

Rector's Letter November 2023

In our Remembrance services, as we do every year, we remember how on the 11th day of the 11th Month, at 11am, the guns at last fell silent on the Western front, and the first world war ended. We come remembering the horror of war, the names we read out and the red on the poppy reminds us of so many who have died.

But we come also with thankfulness that wars can end, and that peace can come.

After the first world war, in the sea of mud and devastation of the battle field, after the guns fell silent, winter came, and then spring came, and out of the mud grew poppies, vast numbers of poppies, symbols of hope, of peace.

This year we also remember the awful events in Israel and the Gaza strip, and we continue to remember Ukraine. War is a current reality and horror for so many. In all those difficult feelings, for me the poppy is a reminder of hope – the bloodshed and mud of the trenches passed and led to new life.

But after the first world war we punished Germany. The reparations we demanded must have felt justified after so many deaths, but those reparations also paved the way for the rise of Hitler and so much evil. We did need to confront and stop that evil. That evil needed exposing after the war. But after the second world war we also brought peace. Through the Marshall plan West Germany was re-built. And now we have had nearly 80 years of peace in Western Europe.

My hope and my prayer for Israel and the Gaza strip, and for Ukraine, is not just that evil can be confronted, but also that healing and forgiveness can come. I pray for God's protection for so many who simply long for peace and the opportunity to get on with their lives. I also pray for truth to combat lies, for listening to produce understanding. For generosity and grace to bring healing. And those who offer that generosity will always have my admiration.

Peter



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