

**Opening Music:** 'I thank you God, for this most Amazing Day'

Words by ee cummings set to music by Eric Whitacre

Listen here: <https://youtu.be/nMbSY7b0fuM?si=P6AGa-GPAqNxYIBM>

**Welcome**

Good morning and Welcome! Whether you are here in the church, joining us on Zoom, or watching the recording at a later time. Welcome whoever you are, and however you are feeling, whatever you carry in your heart, and bring with you: hopes, cares and concerns or celebrations, sadness or joys, you are welcome, especially if you are joining us for the first time.

However we join in, each one of us is part of our community, contributing by being connected in spirit, and all are equally valued. We begin, as is our custom, by lighting our chalice as a symbol of our free religious faith. If you are at home, and have a candle, you may like to light it now.

**Chalice Lighting:** words By Rev. Stephanie Bisby

For the light of days remembered which has brought us to this place,  
and the light of love and justice for the wider human race;  
for the light which burns and blazes to inspire us to our best,  
and the light which in its fading calls us to our nightly rest;

As a beacon lit in memory of all those who came before  
and a light of hope for those who yet will enter through our doors;  
as a symbol of our values and to mark our common aim,  
as we gather here in worship, let us light our chalice flame

**Opening Words:** My Service today is called "May musings" and as it unfolds, you'll see that this May, there is much on which to muse, including special days and anniversaries. So, it seemed appropriate to introduce it with this piece by Dr. Andrew Usher, a Unitarian Minister.

"As we gather in this springtime of marbles and piracies, hop-scotch and jump-rope, we look forward to the coming summer – the lengthening of the days, and the warmth of promise.

But we remember also the winter just gone, and the seeming barrenness of the sleeping earth, and we think too of the seasons and faces of the past: people and places that have touched our lives – whether through friendship and support, or simply because the knowledge of their existence is itself an encouragement.

And in remembering those whose dedication has shaped our lives, we are aware too of the wider influence we have, as we as individuals and as community touch the lives of those around us, through our own initiatives and through the wider causes which we support.

May our interactions amongst ourselves and with others be infused with the increasing light, so that those we meet may likewise take joy in this puddle-wonderful world.

To the sweet spontaneous earth, for all its riches and wonders, we breathe our thanks, grateful too for the knowledge that, whatever happens, Spring is with us still.

May its joyous message of awakening lighten our hearts and enliven our steps throughout the coming seasons.”

I invite you to join in singing our first hymn, no 43 in purple book:

**1<sup>st</sup> Hymn:** Purple book no. 43 Gather the spirit

Gather the spirit, harvest the power.  
Our sep'rate fires will kindle one flame.  
Witness the mystery of this hour.  
Our trials in this light appear all the same.  
*Gather in peace, gather in thanks,  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again.*

Gather the spirit of heart and mind.  
Seeds for the sowing are laid in store.  
Nurtured in love and conscience refined,  
With body and spirit united once more.  
*Gather in peace, gather in thanks,  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again*

Gather the spirit growing in all,  
Drawn by the moon and fed by the sun.  
Winter to spring, and summer to fall,  
The chorus of life resounding as one.  
*Gather in peace, gather in thanks,  
Gather in sympathy now and then.  
Gather in hope, compassion and strength.  
Gather to celebrate once again*

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**Story:** As we are all aware, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of war in Europe, known as VE Day, has been marked by millions of people, in hundreds of different events. Many people have shared their personal memories, or those of family members. There were many memories of the day in Plymouth, of course. The Herald reported how one of Plymouth's last surviving World War Two veterans had unveiled a memorial to the fallen in a ceremony on the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Ivor Foster, now 99 years old, was a mid-upper gunner in a Lancaster bomber and served in the tail end of WW2 with the RAF. He was invited to Plymstock Bowling Club, where he was a member, and former Treasurer to unveil a wall-mounted statue of a soldier, known as a Tommy. This will be lit up at night. He gave a moving speech to members, saying “Thank you for giving me the honour of unveiling a memorial to those brave men and women who fell in wars gone by ..... It is only right that Tommy's statue is there to keep those memories alive forever, and it is my honour and grateful duty to unveil the club's own Tommy.”

He told The Herald that he was still serving when VE Day was announced in 1945, and so he was not caught up in wider celebrations. He said: "We were all really confined to camp, with no flying in or out, so we just wandered around. To be honest I never used to drink on them days. They had a celebration in the evening, but the only thing as far as we were concerned was that there was no flying that day."

But he somberly reflected on VE Day, saying the loss of comrades in the war meant it was not a great cause for personal celebration. He said: "It doesn't mean that much to me now, as I had six of the best mates in the world that I flew with."

