



Remembrance Resource for the Methodist Church

November 2023

Introduction

This resource is offered as inspiration for worship leaders planning Remembrance Sunday services. It provides a choice of readings, reflections, poems and prayers to supplement orders of service for that day.

Much of the material comes from Methodist Armed Forces chaplains, who share in the joys and struggles of life in the Armed Forces.

A small number of contributions have been made available in video format to provide greater flexibility. These are available on the Methodist Church website using this link: [Resources for Methodist churches](#)



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Chaplains' reflections

Thoughts from a memorial garden

This passage is provided as a video recording on the website. The text has been edited to make it easier to read without the background shown on the recording.

In 2006 and 2008 I was serving with 45 Commando and I was part of two six-month tours of Afghanistan. In the first tour we lost six colleagues; in the second tour we lost nine, as well as countless others who suffered life-changing injuries.

Wherever we went in Afghanistan, poppies seemed to be growing or being harvested. We were out there providing security, making a difference, standing up for those who couldn't stand up for themselves. But at a cost; it's a cost I will never forget. I will never forget the smell of the dust – very different from anything else I've ever smelled. The darkness, the silence at night. The impending thud, the impact of an IED (an improvised explosive device) that had gone off and knowing that somewhere, something or someone had been blown up.

One of the things I like about working with the Royal Marines in Plymouth is that very often there are people of all ranks coming up here, just to sit in the memorial garden, remembering.

We have memorials at different times all through the year – because we don't forget. We remember those who lost their lives and we try to reach out and support the friends and families.

Remembrance is quite hard to put into words. Certainly the key part for me is that moment's silence. The hairs on the back of my neck stand up at the *Last Post* and the *Reveille*. At the going down and the rising again, we will remember them.

The Revd Bill Gates (Royal Navy chaplain)



The Grave of the Unknown Warrior

For me, the most poignant memorial for Remembrance is the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. The story behind it is inspiring for chaplains, because an Army chaplain was the one who had the idea. The link below provides information on how this came about.

I have met three people who have told me that they believe that the Unknown Soldier is their Grandfather and have visited the grave to pay their respects.

Detailed information on the Grave of the Unknown Warrior can be found on the Westminster Abbey website: westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/unknown-warrior

The Revd Janice Honey-Morgan (Royal Navy chaplain)



Remembrance

Remembrance, for me, is a time to pause and reflect on the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, and their commitment to risking their lives for our nation's freedom. We are part of a nation with a legacy full of stories from different wars, both great and small, in which many of our soldiers fought hard and died.

The drops of their blood, the unhealed wounds of their bodies and minds, and their loss of life, are living testimony that must not be ignored or forgotten. Their selfless commitment and dedication to serve has paved the way for us to enjoy and feel pride in our nationhood and purpose.

This Remembrance is also a perfect time to express our deepest appreciation to God, the giver of life, and to our fellow men and women across the Armed Forces, for their continuing service – making the world a better place for all people. Let us remember them, lest we forget.

The Revd Josefa Mairara (Army chaplain)

Service; Sacrifice; Freedom; Peace

This passage is provided as a video recording on the website, against the music of the *Last Post* and the *Reveille*. The text has been edited slightly to make it easier to read without the background music provided on the recording.

I have to confess that when I was in circuit ministry full-time I struggled with 'Remembrance Day' – I was never really sure what we were actually doing. Were we glorifying war, remembering the dead, celebrating a victory – and even – which war were we remembering?

Becoming a member of the Armed Forces has meant that this time has taken on considerably more meaning – and I have had to engage theologically with the question 'What is it all about?'

Royal Air Force Wyton celebrates, remembers and commemorates the Pathfinder Force annually – people who served and died, people who served and later died, veterans still living with the scars of war.

The Last Post

Those notes – bringing us to attention, bowing our heads.

Those notes – a poignant reminder of sacrifice and service.

Those notes – a reminder of the cost of war – to life, to well-being, to family, to generations.

Those notes – a reminder of the cost of the freedom, lifestyle that we enjoy today.

Those notes – a lament that people still wage war, that people are still serving and making sacrifices – in the hope of peace.

Reveille

Those notes – raising our heads, eyes fixed on today – another day of service, more tasks to be done.

Those notes – a reminder of our chance to contribute to God's kingdom and values.

We remember those who have run the race before us, we remember to pray for God's kingdom and we remember to offer ourselves in service to God.

