

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 13 November 2020

Dear Friends:

YouTube knows I enjoy history, and it didn't disappoint with the suggestion I received this week from English Heritage:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=wfJNGH-c4kc>.

It's a short, two-person play titled "Letters Home: The Post Office in the First World War."

Whether we choose to communicate today via email or with pen and paper, the thoughts we share with others help to offer support and affirm our connection. Often we are newsy-chatty, and the content is far less important than the contact we make.

Occasionally we have something significant to share, and we deliberate long and hard over the words, to ensure that we're saying what needs to be said. Sometimes, as with the letters to and from the warfront, it's also about what isn't said.

Perhaps there's someone in your life who could use a letter--a word of thanks, a note of apology, or a bit of encouragement.

Handwritten or emailed, it's not so much about the format, but the feelings and connection they convey.

Warm regards,
Jeff

From Our Prayer Team

- We are in the midst of a record - breaking year for destructive weather. Please pray that global leaders will make climate crisis the priority it ought to be and that strong action will take place quickly.

- Please pray for charity organisations such as Scripture Union Scotland where some staff have lost their jobs and the organisation is struggling to keep some of it's centres open.

The prayer teams continue to meet and pray weekly for the church family and the community. If you would like to pray with someone, or have a prayer request for yourself or someone else then please contact either -

Jeff Martin 01334 656181

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

Janice Geddes 01334 652957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

" Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching" Luke12: 37

Reflection from Peter Meager

Cecil considered himself lucky when he got dysentery at Gallipoli in 1915 and was evacuated. He wasn't so lucky the following year in Palestine when he was hit by shrapnel on three different occasions. That caused him chest problems for the rest of his 92 years. For several years he couldn't face other people because of shell-shock. This often made his family's life hell. My granny told me his story, and, a few years before he died, he was interviewed by the Imperial War Museum. Now, I can hear my grandfather's voice simply by logging onto the museum website.

Remembrance is an intensely personal thing. Many of my generation think of a person they knew when pinning on their poppy or standing at the War Memorial. For some, seldom a day passes without the face or voice of a fallen or wounded friend or family member coming into their minds. Not in a morbid way, but in a way

that evokes sadness at lost lives, maimed bodies and broken minds on the one hand, but also gratitude and pride on account of their inspiring courage, vitality, fortitude and sacrifice on the other. Remembrance Day merely brings all these emotions into sharp focus in a very poignant way.

During a formal Remembrance ceremony, the Last Post is often played. This signalled the end of a service man or woman's working day and told them that they were free to rest. It also speaks to us of all who have lain down in the sleep of death and entered their eternal rest.

In Scotland a Lament on the pipes will usually be played - often 'The flowers o' the forest,' recalling one of Scotland's greatest defeats at Flodden in 1513 when a whole generation of our manhood was cut down in one bloody battle. This is a fitting expression of the outpouring of grief which is appropriate in the face of such loss.

But as well as the Last Post and the Lament there is always the Reveille or the Rouse; waking the service man or woman to the tasks of a new day. To us it speaks of the Resurrection; that hope of which we read in John 11:25, where Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever has faith in me shall live, even though they die"* .

Our way of life has been won at a great price and we must preserve it at all costs, if the sacrifices made for us by so many are not to be in vain. This year, as we remember the one hundredth anniversary of the entombment of the 'Unknown Soldier,' we also remember those many unknown heroes who have given themselves to their communities and country so unstintingly in our health service, care homes and other essential services. To them too we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

What is an appropriate response to all of this? Surely it is to commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service; striving for all that makes for peace in our families, churches and communities; seeking to care for any we have contact with who continue bear the mental or physical scars of conflict; working, as we have

opportunity, for a just future for all humanity.

We all know the poem written in the spring of 1915 by the Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, shortly after losing a friend at the Battle of Ypres. It led to the tradition of wearing poppies and began with the words, 'In Flanders fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses row on row.' In the final verse he urged:

“Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high,
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' Fields.”

In 1918 a woman named Moina Michael wrote a response:

“Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet – to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.”
May we too continue to keep the Faith.

Bible Reading

The following verses are among those that are appropriate to this season:

“He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” Isaiah 2:4

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.” Lamentations 3:21-23

“Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint”. Isaiah 40:31

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” John 14:27

“The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” James 3:17-18

Prayer

You may wish to join me in this prayer:

Father of all, at this time of global pandemic and fresh restrictions on our day-to-day living, we pray for all who work in public health, seeking to bring infections under control. Amidst the gloom, we thank you for the bit of good news that a vaccine may soon be available. We thank you for giving scientists the insights that have led to this breakthrough and we ask for wisdom and perseverance for all who will oversee the development and roll-out of the programme to deliver these medicines around the world.

