

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 12th November 2023

Prepared by the Revd Kate Cambridge

This week for our worship we will be remembering Armistice Day, those who died in the two world wars and in conflicts past and present, and praying for peace.

Psalm 90.1-5 reads:

'Lord, you have been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.' For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning.'

These words are echoed in our first hymn, which remind us that God is our help, our hope and our eternal home:

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF 132

[O God, Our Help in Ages Past](#)

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

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

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Prayers

God of mercy,
Your love for us is strong,
But our love for you is weak.
You call us to follow Jesus,
But we are slow to obey.
You care for all that you have made,
But we ignore the needs of others
And misuse your creation.
We are sorry for our sins.
Forgive us, and help us to please you
By the way we live;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is love and forgives our sins through Jesus.
Amen

Collect

Eternal God, in whose perfect realm no sword is drawn but the sword of justice, and no strength known but the strength of love; Guide and inspire all who seek your kingdom, that peoples and nations may find their security in the love which casts out fear; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Read Micah 4.1-8

Read Matthew 5.1-12

Reflection

Every year on Armistice Day at 11am and on Remembrance Sunday, a 2 minute silence is held across the country, remembering those who died in the world wars and in conflicts past and present. As I sit in my office on Monday afternoon, preparing worship, a debate is raging in the news. Our Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has spoken out against planned pro-Palestinian protests in London this Saturday, calling them provocative and disrespectful. He is concerned that war memorials might be desecrated and that this would be an affront to the British public and the values we stand for. He has urged the Home Secretary, Suella

Braverman, to support the police in 'doing everything necessary to protect the sanctity of Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday.' Some people have called for a march on Armistice Day to be banned.

I wonder what this says about our democracy and the right to free speech? More than this, I wonder what this says about Armistice Day and the reason we hold it, if it is not a day where people are permitted to demonstrate and call out for peace? The fact is that the march is planned a few hours after the two minutes silence and will not be going near Whitehall. No marches are planned on the Sunday when the Remembrance Sunday Ceremony will take place.

Pro-Palestinian protests have taken place in London and in many cities around the world, each Saturday since the Israel-Gaza war began. The marchers on Saturday are expected to call for a ceasefire on the Gaza strip. Reverend David Hardman, Methodist Liaison Officer for Jerusalem, is currently working from the UK. When 100,000 attended a protest in London last Saturday, David was part of that protest. He marched behind a small group of Jewish people, who held a banner which said, 'always with the oppressed, never with the oppressor.' Although a small minority join these marches looking for trouble, these largely peaceful marches are very different from the 'hate marches' Suella Braverman believes them to be. Many atrocities have been perpetrated on each side of the conflict. We can and should be appalled by the horrendous killings by Hamas but still speak up against the mass bombing campaign by Israel and the civilians caught up in the crossfire.

Today our gospel reading was from Jesus' sermon on the mount and a section of teaching called the 'beatitudes.' Jesus talks of nine 'blessings' for those who seek the kingdom of God. In Hellenistic literature '*makarioi*', the Greek word which means blessing, describes those of good fortune. However, the background to the New Testament use of the word is in fact the Old Testament. When Jesus talks about people being blessed, he is talking here about how those who participate in the kingdom of God announced by Jesus are blessed. This is not a superficial happiness, but a deep inner joy felt by those who have long awaited

the salvation of God and begin to experience its fulfilment in Jesus.

Two of the beatitudes particularly leap out to me as we remember conflicts past and present and we pray for peace. Jesus said: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled' (righteousness here can also be translated justice)... and 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

What does it mean to mark Armistice Day and pray for peace, if we don't take action and speak out against violent conflict? Can we really watch thousands of children die, among others, in the war in Gaza, and a humanitarian crisis unfold, and say nothing? It will require more than a laying down of weapons for true peace to unfold in the Holy land, in Ukraine and Yemen, among 27 conflicts identified as going on in the world at present, by the Global Conflict Tracker.

'A Justice seeking church,' the guide to the 2023 Methodist Conference report on the 'Walking with Micah' project, one of our five priorities is 'Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation.' It highlights the important link between justice and peace. '*Peace and justice are tightly woven together. Peace cannot exist without justice. In order to create peace in the world we need to know peace within our own relationships and communities too.*' It also recognises the complexities of conflict and the importance of addressing the injustices which nurture conflict. These include economic and social marginalisation, discrimination, misuse of power and corruption. Without addressing underlying issues, tension and the potential for violence can often lurk beneath the surface. We have seen this in the Israel-Palestine conflict over many decades.

How then can we be a people who pray for and work for peace, in the international arena but also in our families, churches and communities? Perhaps we can start by being willing to talk with those who disagree with us – to educate ourselves, learn from one other and learn to listen. There is no place for prejudice or discrimination against one group of people. For national and international conflicts, I would suggest that we be careful where

we look for our news and to be aware of the prejudices of the paper or news programmes we view. Another response might be writing to our MP, joining a march for peace or financially supporting charities speaking out and providing humanitarian aid where it is desperately needed.

The prophet Micah spoke words of peace which echo to us across the ages: *For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*

Let us, as we remember those who gave their lives in the past world wars, also remember those who continue to suffer, to hunger and thirst for justice and to pray for and support those who work for peace. Amen.

A poem by Brian Wren

Say no to peace,
if what they mean by peace
is the quiet misery of hunger,
the frozen stillness of fear,
the silence of broken spirits,
the unborn hopes of the oppressed.

Tell them that peace
is the shouting of children at play,
the babble of tongues set free,
the thunder of dancing feet,
and a father's voice singing.

Say 'no' to peace,
if what they mean by peace
is a rampart of gleaming missiles,
the arming of distant wars,
money at ease in its castle,
and grateful poor at the gate.

Tell them that peace
is the hauling down of flags,
the forging of guns into ploughs,
the giving of the fields to the landless,
and hunger a fading dream.

Act of Remembrance

Wherever you are, let us join our hearts and voices as we remember conflicts past and pray for peace:

We meet in the presence of God.

We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

They shall grow not 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.

Two minutes silence

Ever-living God, we remember those whom you have gathered from the storm of war into the peace of your presence; may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples and establish harmony among the nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers

In a world that God made good, let us pray, for people seeing things no human being should see, for people seized by terror no human being should experience, for people whose depths of suffering no human being should know.

God of unquenchable hope, confirm our belief that this is not how things should be; affirm our belief that things can and will be different; strengthen our belief in Jesus, who opens the way from death to resurrection, and help us, as his disciples, to be your agents for change in our broken world. Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

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.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along STF

[Beauty for brokenness](#)

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in your suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

*Graham Kendrick
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Closing Blessing

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us in the coming days, as we seek to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our faithful God. Amen.

Prayers taken from:

<https://ctbi.org.uk/remembrance-sunday/>
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/israel-palestine/prayers-for-israel-palestine/> and the Methodist Worship Book

The Methodist website also has helpful resources for studying theological issues relating to Israel-Palestine. To join a weekly prayer meeting for justice and peace in the Holy Land (Wednesdays 6pm for 40 minutes) please email office@mlojerusalem.org and you will be sent joining instructions.)

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