"There were seven of us in the Lancaster and they're all gone. I was the baby of the group and our engineer was the grandfather of the group – he was 44, flying with boys who were 18 or 19. So I'm the last one left. But as my pilot would say 'that's how the cookie crumbles'."

### **1<sup>st</sup> First Prayers: 'Remembrance and Peace' By Rev. Mark Hutchinson**

Thank you and may there be Peace  
I desperately want to remember everyone who fought and died  
I desperately want to understand all those who fought on the side  
And those who wouldn't fight  
And the destruction of planet and animals from everywhere,  
an everywhere that thought it was right.

But there are too many.  
It is simply too much to take.  
So for the all of these 'many'  
May we try to never repeat the mistake  
That war offers solutions to the way we are together.  
It doesn't.  
We are the solution for the way we are together.  
Thank you each person and everything that allows this moment .  
May there be peace in each moment to come.

'Peace' - anon

Spirit of love and life,  
guide the efforts of humankind to bring peace and justice to the nations of the earth, and  
give strength to rulers and all who work to establish peace and justice in the world.

Prosper the activities of those who work to preserve human rights.  
Promote the endeavours of all who work for reconciliation and justice.  
Deliver us from the forces of malice, jealousy and fear.  
Direct us into the ways of understanding, cooperation and mutual respect.

Bless all peacemakers.  
Sustain all peace keepers.  
Break down all barriers of ignorance, suspicion and fear.  
Build up those things that make for peace, justice and freedom.  
Enable us to live with dignity as brothers and sisters united in our diversity and our desire  
for a world where war itself is but an event only dimly remembered. *Amen.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Hymn:** Purple hymn book 178 'Together now we join as one'

Together now we join as one  
our common faith to sing;  
to render to this pilgrim world  
our heart felt offering.

We strive to be a fellowship  
with mind and conscience free,  
to search for truth and saving light  
in cosmic mystery.

We worship God – love's source and power;  
we celebrate the life  
that all earth's children freely share  
beyond their sinful strife.

We would in love, serve humankind  
with caring, justice, peace;  
and with the earth seek harmony  
that pride and pillage cease

We hold in reverence the man  
who walked in Galilee,  
who healed the sick and loved the poor –  
revealed divinity.

We welcome truth, we welcome light,  
all prophecy and song,  
whoever they be channelled through  
to all they shall belong.

Music 'St. Fulbert' Henry John Gauntlett, 1805 1878  
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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Readings:**

**1.Poem:** 'May Has Decked the World' by Annette Wynne. Annette Wynne is an American poet. Little is known about her life, except that she wrote poems mostly for children, and had 2 books of poetry published in the years following WW1. Some USA States observed the Memorial Day following the Civil War. After the World Wars it became a national day of remembrance for all members of the U.S. military who fought and died in service. It is observed on the last Monday in May.

May has decked the world, that we  
May bring the brave on land or sea  
Earth's glory on Memorial Day,  
The lovely meadow gifts of May.

Brave dead, who saved our country, we  
Come with flowers; O living brave, on land or sea,  
We wave the bright Red, White and Blue  
And bring May meadow gifts to you!

2. **'Salvation'** by Cliff Reed from his book 'Carnival of Lamps' which we have here in our church library

He starts with a quotation from Acts of the Apostles, 16:verse 10 "What must I do to be saved?"

He continues, "What does it mean 'to be saved'? To be saved in soul and spirit?

Is it about holding the right beliefs, observing the right rituals, saying the right prayers, venerating the right saints?

Is it booking a place in paradise?

Stepping by grace from off some predestined walkway to hell?

Or is it being true to the best you know, regardless of the consequences?

Living in honesty and authenticity? Being as kind, compassionate and loving as we can – even when we don't much feel like it?

Could it be that to be saved is to live free from hatred, vengefulness and resentment, free from hypocrisy and self-righteousness;

Free from selfishness, jealousy and greed;

To 'take no thought for the morrow'

Because God's kingdom is here, now, and we are called to enter it today, as living souls in living bodies, not free from mortality, but free from its dread?

To be saved is to live abundantly,

Following as best we can in the footsteps of the great souls,  
blessed with the courage to take hard roads.

### **Candles of joy and Concern:**

We have here candles .Anyone including our friends on Zoom, are invited to come up and light a candle, to say a few words if you wish, or light it silently. When all are done, there will be some silence for your own personal prayer and reflection, followed by some harp music.