Lord, we remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives have been given and taken away in world wars and conflicts past and present; we pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terrorism.

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.

Father, we pray for all members of the armed forces who are in danger even now, remembering too their families, friends and all who pray for their safe return; for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and, as we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. Amen.

Blessing:

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, tranquility; to the Church, the Queen, the Commonwealth and all humankind, peace and concord; and to all His servants, life everlasting. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, be with us and remain with us always.

Hymn

Sir Cecil Spring Rice was the British Ambassador to the United States during the First World War. Shortly before his departure from the US in January 1918, reflecting on the horrendous losses of that conflict, he re-wrote an earlier poem which we now know as the hymn, 'I vow to thee my country,' It describes how a Christian has dual citizenship; owing loyalty both to their country and to the kingdom of God.

The composer, Gustav Holst, later wrote the tune, Thaxted (after the village where he lived) for these verses. The tune adapted a theme from, Jupiter, one of his Planets Suite. Jupiter was the bringer of jollity which, I think, helps lift the poem to a new level as an inspiring, uplifting hymn. It is one of my favourite Remembrance tide hymns.

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the way test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;

And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

Here is a link to a recording of the
hymn: https://youtu.be/bvouc8Qs_Ml

My email is meager52@btinternet.com should you wish to get in touch

Amnesty International: Write for Rights campaign

It is that time of year when members of the Justice and Peace Group would normally be handing out information about this annual campaign; we are grateful to all of you who join with us to support prisoners of conscience. This year, as with so many other activities, we will not be giving out information sheets, as the advice is not to pass out leaflets etc and also, of course, our usual Sunday morning service has been replaced by three smaller services or by watching on YouTube. Nevertheless, there are sadly still prisoners of conscience and you can find out about this year's campaign by going to the Amnesty website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk>. This takes you directly to Write for Rights (on the home page) and if you click on 'Take action' you will find information about four people, from Burundi, Chile, Saudi Arabia and Turkey respectively. Again, if you click on the different photos you will get more information about each one, together with draft emails which you can send as they are or amend.

Those who were part of last year's campaign have expressed their thanks for the support which strengthens them even when they remain in prison.

For example, Jose Adrian was 14 when he was arrested and beaten by police on his way home from school in Mexico. He has an undiagnosed disability that makes it difficult for him to hear and communicate. Strengthened by the messages of solidarity, he and his mother fought to clear his name, he has attended his first advocacy meeting, and he has received an official letter that states he has no criminal record. Amnesty expects the government to sign a reparation agreement soon. Jose says: I thank the people who have supported me, you have changed my life and I thank you all.

In Nigeria, Nasu Abdulaziz was shot when without warning the authorities bulldozed his community in Lagos. 30,000 people were left homeless. More than 20,000 Amnesty supporters sent him messages of support and 400,000 appeal letters called on the Governor of Lagos for justice. There have now been talks between the authorities and Nasu's community about a resettlement programme. He says: I am very happy to receive all these messages. It means that people care about me and what happened. Thank you so much.

Finally, three women in Iran, who campaigned against being forced to wear the veil have had their prison sentences reduced after 1.2 million messages and appeals were sent on their behalf. Although two of them still have to serve nine and a half years and the third twelve and a half years. One of them, Yasaman Aryani says: I hope to walk side by side in the street one day, me without the hijab and you with the hijab.

I hope you will feel able to join in this campaign this year.
Celia A Armitage

Christmas Collection for Families First

Families First is a charity based in St Andrews that looks after families in North East Fife. As we have done in the past, we are supporting Families First this year with an invitation to provide gifts for children and youth. They will be grateful for any gift donated.



Please do not wrap the gifts as this makes it easier for them, but paper and tape would be much appreciated. Please bring your gifts on Thursday 10th December and Sunday 13th December. The gifts will be "quarantined" before they are delivered the following week to the recipients.

Worship and Sunday Club

Our worship services are in the Old Parish Centre, 10:30am on Thursday, and 11:00am and 4:00pm on Sunday. If you're not able to be present for one of our three worship services each week, you may listen online. Please go to our church website and follow the link to the recording of the service:

www.cuparold.org.uk

Sunday Club meets at 3:45 on Sunday afternoon, in the lounge and meeting room. Children age 4 through P7 are welcome.

Donations

If you would like to make an online donation to the church, you may do so through the Church of Scotland website:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk.

Just click the red 'donate' button and it will guide you through. You may also speak with David, our treasurer, if you would like to set up a regular direct deposit.