

8th November, 2020 Remembrance Sunday (StF)

Let us 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

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

Call to worship: Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is when people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life for evermore. Amen.

"God is Love, so love for ever / O'er the universe must reign." Words by Rt. Revd. Timothy Rees, who served as a chaplain in the Great War and was Bishop of Llandaff between 1931 and 1938. We shall sing hymn number 103, 'God is Love: let heaven adore him;'

**1. God is Love: let heaven adore him;
God is Love: let earth rejoice;
Let creation sing before him,
And exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
He who spread the heavens above,
He who breathes through all creation,
He is Love, eternal Love.**

**2. God is Love: and he enfoldeth
All the world in one embrace;
With unfailing grasp he holdeth
Every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
Under sorrow's iron rod,
Then they find that selfsame aching
Deep within the heart of God.**

**3. God is Love: and though with blindness
Sin afflicts the souls of men,
God's eternal loving-kindness
Holds and guides them even then.
Sin and death and hell shall never
O'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love: so Love for ever
O'er the universe must reign.**

© Timothy Rees (1874 – 1939)

Let us pray.

Lord of all, we have come to worship you, for you are the Word who made everything that exists throughout the universe. You are the only true God whose power and wisdom are far beyond our understanding, yet whose love provides our daily needs. You are not only good, but holy, faithful, compassionate, just, merciful, glorious, lovely, and truly worthy of our praise and adoration. Hear us, Lord, as we joyfully sing your praises, pray to you in faith and receive your word.

Thank you, Lord, 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 experiences and opportunities that have given meaning to our lives, but most of all for your amazing grace that sent your Son, Jesus Christ, as our Saviour, guide and friend.

However, merciful God, when we think about our own lives, we recognize how we have let you down, because we are not always wholehearted in our discipleship and we often fail to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. 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 speak and act before we think and we are often 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.

Gracious, loving God, you breathe forgiveness over us and call us to follow you. Help us serve our neighbours with warm, 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.

'Time, like an ever-rolling stream, / Bears all its sons away; / They fly forgotten, as a dream / Dies at the opening day.' We continue our worship as we sing a great hymn by Isaac Watts. Hymn number 132, 'O God, our help in ages past,'

1. O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;
2. Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.
3. Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.
4. A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.
5. The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
With all their cares and fears,

**Are carried downward by the flood,
And lost in following years.**

**6. Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.**

**7. O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while life shall last,
And our eternal home.**

© Isaac Watts {1674 – 1748}

In our prayers of intercession we shall bring our concerns to God for people nearby and far away. Let us pray.

God of all nations, Jesus came to earth to heal the world's brokenness and so we turn to you in prayer, asking you to bring hope and wholeness to our broken world, for there are so many situations way beyond our power, but which are possible to you. 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, courage, faith and compassion so we reflect your love on all-comers.

Today as we pray for peace, we remember all whose lives have been affected by conflicts of the last century and the present one, where our foes often resort to terrorism, rather than formal warfare: we remember those who have been killed; for the huge numbers of displaced peoples; for everyone who has lost loved ones; for those whose bodies, minds and spirits have been crippled by war, persecution or terrorism and for everybody who has made personal sacrifices, so we can live in the freedom they have made possible. Let us never underestimate the cost of the peace we enjoy, for it is great and terrible. May we be instruments of your peace, offering love for hatred, forgiveness for hurt and loss, hope in place of despair, joy for sadness, the gospel light for the darkness of sin and generosity for our neighbours' need.

Lord of all, lead and inspire leaders of the nations of the world and leaders of opposition groups, granting them wisdom and compassion so that they lead their people with mercy and justice and not resort to violence in order to have their own way. May they learn to listen more and to proclaim less, so their words may offer grace and reconciliation rather than contempt, or threats.

Gracious God, hear our prayer for all who live in poverty, both here and abroad. Help us to stand up for people who have neither power nor influence, so we can change society, improve their lives and make a better world.

Heavenly Father, we come to you in our brokenness, for all our lives have been confined and changed by COVID19. We are struggling to deal with this virus and find it difficult to see a way forward. In loving-kindness, guide the leaders of our nation and all nations to adopt effective policies that will not only protect us, but help to sustain our economies. Bless the NHS, key-workers and scientists in their work and keep them safe in their labour. Strengthen us all, so we can bear the latest lockdown with fortitude and hope, difficult though it is for many, if not all of us.