The Revd Dawn Colley (RAF chaplain)

Remembrance Sunday

Reminisce
Remember
Recall
Recollect
Remind

What do these words all have in common? The prefix 're'. Originating from Latin, when we use 're', we mean again, or even again and again. In short, repetition – another 're' word.

The second Sunday in November is Remembrance Sunday. Traditionally a day where whole communities gather to recall, remember, reminisce, recollect and are reminded of conflicts and war, where men, women, children and animals lost their lives or had them significantly changed.

Some may not have directly experienced such loss. But within the military community that is different. Many members of the military have served in conflicts that have changed them; they have seen loss and destruction at close quarters.

Some of them will be able to tell of such events; others will hold these experiences so tight that they feel a physical part of them...and yet they perhaps cannot, or choose not, to speak of them.

I was recently sorting through a few things after a house move. I found a box containing my own Grandfather's 'Call-up Notice' for World War 2, letters that he sent my Grandma, ration books and cap badges from his old uniform.

I wasn't around then – even my own father hadn't been born. As I read the letters, I found myself emotionally involved in the lives of my grandparents. I reminisced and was reminded of the world they lived through in the 1940s.

If we look carefully, we have with us the reminders of the service and sacrifice of others – poppies, war memorials, old letters, medals and Remembrance season are all ways to recall what our family, friends and those unknown to us have been through.

It is right to remember those who have gone before us; we do that all the time. It is appropriate to pause, to gather our thoughts, to gather as a community, to recall and be reminded of events that changed lives and communities.

We may not have a personal memory to connect us to war or conflict, just as I have absolutely no memory of my grandparents' struggles in WW2, but we can still feel emotionally involved in the story of those who were there.

As we remember again:

Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping, those who have died for their country in conflict; those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of humanity.

'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.

We will remember them.'

Deacon Jo Critchley (RAF chaplain)



Stories of Remembrance

In Joshua 4:4-7 Joshua asks representatives of the tribes of Israel to place stones as a lasting memorial. This passage speaks powerfully to me of what Remembrance is about... to tell a story.

Throughout my years as an RAF chaplain I have been privileged to lead services of Remembrance in many locations around the world – Norway, the Falkland Islands, Holland, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus – as well as around the United Kingdom, of course.

The war memorials I stand in front of are not just stone memorials with a list of names, but they are places of stories. Those stories tell of sacrifices made and of freedoms won and lost. This is why we should always look to discover the stories behind those names – to read and to research.

That is also why it is so important that with the passing of the generations those stories are passed on; so that the peace which we enjoy today is not only commemorated, but celebrated.

The Revd Colin Weir (RAF chaplain)



Reflections from further afield

Reflections from a Ukrainian

I'm Ukrainian and I have something to tell you about.

Sometimes horrible things happen to good people. Life isn't fair and it can be heart-wrenching. And if you're having one of those dark days, it's okay. It's okay to feel that darkness. When challenges and issues come back to back to back to back and it seems like something is after me, something is attacking me, something is attacking my journey. Look for the lesson in it all. You will grow through what you go through.

The question is are you willing to go through it? When those bad things happen what are you going to do? Are you gonna let this horrible situation dictate the way you feel and the way you handle it? Are you gonna fall over and fall down and fall apart or are you going to face this issue with courage and with resolution?

Terrible things happened to me the same way, on February 24th – Russia attacked my country. Literally, within three months, I lost friends whom I knew from the beginning of [my time in] service, the city in which I grew up, and hope for the future.

What do you do when:

- something you have been building all your life disappears in one moment and there is nowhere to return home?
- your family cannot leave the red zone, 20 metres from the Russian positions?
- you realise that you are 2,000 km away from them and you cannot help?
- you realise that nothing will ever be the same?

I understood one simple thing: sitting idly by, nothing will change.

And I began to call and write to all the people I knew and didn't know from that region with the hope of finding a person who would dare to go and pick up my family from a hotspot. And thanks to God, my search was not in vain; I found a person who took them from there and took them to a safe place. It was great happiness for me to talk with my mother for more than one minute after 30 days of worries, sleepless nights and [emotional] breakdown. Thank God they are here now.

I remember one of my dad's phrases: 'family is a man's Achilles heel, his greatest weakness'. The meaning of this phrase I realised recently. So I see that family is our greatest weakness, but it's also our greatest strength. It gets us out of bed in the morning; it lets us chase our dreams even when they are moving too fast to catch; and, it keeps us from falling over when we are too tired to take another step. Money, jobs, and even best pals will come and go, but family is forever.