### **Silent Meditation:**

**Reflective Music:** 'A trip to the Island' - Celtic Harp played by Nadia Birkenstock

Listen here: [https://youtu.be/qvyijUMqp\\_U](https://youtu.be/qvyijUMqp_U)

### **ADDRESS – "MAY MUSINGS"**

My Service today is called "May musings" and as it is unfolding, you'll have seen already, that this May, there is much on which to muse, including special days and anniversaries: The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, of course, still very fresh in all our minds, and for our most senior members, this includes their own personal living memories.

Going much further back in time, this May sees the 1,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening gathering of the first council of Nicea, in 325 CE.

Then there are also ancient and modern celebrations for the start of summer, with the month bookended with early and late Spring Bank Holidays.

Any May month is one of much promise – with new growth, warm sunny days and the beginning of the time of the great abundance of summer. But the breeze can still have a chill to it, a reminder to be aware of the threat of late night frosts with their potential to damage the darling buds of May. Along with the rejoicing, comes the need for vigilance to cherish and protect the tender new growth of our dearest hopes, for peace and for freedom of thought and belief, for all people of the world.

So, thinking first about the earlier event, which opened in May 325, and had a huge effect on the whole Christian church for many centuries. This was the First Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical council of the Christian church, which met in ancient Nicaea (now İznik, Turkey). Christianity had only recently been legalised in the empire. The Council was called by the Emperor Constantine I, who presided over the opening session and took part in the discussions, which involved at least 200 bishops and many supporting staff.. Constantine was still preparing for his own baptism.

The council of Nicea was the first of many efforts to reach consensus in the church, over various issues, including setting the date of Easter, and, the most important one, concerning the divine nature of God the Son and his relationship to God the Father. The main people involved were Archbishop Alexander of Alexandria and the presbyter Arius. Alexander and many other bishops believed that God the Son was eternally generated from the Father, while Arius and his followers asserted that the Father alone was eternal, the Son was created or begotten by the Father, and therefore was not eternal, and subordinate to the Father. Arius' point of view was rejected and the Nicene Creed was drawn up, still adhered to by mainstream Christians. Anyone rejecting this Creed, including Arius, and several Bishops were excommunicated and exiled on the orders of the Emperor. Arius' writings were confiscated and burnt, while his supporters were regarded as "enemies of Christianity". Constantine ordered the death penalty for anyone who refused to hand over Arius' writings. Despite this, the controversy continued in various parts of the empire, for 4 or 5 centuries.

Although Arius' beliefs were not identical to those of modern Unitarians, it set me wondering how differently the Christian church might have developed if what became the mainstream churches and Arius had been able to co-exist ... Its one of history's great 'What if's' we'll never know ... in later centuries, various versions of Arius' ideas resurfaced in central Europe, later reaching our shores. People died defending their beliefs when they differed from the official views of the time. It is so important to this day to ensure we keep our right to a free religious faith, and free from having any creed or dogma imposed upon us.

Before coming to VE Day, I'm going to mention something else. Its an ancient church festival on the fifth Sunday after Easter Sunday, called Rogation Sunday. It originated about 200 years after Council of Nicea. It was started in France, by the bishop of Vienne. The word rogation comes from the Latin verb 'rogare', meaning "to ask", and reflects the beseeching of God for protection from calamities, and includes asking for health of the crops. This was so important then, as people depended on locally grown food.

Its been observed in some parts of this country and in some places includes the beating of the bounds" of the parish, praying for God's blessing upon the crops and thus the well-being of that particular settlement.

This past week, the whole country has celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of fighting in Europe, aka V-E-Day. The first VE Day in May 1945 came after a series of surrenders by Germany.

The first came on April 29 at the Palace of Caserta, outside Naples, Italy where British Field Marshal Harold Alexander accepted the surrender of German and Italian forces in Italy and western Austria. Five days later, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery accepted the surrender of German forces in northwestern Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands at Luneberg Heath, south of Hamburg.

Finally, there was the unconditional surrender of all Nazi forces in Europe. This was signed first at Reims and again in Berlin.

For many V-E Day after nearly 6 years of war, was a bittersweet moment, a time of reflection as well as celebration.

While many people lit bonfires and threw back the blackout curtains, others thought about what they had lost. The world also had to reckon with the Holocaust after the advancing armies uncovered the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps where millions of Jews were slaughtered.

"It was just a big letting off (of) steam and a massive relief for so many people," said Dan Ellin, a historian at the University of Lincoln in the U.K. "But then, of course, for others, there wasn't an awful lot to celebrate. For thousands of people, the victory was tinged with a sadness because for them, their loved ones were not going to come home." And V-E Day wasn't actually the end of the war elsewhere. The Japanese were still fighting ferociously to defend their home against any invasion, and many Allied soldiers expected that they would be deployed to the Far East as soon as the war in Europe ended.

