

Remembrance Sunday 2019:
A Peacemaker's Perspective

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

CHIPS

We take sides. Both sides.

INTRODUCTION

Several local church leaders have told us that they find Remembrance Sunday a challenging date to mark on the church calendar.

How should we approach it as peacemakers? Can we make it more inclusive? How do we ensure the takeaway message is one of peace?

At CHIPS, we don't have all the answers. But, in response to these questions, we have developed some simple resources for churches this year.

The content is designed to be flexible, and includes some suggested Bible verses, themed remarks and a new CHIPS Prayer of Remembrance which can be used around the two minutes' silence or any point during a service.

Whether you choose to use or adapt it, or simply incorporate some of the themes, we hope that you will find it helpful and invite you to pray with us for peace this Remembrance Sunday.

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BIBLE READINGS

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven...If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?”

(Matthew 5:43-47)

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

(Isaiah 2:4)

NIV version

LOOKING OUTWARDS, LOOKING INWARDS, LOOKING UPWARDS.

This Remembrance Sunday, we look *outwards*

- ***It is ten years since the death of Harry Patch. At 111 years old, he was the last surviving soldier of World War 1. But Harry spent his last 80 years avoiding any celebration of war, and said that we should remember those on “both sides of the line”. Later in life, he visited both British and German war cemeteries to lay poppies on soldiers’ graves.***
- This Remembrance Sunday, we can be thankful for the relative freedom we enjoy in the UK today. We remember with thanksgiving the soldiers – from the UK and across the Commonwealth – who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars and the conflicts since. And just as Harry Patch encouraged us to, we also remember with sorrow the many millions of soldiers who were killed on the ‘other side’.
- We sometimes forget the many other casualties of war, such as those killed or injured while serving in non-combat and alternative roles. They include several tens of thousands of volunteers from places as diverse as China and the Caribbean, as well as British conscientious objectors who contributed through medical care, infrastructure building and general labour.
- Many millions of civilians also died during conflict, whether through enemy fire, sickness or starvation. For example, of the 70-85 million who died in World War 2 worldwide, the majority – some 50-55m – are estimated to have been ordinary people.
- Still others were attacked or imprisoned for their refusal to play any part in war – some even dying as a result of their treatment. We remember all of them with sorrow today.

This Remembrance Sunday, we look *inwards*

- ***All four gospels tell the remarkable story of Peter and Malchus. When Jesus was arrested before his trial, his disciple responded by pulling out a sword and used it to cut the ear of one of the Roman servants involved in the ambush. John's gospel names him as Malchus and tells how Jesus first rebuked Peter for his action, and then reversed it by miraculously healing the wounded servant's ear (John 18:10-11).***
- The contrast between the actions of Peter and Jesus is powerful. Jesus' last recorded miracle before his death was healing the wound of his enemy. He then went on to his death as a sheep to the slaughter, unarmed and unprotesting. He proved that he was willing to die not just for his friends, but for his enemies and the whole of mankind.
- As imperfect people, our default reaction may also be to respond to violence with violence. Like Peter, it could be a violent action. More often, it might be a violent word or thought.
- Other times, we are guilty of looking out for our own, and showing love only to those who love us. But Jesus reminds us that this kind of love is something even the tax collectors and pagans manage. He calls us to go much further – and to love our enemies too.
- Today, Remembrance Sunday presents us with an opportunity to look inside our hearts, to confess our violent actions, words and thoughts, and to look again to the perfect example of Jesus.

And this Remembrance Sunday, we look *upwards*

• One Sunday evening in 2001, soldiers surrounded the village where CHIPS, the peacemaking charity, was based in Uganda. 12 villagers were gunned down and killed that day. But the peacemaking team remained to continue the work and unite the opposing tribes caught in conflict. Ten years later, the commander who ordered the massacre admitted that it had been a mistake and the authorities said the peace which had been built was “irreversible”.

• For Christians, the purpose of remembrance must never be to glorify war, or to look only to the past. It is an opportunity to affirm our conviction that war will never be the best way to resolve conflict, and to commit ourselves to a more peaceful future.

• Today, as we look around us, we are confronted with an almost overwhelming number of divisions and conflicts in our communities, our country, and across the world.