We must remain grateful for everything that we have, for healthy relatives, for daily food, for clothes and shoes, for everything good and bad that happens to us, as these are life lessons. Appreciate what you have, because this is the dream of any person who can't afford it.

Officer Cadet Mark Khoroshko (Ukrainian Army)



A new recruit's visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery

I wasn't sure what to expect of Exercise Valiant Eagle. We were told that no part of the exercise – from home soil to the Ypres Salient, near Passchendaele in Belgium – was unimportant. Every part tells the story: of the political situation, use of the military, and the courage of the serving forces. We were told repeatedly that what we would see would undoubtedly have an effect on us.



I was still on a high from having graduated from Basic Training, and visiting Tyne Cot Cemetery brought me back to earth. The graves of 12,000 British soldiers and 35,000 soldiers with no known grave – only their name on a wall.

Name after name: someone's son, someone's father, someone's boyfriend, someone's friend... It was all too big to take in.

We were asked to reflect on the question: 'Was it all worth it?' I really don't know; I don't have an answer to that. What I do know is that I am grateful that they were prepared to stand up for freedom, that which they treasured, and all that they believed to be true.

They wanted to be counted in their commitment to country, but not counted like this. I want to be counted like them too, that's why I joined the Royal Air Force, and that's why I think it was important for me to see this and experience why my commitment is more than words; it's my life.

An 18-year-old recruit, graduating from Basic Training in 2019



Suggested Bible readings

Isaiah 35:1-10

Isaiah 40:28-31

Isaiah 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25

Isaiah 61:1-3a

Psalms 3:3-6

Psalms 4:8

Psalms 27

Psalms 46

Psalms 91

Psalms 103

Psalms 146

John 3:16-17

John 11:1-44

John 15:9-17

Romans 8:31-38

Romans 14:7-12

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Revelation 21:1-4



Poems

Autumn Bullets

Spiralling like a spitfire in a dogfight
Coming to an abrupt stop in the air
Balance regained until the next
Whisper of air flicks the tail of the leaf
And the flight continues ever downward
Crimson and Gold flecks of colour
Interspersed with hues of coldest blue
Flashes of white clouds stream across the sky
A backdrop as a canvas to the autumn hues
The leaf as fragile as a wafer rocks itself to sleep
Falling and swirling to the pathway below
Joining the infantrymen who have gone before
Their colours emblazoned against the sky no more
And down into the ashen world they fall
Searching for space of peaceful rest
Its glory is done but the day is not over
Landing delicately on the grass below
Marking a place in time an autumn rhyme
The dancing is done as the sunlight fades
Orange, gold and red turns to shade
The autumn haze upon which we gaze
The gentle leaf, we shed no grief
To be swept away some other day
Delicately, with honour it is nature's calling
Above, a dogfight starts once more...

Callie Neale (Royal Navy)



In Desert Sands

In desert sands and Balkans' snow,
I spent my youth and watched it go.
On Belfast streets and Armagh fields,
My innocence and childhood yields.
Through pools of blood and streets of pain,
My eyes did open; never closed again.
Through burning flesh and battles far,
I learned my trade and still bear the scars
Of sleepless nights, and sweat-soaked dreams –
Even now I hear their screams.
In desert sands and Balkans' snow;
It's a place, my friends, no-one should have to go

Dean Davey



MCMXIV

Philip Larkin

(First published in *The Whitsun Weddings*, 1964)

This poem reflects on the impact of World War 1, and the innocent way of life that preceded it. A reading of this writing from one of Britain's most acclaimed poets would be a valuable addition to a Remembrance Day service.

However, please be aware that this work is still in copyright. It can be read out in a service (as long as the service is not recorded or broadcast), but you must seek copyright permission to print it in a service booklet.



Prayers

O God of truth and life, during these turbulent times – with violence and loss once again at the forefront of world affairs – help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world.

As together we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life, health and hope, now and forever.

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace:

For the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God;
may God give peace.

All God give peace.

For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;
may God give peace.

All God give peace.

For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;
may God give peace.

All God give peace.

For peace-makers and peace-keepers,
who seek to keep this world secure and free;
may God give peace.

All God give peace.

Amen.

The Revd Richard Smith (Army chaplain)



Holy God,
You chose to walk with us in the messiness of the world,
sharing our vulnerability.
We pray for all those deployed on operations:
Where they face danger, protect them;
Where they face unimaginable responsibility and pressure,
sustain them;
Where they face the pain of separation from loved ones,
comfort them.
Remind us all of our responsibilities to those who do difficult things
in pursuit of a peaceful, stable world.
And challenge us to play our part in building a world in which all
your precious people can live without fear.

