

## **A service for 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 Remembrance Sunday (StF)**

### **Call to worship: Psalm 46 verses 8 to 10**

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Amen.

*Rt. Revd. Timothy Dudley Smith, Suffragan Bishop of Thetford, echoes the Psalmist as he recognizes the might and glory of our timeless God. We shall sing hymn number 470, 'Lord, for the years'.*

**1. Lord, for the Years, your love has kept and guided,  
Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.**

**2. Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.**

**3. Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.**

**4. Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt you,  
Loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,  
Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without you:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.**

**5. Lord for ourselves; in living pow'r remake us –  
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
Past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.**

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### **Let us pray.**

Creator, we have come to worship and adore you on this solemn day; to acknowledge your wisdom, might and glory in the light of our manifold failure to live as you call us to. You spoke life into existence throughout the universe; your love sustains our lives and your grace offers us salvation through Christ Jesus. Your love is unmerited and free, for even when we had rebelled against the teachings you gave us through the patriarchs and prophets, you did not abandon us, but came into our world as Jesus, so we might see your true nature and understand how you want us to live. Indeed, he not only came to show us your kingdom's values in his words and actions, but he became the one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and conquered both sin and death for our sakes. Hear us, Lord, as we sing your praises, pray to you in faith and receive your word in Jesus' lovely name. Amen.

***In our prayer of thanksgiving and confession, when I say, 'Lord, in your mercy' please respond with, 'Hear our prayer'. Let us pray.***

Heavenly Father, thank you for all that you give us, do for us and achieve in us, for we know how you have blessed us from our earliest days. Thank you, too, for people who have guided, inspired and loved us and for experiences and opportunities that have given meaning to our lives. Most of all, Lord, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, without whom we are lost, hopeless and helpless.

Merciful God, when we think about our own lives, we see how we let you down, because we say and do things that hurt and upset others and we sometimes don't help people we see are in distress or in difficulties. We sometimes act before we think and are unwilling to forgive those who have upset us. Lord, help us to change our ways, and forgive us as we learn to set aside old grievances.

*'Lord, in your mercy' ..... 'Hear our prayer'.*

Heavenly Father, forgive us for our unwillingness to see our neighbours as Jesus sees them, especially those whose lifestyles, attitudes and beliefs differ markedly from ours. Warm our souls with your love, so we may serve you with Christ at the heart of all we do and say.

*'Lord, in your mercy' ..... 'Hear our prayer'.*

Gracious, loving God, you assure us that our sins are forgiven and call us to follow you. Help us serve our neighbours with humble, caring hearts, so that our lives bring honour to your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***As our Saviour taught his disciples, we say:***

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*Our next hymn was written in 1965 by Revd. Frederik Kaan, a Dutchman who served as Moderator of the West Midlands Province of the URC and sometimes worshipped at Birmingham Cathedral. Hymn number 696, 'For the healing of the nations,'*

**1. For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord;  
For a just and equal sharing  
Of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love and action  
Help us rise and pledge our word.**

**2. Lead us, Father, into freedom;  
From despair your world release,  
That, redeemed from war and hatred,  
All may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
Fear will die and hope increase.**

**3. All that kills abundant living,  
Let it from the earth be banned:  
Pride of status, race, or schooling,  
Dogmas that obscure your plan.**

In our common quest for justice,  
May we hallow life's brief span.  
4. You, Creator-God have written  
Your great name on humankind;  
For our growing in your likeness  
Bring the life of Christ to mind;  
That by our response and service  
Earth its destiny may find.

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### **Act of Remembrance (11 a.m.)**

Let us stand as we remember those who have died for our freedom: here are words from Laurence Binyon's poem, "For the Fallen", which we shall use to lead us into our silence.

They shall not grow 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.**

### **Silence**

### *Kohima Prayer*

When you go home, tell them of us and say:

**'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'**

*We shall sing a hymn by Alan Gaunt, which uses peace to illustrate the full meaning of the Hebrew shalom: harmony, well-being, prosperity, rest, contentment – in other words, the full blessing of God. However, shalom comes at a cost! We shall sing hymn number 719, 'We pray for peace,' \**

1. We pray for peace,  
But not the easy peace  
Built on complacency  
And not the truth of God;  
We pray for real peace,  
The peace God's love alone can seal.

2. We pray for peace,  
But not the cruel peace  
Leaving God's poor bereft  
And dying in distress;  
We pray for real peace,  
Enriching all humanity.