"Everybody knows there's a big show left and the big show is going to be gigantic and it's going to be bloody ...," Citino said. "And I bet you every single Allied soldier in Europe, after toasting victory in Europe, they sat down and said, 'I'm going to Japan. This isn't over yet.'"

Most were spared another fight when Japan surrendered in Aug., after the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

#### The veterans have their own thoughts on V-E Day

Dorothea Barron, now 100, served as a signaller in the Wrens, the Women's Royal Naval Service. She remembers the sense of camaraderie as everyone banded together to defeat a common enemy.

She said, "Well, naturally, it's something worth celebrating, because we had finally stopped the Germans from trying to get into England," she said. "Because we were absolutely determined they weren't going to set foot in our country, absolutely, and we would have resisted, man, woman and child."

Mervyn Kersh, also 100, said V-E Day should be a reminder to today's leaders that they must stand up to bullies and despots, wherever they may be.

"You can't have peace without strength," he said. "It's no good just remembering. You've got to do something."

For many people, the memories can only be 2<sup>nd</sup> hand. Some years ago, when I asked my father, who was with the American forces as they made their way into Germany, how he had celebrated VE Day. I was surprised when he said he couldn't remember any celebrations, they were too busy pressing on with what they had to do; he helped in repatriation work for months afterwards . . . My late partner, John was in the jungles of Burma, so for him, the war was still very much ongoing. He didn't go into much detail, that generation didn't, but did say that a few days before the Atom bombs were dropped, although he didn't know that was going to happen, his unit was told to go on a few days leave and to enjoy it because it might be their last... Like many thousands of others, they were spared that final fight when Japan surrendered in August, after the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.- a horror, which I heartily pray will never be repeated.

From what I have read and heard, the generation who lived through WW2, pulled together to survive and overcome a dreadful tyranny, so that we, their children, grandchildren and future generations can enjoy the freedom to discuss the rights and wrongs of warfare, and other important concerns, such as how best to care for our environment, and all the species with which we share this precious planet. We cannot afford to be complacent, for in too many countries war and conflict still exist, even again in Europe. We must protect our freedom of belief, conscience and speech which is why it was so important to honour that generation with the recent commemorations.

In his speech just a few days ago, on that anniversary day, King Charles acknowledged not only those who served in uniform but also those who remained at home during the war... "We unite to celebrate and remember with an unwavering and heartfelt gratitude, the service and sacrifice of the wartime generation," he said. He recalled the original VE Day speeches: "We should remind ourselves of the words of our wartime leader, Sir Winston Churchill, who said 'meeting jaw to jaw is better than war'." The King called for us to "rededicate ourselves not only to the cause of freedom but to renewing global commitments to restoring a just peace where there is war, to diplomacy, and to the prevention of conflict." He quoted his grandfather's plea for "a lasting peace, founded on justice and established in goodwill .... a result of unity between nations, races, religions and ideologies, fighting back against an existential threat to humanity ... Their collective endeavour remains a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when countries stand together in the face of tyranny"

And so, amidst the celebrations, it was appropriate to pause and reflect in silence for a few moments. May 8<sup>th</sup> also happened to be the day of the Furry dances in Helston Secretary of the Helston Flora Day Association Nick Wills said: "This moment of reflection is held in honour of the sacrifice made by those Helstonians, countrymen and women who gave their lives in the service of their country during the Second World War.... We invite all attending Flora Day to join us in this act of remembrance." ...Which they duly did. I listened to the radio clip of this and was very moved by it. Unfortunately, I could not download this for you to hear, but our closing video is a short recording of one of the dances.

Before we enjoy that, it is time for our final hymn followed by our closing words.  
So dear friends, I invite you to join in our final hymn,

**Final Hymn:** Purple book 44 'Give thanks for life'

Give thanks for life, the measure of our days,



mortal, we pass through beauty that decays,  
yet sing to God our hope, our love, our praise:  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for those whose lives shone with a light  
caught from the Christ-flame, gleaming through the night,  
who touched the truth, who burned for what is right:  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for all, our living and our dead,  
thanks for the love by which our life is fed,  
a love not changed by time or death or dread:  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for hope that like a seed of grain  
lying in darkness, does its life retain  
to rise in glory, growing green again:  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Music Ralph Vaughan Williams, words Shirley Erena Murray © 1987 Hope Publishing Company

### **Closing Words: The Millenium Prayer**

“Let there be respect for the earth,  
Peace for its people, love in our lives,  
Delight in the good, forgiveness for past wrong,  
And from now on, a new start, *A M E N*

### **Extinguish Chalice**

**Closing Music/Video :** Helston Furry Dance May 2025

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/b4VWNn7sOs4?si=GbY65XK8ER3Bf51V>