Amen.

The Revd Hannah Bucke (Army chaplain)



Loving God,
as we work for peace – give us wisdom,
as we strive for justice – give us courage,
as we tear down the walls that divide – give us strength,
as we care for those in need – give us compassion.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Revd Ian Brown (RAF chaplain)



Merciful God

We remember those who have gone before us;
we are mindful of the stories that were never spoken of, never
discussed, never known to anyone but themselves. We lift those
men and women to you,
known and beloved by you;
so that your Spirit will be poured out on their memories and our
futures, according to your holy will.

Amen.

Deacon Jo Critchley (RAF chaplain)



Let us confess to God the sins of the world; its pride, its selfishness,
its greed; its evil divisions and hatreds.

Let us confess our share in what is wrong, and our failure to seek and
establish the peace that God wills for creation.

Merciful God, bless our rulers and those in authority under them, that
they may order all things in wisdom, righteousness and peace, to the
honour of your holy name, and the good of your church and people.

Let us pray for the peace of the world:

- For leaders and rulers; that they may have the
wisdom to know, and the courage to do, what
is right.
- For all who work to improve international
relationships; that they may find the true way to
reconcile people of different race, colour and
creed.
- And for all people the world over; that they may
have justice and freedom, and live in security
and peace.

God, you have taught us, through your Son, that we should love one another; that no one has greater love than to lay down their life for their friends.

We remember with gratitude those who have done this, and those who continue to risk their lives for the good of others.

May their decision and sacrifice never be in vain.

Let us pray for all those who suffer as a result of war; for the injured and the disabled, the mentally distressed, and for those whose faith in God and in humanity has been weakened or destroyed.

Almighty God, infinite in wisdom, love and power, have compassion on those for whom we pray; help us to learn from all the suffering of humanity, through him who gave himself for us on the cross – Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

The Revd Mike Hall (RAF chaplain)



God of Love,

At this time of Remembrance, help us to remember, now more than ever, that all people are members of your family and called to reflect your likeness and light.

We acknowledge that we find some of those qualities harder to reflect than others. As today we are mindful of times when our nations have faced division, conflict and war, we confess that Christ was not selective about those whom he chose to love, forgive and bless: "he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."*

* 1 John 2:2

So, help us reflect who you are by echoing your love in all we do.

For we are called to the costly business of being as committed to the welfare of those who call themselves our enemies as we are to the welfare of those we call our friends.

In obedience to the one who calls us to follow him as Lord, and inspired by his cross – a symbol of the greatest act of ‘love for enemies’ there has ever been – enable us to willingly embrace all that it stands for.

Help us to stand shoulder to shoulder with those we once called enemies and call them friends, living in a way that:

- enables us to build bridges across seemingly impossible divides
- enables us to be ministers of peace and reconciliation
- allows light to shine in the darkest of places.

As we look at the dark and broken world around us, may we place our hope as in the prayer of Desmond Tutu:

“Good is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours, through him who loves us.”

And empower us to face the challenges, in the midst of the many tribulations in our world that can cause hatred and division, to make our lives ones that promote goodness and love, life and light.

Amen.

The Revd Paul Mellor (RAF chaplain)



Remembrance prayer

This prayer was used for the 9/11 remembrance service in the USA; it can be altered to meet your situation.

God, our hope and refuge,
we confess that anger and hatred have held on to us.
Healing has begun, but loss is still real.
We are not in control.
We don't like being vulnerable.
We still want security, or the illusion of it.
We still want our enemies to be annihilated
and for our lives to return to safety and Shalom.
Forgive us and heal us.
Raise us to new life.
Strengthen us in the way of compassion and justice.
Fix our faith on you, so we know that nothing can
separate us from you.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



An all-age prayer for Remembrance Sunday

Lord, we are saddened at the thought of war, of the soldiers who
must fight
and all those people who are killed.
Today we remember their sacrifice with great sadness.

We give thanks for what they did for us.

We also remember that they won for us a victory,
that without their bravery these wars may have been lost,
and our lives could have been so very different,
without the freedom we so much enjoy.

We give thanks for what they did for us.

We are saddened at the thought of your suffering,
that you, too, had to be a great hero,
and walk to Jerusalem, be arrested, tried and killed on that
horrible cross.

We thank you for what you did for us.

We also remember that you won for us a victory, that on Easter
morning you rose again,
and helped us to overcome our human nature, so that we might
rise again with you.