• But we can also look forward to a time when the kingdom of God will be fulfilled on earth. The wolf will lie with the lamb and it will be a time of worldwide peace. Enemies will be reconciled, and the machinery of warfare will no longer even exist.

• In the meantime, Remembrance Sunday is an ideal moment to recommit ourselves to praying and working for peace... to ask for the peace of God's Kingdom to come to earth, and for help in discerning and fulfilling our role as peacemakers in our communities, every day, in practical ways.

PRAYERS

The CHIPS Prayer of Remembrance

Heavenly Father, this Remembrance Sunday, we thank you for the perfect sacrifice and perfect example of your Son, the Prince of Peace.

We thank you for the relative freedom we enjoy today and we remember, with sorrow, all those who have suffered as a result of the two World Wars and conflicts since.

We remember them - both military and civilian; in combat and non-combat roles; willing participants and objectors. And we think of those who suffered on 'both sides'.

[Optional: take a few moments either to reflect in silence, or to call out specific conflicts and countries].

We confess our own sins and shortcomings, and we ask your Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and fill us with love and compassion for our enemies.

We confess that we often fail to look beyond our own interests. We are sorry for our prejudices to others; our reckless actions; our careless words; and our hostile thoughts. Help us to fix our eyes on the perfect example of Jesus and to love everyone, even those who are against us.

[Optional: take a few moments to confess in silence].

We look forward to the day when the peace of God will reign on earth, and we commit to working for peace until that day.

Help us to be people of peace in our prayers and in our actions. We ask that you would touch and heal those who are suffering today as a result of conflict. Help each of us to discern our personal calling as peacemakers, and to sow peace in our day-to-day lives.

[Optional: take a few moments to commit in silence, or to pray out loud for current conflicts and divisions].

Make us, O Lord, we pray, channels of your peace in Jesus' name.

'The CHIPS Prayer' - prayer for us as peacemakers

Loving Father, thank you for bringing us back to yourself through your Son Jesus Christ; You have shown us that there is no end to your love, and no limits to your compassion for us.

We ask you to have mercy on our broken world and divided communities.

We ask you, Holy Spirit, to pour out your love and compassion into our hearts and minds, so that we may follow your example and lovingly serve others who have asked for our help.

Thank you for encouraging us to go and be peacemakers even in the heart of the conflict.

Help us to lay aside our fears and preconceptions, and make friends of both sides;

Inspire us to accept peoples, cultures and faiths different from our own;

Give us courage to bear the adversities we will face, patience to persevere - however long it takes - and strengthen us in every way through Jesus Christ who is our Peace.

The CHIPS Prayer – copyright CHIPS

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are some other Remembrance Day resources we found with a focus on peace.

Fellowship of Reconciliation

FOR has produced a 'White Poppies in Churches' pack which contains a box of 100 white peace poppies, a poster and a booklet with guidelines for church services and FAQ.

<https://for.org.uk/resources/remembrance>

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Armistice Centenary Resources

<https://www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/resources/armistice-centenary-resources>

Baptist Peace Fellowship, Remembrance Sunday Worship Material

<http://www.baptist-peace.org.uk/pdfs/RemembranceSundayWorshipResources.pdf>

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Resources for Peace/ Remembrance Sunday

https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/worship_resources/peace-sunday-or-remembrance-day

Ekklesia, Reimagining Remembrance

http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/research/reimagining_remembrance

Joint Public Issues Team, poetry for Remembrance Sunday

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/peacemaking/remembrance-2018>

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT CHIPS

There are four key ways in which Christians and their local churches can support our work.

Follow us on social media to follow what's happening at CHIPS

- facebook.com/chipspeace
- twitter.com/chipspeaceorg
- instagram.com/chipspeace

Sign up for our email and print newsletters for regular updates from us

- [Sign up on our homepage chipspeace.org](https://chipspeace.org)

Pray for our work - specifically our current projects in Ghana and Brixton as well as for emerging opportunities to support new projects across the world.

Give financially to our work - regular giving really helps to give our work financial security, while one-off donations are also very welcome.

- [Give at chipspeace.org/donate](https://chipspeace.org/donate)