there is to be peace between neighbours,  
There must be peace in the home.

If there is to be peace in the home,  
There must be peace in the heart.”

May it be so.

*Let's sing...*

**HYMN 188 (G) Let love continue long**

Let love continue long,  
and show to us the way,  
and if that love be strong  
no hurt can have a say;  
and if that love remain but strong,  
no hurt can ever have a say.

If love can not be found,  
though common faith prevail,  
when love does not abound,  
a common faith will fail.  
When human love does not abound,  
a common faith will always fail.

If we in love unite,  
debate can cause no strife:  
for with this love in sight  
disputes enrich our life.  
For with this bond of human love,  
disputes can mean a richer life.

May love continue long,  
and lead us on our way:  
for if that love be strong  
no hurt can have a say.  
For if that love remain but strong  
no hurt can ever have a say.

*Music by John Ireland, words traditional American*



We're going to close with the universal prayer of peace. You may find the words in the front of your hymnbooks or on the screen, so do join in with me in saying...

**CLOSING PRAYER – Universal prayer of peace**

Lead me from death to life,  
from falsehood to truth.

Lead me from despair to hope,  
from fear to trust.

Lead me from hate to love,  
from war to peace.

Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.

Peace, peace, peace.

*Extinguish chalice*

**CLOSING MUSIC** 'Peace train' Playing for change, with Yusuf/Cat Stevens

<https://youtu.be/0QpjR6-Uuks>