We thank you for what you did for us.

Amen.



A prayer of petition for those affected by war

God of justice and peace,
we pray for those who have been injured or disabled through war.
For those who have lost homes and security through conflict;
for those who have lost loved relatives in wars;
for those who face danger and take risks for peace;
for all those, especially children, caught up in current conflicts;
for refugees and all those in need of aid and other help.
God of encouragement
and Saviour of the despairing,
comfort those who remember past sacrifices and guide us in building
a just and peaceful community for all.

Amen.



A prayer for peacemakers

History can inspire or trap.
Walls can protect or divide.
Words can encourage or inflame.
Power can free or destroy.
Touch can comfort or violate.
Peace can be shared or withheld.
Gracious God, on this day,
when we remember past and present conflicts,
we pray for the divided peoples of the world;
that leaders, governments and each one of us may
use our resources, our opportunities and our lives,
in the service of reconciliation,
for the sake of future generations and
to the glory of your name.

Amen.



Prayer in a time of hopelessness

We entrust to you, eternal God,
those times when we can see only shadows and lose sight of the
hope to come;
the times when suffering seems so senseless,
life so fragile, war so unstoppable and death so permanent.
Bless us with the assurance that you are in all things,
the tragic and the beautiful,
the nightmare and the dream,
the light and the darkness.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ,
the peace of the world, today, tomorrow and forever.

Amen.



A prayer for reconciliation

As one family, we reflect today on the horrors of the past that continue to haunt humanity and darken our world.

Lord, where pain still overwhelms, bring healing.
Where hearts are still breaking, bring comfort.
Where peoples are still oppressed, bring liberation.
Where communities are still victimised, bring justice.
Where children are still brutalised, bring compassion.
Where lives are still crushed, bring hope.
Where evil is perpetrated, bring repentance.
Where war still devastates, bring peace.

But most of all,
wherever a single voice cries out in the darkness,
bring us to one another,
in the name of the love you bear in your heart for all people,
all nations and all creation.

Amen.



Songs and music

- O God, our help in ages past
- I vow to thee, my country
- Guide me, O thou great Redeemer
- Thine be the glory
- Amazing Grace
- Praise, my soul, the King of heaven
- Why has God forsaken me?
- Out of the depths (Psalm 130)
- His eye is on the sparrow (Why should I feel discouraged?)
- Give peace to every heart (*Da Pacem Cordium*)
- Come and fill our hearts (*Confitemini Domino*)
- We are called
- Wounded world that cries for healing
- Why stand so far away, my God?
- Unsettled world
- For one great peace
- Song of hope (*Canto de Esperanza*)
- Eternal Father, strong to save
- In the Lord I'll be ever thankful
- O Lord, hear my prayer
- Joy comes with the dawn
- Healer of our every ill
- Come now, O Prince of peace (O-So-So)
- Abide with me; fast falls the eventide
- The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want
- Dear Lord and Father of mankind
- Fight the good fight



Hymn to the Fallen by John Williams, from the movie *Saving Private Ryan*.

Powerful music for reflection on the themes of commitment and courage.

Dirge for Two Veterans, from ***Dona Nobis Pacem***, by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

The *Dirge for Two Veterans* is a setting of the powerful words written by the poet Walt Whitman.

Vaughan Williams wrote this cantata in 1936, as a plea for peace amid the rising tensions ahead of what was to become WW2. He hoped that the world would not return to the carnage and destruction of 1914-18. Had the lessons not been learned?

Et Incarnatus Est, Crucifixus and Et Resurrexit – from the ***Nelson Mass*** – by Joseph Haydn.

Originally called *Missa in Angustiis* (the Mass for Troubled Times), this work quickly became linked with Admiral Horatio Nelson's victory over Napoleon.

It was written in 1797, a time of intense fear and approaching military conflict. The words and music remind us of the hope that may be found in the central focus of the Christian faith – Christ's birth, death and resurrection.



Copyright and acknowledgements

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For more than 160 years, the people of God called Methodists have supported the spiritual and pastoral needs of members of the Armed Forces and their dependants. For over 100 years this has also involved a commitment to send Methodist ministers who are commissioned as chaplains to live and work alongside service personnel at home and abroad, in times of peace and conflict.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Methodist Church with the Armed Forces, search 'Forces Chaplaincy' at **methodist.org.uk**

The experience of Armed Forces chaplains has been drawn upon in this resource to support churches to mark Remembrance well.