3. We pray for peace,  
And not the evil peace  
Defending unjust laws  
And nursing prejudice,  
But for the real peace

**Of justice, truth and brotherhood.**

**4. We pray for peace,  
Holy communion  
With Christ our risen Lord  
And all humanity;  
God's will fulfilled on earth,  
And all his creatures reconciled.**

**5. We pray for peace,  
And, for the sake of peace,  
Look to the risen Christ,  
Who gives the grace we need  
To serve the cause of peace  
And make our own self-sacrifice.**

**6. God, give us peace;  
If you withdraw your love  
There is no peace for us,  
Nor any hope of it.  
With you to lead us on,  
Through death or tumult, peace will come.**

© Alan Gaunt {born 1935}

***In our prayers of intercession we bring our concerns to God. Let us pray.***

God of all nations, you came as Jesus to bring healing to this beautiful, but broken world and so we turn to you in prayer, asking you to help us to change our ways, so that we always seek the well-being of people whose lives touch ours and act as your earthly hands by reaching out and offering practical support to neighbours who are in need or distress. Lord, grant us strength, faith, steadfastness and compassion we need to show your love for all-comers.

Today as we pray for peace, we remember all whose lives have been affected by wars, persecution, bigotry and terrorism throughout the last century and in the present one. We remember and grieve for people who have been killed; for all who have suffered life-changing injuries in body, mind or spirit; for the huge numbers of displaced peoples whose lives have been changed forever by the dark shadows of war; for everyone who has lost loved ones through mankind's inhumanity to his fellow man and for everybody who has made personal sacrifices, so we can enjoy the freedom they have made possible.

Let us never underestimate the cost of the peace we enjoy, for it is great and terrible. We ask you to guide all who serve in the military, in our security and emergency services and bless the work they do to keep us safe. Gracious heavenly Father, may we be instruments of your peace, offering love for hatred, forgiveness for hurt and loss, hope for despair, joy for sadness, generosity for want and the gospel light for the darkness of sin.

Lord of all, lead and inspire leaders of the nations of the world, granting them wisdom and compassion to lead their people with mercy and justice and not resort to violence in order to have their own way. Gracious God, bring an end to conflicts between Palestinians and Jews in Jerusalem, civil strife in Iran and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Generous God, we pray for the victims of recent natural disasters, that they may receive speedy help. We remember, too, our neighbours in countries facing severe famines in Afghanistan and those in the horn of Africa, where droughts and warfare have exacerbated the situation. We ask a blessing on organizations like the Disasters Emergency Committee, All We Can and Christian Aid which are working to provide them with desperately-needed aid. May they succeed in bringing relief to those needy lands.

We pray, too, for people in this country who are struggling to live as the cost of energy and rise in inflation increases to record levels and we thank you for food banks and for other organisations which are helping the poor. Despite the dire economic situation, may the Government and other agencies, including the Church find ways of helping people who are facing the awful choice of heating their homes, or eating to manage during the coming winter.

Lord of shalom, of healing and wellbeing, we offer our prayer for neighbours who are ill, or in any kind of need or trouble, for people who are living with anxiety or depression, or those whose relationships have broken down but, particularly, all who mourn the loss of somebody dear and find it difficult to come to terms with their grief. In a time of quiet reflection, we offer names of those for whom we are particularly concerned – confident that, as we name them in our hearts, you will know and meet their needs. .... Heavenly Father, help us to support them in whatever way we can, but embrace them all with your love, so they may be healed, comforted, given hope, encouraged and blessed with enduring peace.

Lord, we pray for our church, all churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church. As we emerge from the dark shadow of Coronavirus into a financial crisis, help us to renew and alter our ministries to our communities, so we can meet our neighbours' needs and offer not only healing but evidence of Christ's love for all-comers. Grant us faith to bear the gospel light of hope and joy to our suffering, sin-darkened world.

Abba, Father God, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe in your care and help us to share the abundance of your love with all-comers, thereby glorifying your name, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**Our Gospel reading is John chapter 15 verses 9 to 17**

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other." Amen.

*Our next hymn is from the United Methodist Hymnal from the USA and is on our sheets. We shall sing, 'This is my song, O God of all the nations,'*

**1. 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 as true and high as mine.**

**2. 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, thou God of all the nations,  
A song of peace for their land and for mine.**

**3. This is my prayer, O Lord of all earth's kingdoms:  
Thy kingdom come; on earth thy will be done.  
Let Christ be lifted up till all shall serve him  
And hearts united learn to live as one.  
O hear my prayer, thou God of all the nations;  
Myself I give thee; let thy will be done.**

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**Address 2:** *"Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," John 5:13*

Today, we remember the terrible cost of wars, in material, personal and spiritual suffering and loss, but also the sacrifices made by so many people for our freedom: those who lost their lives in not only the World Wars, but also the nearly eleven thousand British and Commonwealth service personnel who have been killed since 1945; people who suffered injuries of body, mind and spirit and for everybody who put their lives on hold until their war ended including civilians who bore privation and danger as they played their part in the war effort. Let us not forget the service men and women who are prepared to lay their lives on the line for our sake. What can we do to show our gratitude, other than welcoming them when they return and making sure that any who have been injured on duty – and their families – receive all the help they need, as well as supporting both the Poppy Day appeal and the Invictus Games? More importantly, we can play our part in making the kind of society that our young people are prepared to risk their lives defending.

