

## Remembrance Day 2020

In the years between 2014 and 2018, a parish in my former archdeaconry up in Manchester undertook a project. They took all the names from the war memorial of those who had died in the First World War and researched who they were and where they came from as a way of marking the one hundredth anniversary. Photographs were gleaned, along with addresses and family members, and any history they could find. The names were then indicated on a large map of the parish so that members of the congregation could see where these men had lived. A loose-leaf folder was created holding a page for each one killed in the war which included when and where they had died and where their remains had been buried. Over the five years, on the Sunday closest to when each had died, they and their families were remembered in the intercessions and the folder was left open at the pages containing information about them.

By having a photograph and some details about these men, the names etched onto the memorial were brought to life and made real. The impact of their deaths on the local community was given substance, as the map of the parish revealed the tremendous loss it had endured in losing so many young men; sometimes two or more from the same household. And when the names were read out on Remembrance Sunday each year of the centenary, there was a connection with the men remembered, made through the photos, the stories, the streets in the parish where their homes still stood.

Whether on the grandest memorials in places like Ypres, or the most modest in our rural village churches, the names engraved there represent fathers, brothers, sons; people loved and cherished who fought and died in foreign lands, not just in the First World War, but in all conflicts since. Today we remember them and give thanks for their sacrifice. And we honour their memory best by continuing to work for the peace they secured.

Peace is hard won. It doesn't just happen. It has to be worked for and takes courage and determination. All of us have a responsibility and a part to play if peace is to be ensured in our streets, our communities, our country, our world. Being peace-makers means doing what we can to live in peace with our neighbours, however small a gesture it might feel; extending the hand of friendship to strangers, breaking down barriers of mistrust and suspicion, building bridges when relationships are broken, and standing up for justice even when that requires us to make sacrifices so that others can have a decent and secure life.

Today we remember those who gave their lives that we might live in peace. May we dedicate our lives to ensuring that peace is maintained.