

Remembering

Remembrance Sunday

Foundation

Bible passage: John 15.13

During the First World War around 9 million combatants and 7 million civilians were killed. An armistice was signed early on 11th November 1918 formally ending hostilities “at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month”. The war officially ended in 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles.

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

On 11 November 1919 an act of remembrance was held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace and the practice spread to other European countries, the British Empire and Commonwealth over the next three years.

The wearing of poppies began in 1921 as a result a poem called “In Flanders Field” by Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian Doctor.

The act may begin with the reading of “Ode of Remembrance” from the poem “For the Fallen” by Laurence Binyon (who was born in Lancaster). The Last Post may be sounded, followed by two minutes silence and The Reveille (this is often confused with The Rouse). Wreaths may then be laid at a memorial and the words “Kohima Epitaph” read.

In the United Kingdom, although there are acts of remembrance on 11 November, the main acts have taken place on the second Sunday of November both in churches and at civic memorials.

War memorial in the grounds of St James' church, Chorley.

Following the Second World War, when more than 50 million people were

killed, the act of remembrance has embraced all who died in armed conflict.

From the beginning of the Bible (Gen 4.6-8) we see that it is evil desires that lead to conflict and wars (cf. Jas 4.1). Such things will continue until sin is finally dealt with when Jesus returns as Judge. However, in the meantime Jesus says that peacemakers will be blessed (Mtt 5.9). Nevertheless, in a fallen world it is the God-given role of governing authorities to restrain evil and to “wield the sword” (Rom 13.1-4). As we see so often in the world around us even bad government is better than chaos.

Those who serve in the police and especially the armed services do risk their lives to maintain law and order and though we cannot think all they do is right nevertheless we should remember the cost many have borne for others.

Many war memorials contain the words of Jesus (in older English) “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Yet Jesus died for His enemies and prayed that they might be forgiven.



On Remembrance Day we give thanks for those who died in time of war to defend freedom.