Since the destruction of the World Trade Center on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 and subsequent terrorist outrages around the world, many of our enemies wear no uniform and live among us. Sadly, some Moslems, including some from this country have joined Islamic State, a terrorist death cult whose brutality even outrages Al Qaeda! Consider how they have added to the appalling situation in Syria and in European cities. We also face a threat from right-wing extremist groups, mainly in the USA, but spreading insidiously through Europe. Such terrorist groups want us to feel afraid, to suspect anybody who looks different, in skin tone, accent, or dress. They want Governments to introduce draconian anti-terrorist laws, hoping that a sense of injustice, of 'being picked on' will radicalize ordinary people in their communities. They **must not** be allowed to succeed.

Micah, a minor prophet eight hundred years before Christ was born, forecast that there will be a time when people **'will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more.'** Such a vision is one we should work for by seeking just settlements through negotiation rather than by bullets and bombs.

After the Last Supper, whilst he led the disciples toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told them, **"My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you."** At first glance, this seems simple enough: after all, it is very easy to love our friends, our fellow Christians – isn't it? A quick survey of Church history – from the churches in First Century Corinth to the present day suggests otherwise. Indeed, the opening of the First Letter to the Corinthians shows how factions were already at work, **some following Paul, others Cephas / Peter, others Apollos and yet others Christ!** How then can we hope to love strangers, or even opponents? How can we possibly love people who are hateful? We can begin by separating **'loving'** from **'liking'**. God's love for sinners is as boundless as his hatred for sin and we have a duty of care for one another, even if we can't bring ourselves to like somebody. How then can this be achieved?

The answer lies in imitating Christ Jesus – which is what we are supposed to do as his followers. He didn't just love his disciples: he reached out to all-comers – the ceremonially unclean, tax-collectors, fallen women, foreigners – even to occupying Romans. When he died on that cross at Calvary, our Lord gave his life to redeem all who sought forgiveness in his name. Here is an example of how a Roman Catholic priest lived out what Jesus said. His name was Maximillian Kolbe and he was serving in Poland when that country was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1939. Poland was quickly overrun, but when Nazis began to round up Jews to send them to concentration camps, Father Maximillian tried to shelter as many as he could. Needless to say, he was betrayed, arrested, then sent to the fearsome Auschwitz Concentration Camp.

Father Maximillian was not cowed by his experiences. Instead, he set about tending the sick, taking communion services, comforting the dying of all creeds and even sharing the small allowance of food he received with the starving. Above all else, he remained a cheerful presence, showing that God's love reached even into the most hellish of places and to those who might have thought themselves abandoned and forgotten. Even some of the concentration camp guards were amazed at his smiling face and grace, but his greatest challenge occurred in July 1941, when three prisoners escaped from Auschwitz.

As a result, the Nazi guards lined up the male prisoners and selected ten to be starved to death in an underground bunker. One of those selected to die, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out in despair, 'Oh, my poor wife! My poor children! I shall never see them again!' At once, prisoner 16670, Maximillian Kolbe stepped forward from the ranks of prisoners and offered himself in place of Mr. Gajowniczek. The guards wanted ten victims, so it was of no consequence who was taken into the death bunker and they agreed to the swap. The ten were led to the bunker and sealed inside with no food, water, nor light. A fortnight later, Nazi guards opened the bunker, and were amazed to find Father Kolbe still alive, though unable to stand, or speak. Rather than spare him, they gave him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. Even then, he offered no resistance and smiled at them as they administered the poison.

Franciszek Gajowniczek died peacefully in 1999, an old man saved by an incredible priest. Pope John Paul II recognised his fellow-countryman, Maximillian Kolbe and fast-tracked him towards sainthood, by Beatifying him. We may never be called to prove our commitment to Jesus in such a way, but we are challenged to trust the Lord enough to serve him wholeheartedly by caring for one another, confident in the truth of these words used by St. Paul to the Roman Churches: **'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'** May each of us work to build a just society, play our part in standing up for truth, justice and reconciliation to make a world fit for those who have sacrificed their bodies and lives in hope that their suffering would produce a better, safer world. Amen.

*We conclude our worship as we sing Sebastian Temple's paraphrase of a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi. Hymn number 707, 'Make me a channel of your peace.'*

**1. Make me a channel of your peace.**

**Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.**

**2. Make me a channel of your peace.**

**Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;  
Where there is darkness, only light;  
And where there's sadness, ever joy: *Chorus:***

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

**3. Make me a channel of your peace.**

**It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
In giving of ourselves that we receive,  
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

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***Benediction***

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the world, peace; and to us and all the faithful, life everlasting; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us now and for evermore. **Amen.**