We remember anybody we know who is sick in body, mind or spirit. Let them feel the warmth of your holy presence throughout their time of need, for you not only offer healing, but courage, hope and serenity. Lord, hear our prayer for people who are lonely and depressed, or burdened by debt, or the likelihood of unemployment; for

anyone living with a dementia and their carers; for all who mourn. In a time of silence, we offer names of those for whom we are especially concerned

Gracious, heavenly Father, bless everyone for whom we pray. Hold them in the warmth of your love, so they may find healing and hope, but also help to us to act as your earthly hands, by offering them friendship and practical support.

We ask you to bless not only our Circuit and churches in our district, but also the World Church. Lord, heal our divisions and unite us in ministry, so our words and deeds show clear evidence of the Good News our Saviour commanded us to take to all the world.

Abba, Father God, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe in your care and help us live as you call us to, by sharing your abundant love with all-comers and thereby glorifying your name, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We shall sing a hymn by Alan Gaunt in which the peace he prays for is shalom: not only an end to warfare, but harmony, fulfilment, prosperity, good health and the richness of God's blessing. 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,
No any hope of it.
With you to lead us on,
Through death or tumult, peace will come.**

© Alan Gaunt {born 1935}

The Old Testament reading is Micah chapter 4 verses 1 to 8

In the last days the mountain of the LORD'S temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They 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. Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and no-one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken. All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. In that day," declares the LORD, "I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and for ever. As for you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem." 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 your 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: *"Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," John 5:13*

At eleven o'clock, a hundred and two years ago on Wednesday, the First World War ended, a war in which more than twenty million people were killed and tens of millions injured in little over four years' fighting. However, it was the squalor and sheer horror of trench warfare that ended forever the belief that war is in any way glamorous, or a great adventure. Most soldiers hoped and believed they were fighting 'the war to end all wars', yet twenty-one years later, the Second World War had to be fought to overcome Fascism and Nazism. It is a salutary thought that since the end of the Second World War there has only been one day when there has been no fighting somewhere in the world, so the hopes of that generation who fought in the Great War have not really been fulfilled.

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. Let us not forget the men and women who have been prepared to lay their lives on the line for our sake, as well as those who still strive to keep us safe and preserve the freedom we enjoy. 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? 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 11th September, 2001 and subsequent terrorist outrages in many countries, including two in France this year, many of our enemies wear no uniform and live among us. Sadly, some young Moslems from this country have joined Islamic State, a terrorist death cult whose brutality even outrages Al Qaeda! Such terrorist groups want us to feel afraid, to suspect anybody who looks different, in skin tone, accent, or dress. They want the Government to introduce draconian anti-terrorist laws, hoping that a sense of injustice, of 'being picked on' will radicalize ordinary people in the community. 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 men **'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 anymore.'** Nearly three thousand years later, it may seem a forlorn hope, an unachievable ideal, but it 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. I hear you say, **“That’s all very well, but how do we forgive our enemies?”** Here is an example of how it can be done.

In 1942 Singapore fell to the Japanese and its English-born Bishop, John Leonard Wilson, was sent to Changi Gaol, accused of spying. There he was tortured by Kempei-Tai, the Japanese secret police, who were experts in psychological warfare. For eight months he was severely beaten and endured waterboarding, or water hose torture as it was known then.

During periods of torture he was taunted by his enemies, who asked why God did not save him. Bishop Wilson replied,

“God does save me; he does not save me by freeing me from you or punishment, but he saves me by giving me the spirit to bear it.” **When they asked him why he did not curse them, he told them that, as a follower of Jesus Christ, he was taught that we were all brothers and sisters. However, he felt unable to forgive them until, in his own words,** **“By the grace of God, I saw those men not as they were, but as they had been; as little children, as children loved by their mothers and fathers, as children sharing love with their brothers and sisters – before they were brutalised by false values.”**

As a result, Bishop Wilson found grace through Christ to forgive and love his brutish torturers, so after eight months, the Kempei-Tai realised that they had failed to break Bishop Wilson’s spirit. He was returned to the prison camp, where he took communion, using grains of rice and water. Interestingly, at the end of war, a number of his Japanese captors came to Bishop Wilson asking to be christened, because they recognised something special in his ability to forgive. There we have an answer: seek the grace to forgive through prayer to the One whose love allowed him to ask God’s forgiveness for those who were crucifying him, although they did not realise he was laying down his life to offer them and us new life. May each of us work to build a just society, fit for those who have sacrificed their bodies and lives in hope that their sacrifice would produce a better, safer world.

I shall finish with a prayer for peace:

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe. Let us dream together, pray together, work together, to build one world of peace and justice for all. 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. *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.

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 unto all that we receive,

And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

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Benediction

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep *our* hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, remain with *us* always. **Amen.**