

# CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH WINDSOR

November 7, 2021

Remembrance Day Sunday- PRESIDING: PASTOR CHARMAIN

Michael B Perrot is a British united Reformed minister, and he likens the image of a harvested vineyard, to the sentiments expressed on behalf of those who have lost their lives in conflict and war – particularly as those who are remembered on this, the Sunday (closest to / of) the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, when we remember our war-dead.

He writes: “I don’t know if you have ever seen a vineyard. In my travels in the Burgundy region of France (famous for its wines) I have seen vineyards where the vines have been cut right back to the ‘trunk’. They look like dead pieces of driftwood sticking out of the dry earth, from which it seems impossible that anything green and fruitful can ever grow again.”

I have seen those images, perhaps not of vineyards, but farmlands, wide open fields where the crops have been brought in, but left behind is a sad picture of dried stumps and discoloured foliage, and oftentimes birds, picking through grains that had fallen from the retrieved crops. Like me, you’ve probably seen these fields, but have never made such a connection. I am asking you today to remember what those looked like, as you yourself drove by in the Fall months.

The picture of those heavily pruned vines, the old gnarled stumps of wood, sticking out of desolate fields, are potent reminders of the stark, desolate landscapes that were the battle-fields where so many died – and where so many continue to die today. In their highest expression of love (duty) for friends, family, security and country, they laid down their lives. And for this, we remember them.

For those who went to serve in the armed services in conflict, and for those that waited for them at home, death, sorrow and bereavement was real, as some here might remember. That was a reality. And also, with that pain and sadness that was endured, Always there was HOPE: hope of a return home to be reunited with loved-ones; a return to better times and a better world.

Yet many, many did die, and many more suffered the greatest depths of grief which tested them to the limits of their endurance – their faith, their capacity to love. They – some of you present here today – suffered – and continue to suffer the loss of a loved one who could never be replaced. Those who we remember today.

Remember’ means to re-member, re-unite, to bring back together, to reunite (in our memories). Today we bring back the past, or more accurately, the PEOPLE of the past, whom we miss and for who we grieve; those who lost their lives in war.

We ‘re-unite’ ourselves with them, acknowledging our sense of loss and our sorrow, yet in a spirit of deep gratitude and, yes, in the spirit of love. NO ONE HAS GREATER LOVE THAN THIS, TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIFE FOR THEIR FRIENDS. As Jesus showed the ultimate expression of love for all people in the giving-up of his life, so the many people who laid-down their lives for their loved-ones – for everyone – expresses the depth of their love.

It is in the spirit of LOVE that we are reunited, ‘re-remembered’, with them. Memories of war and conflict and death, and the emotional scars left by bereavement, can easily fester like a wound that won’t heal, and result in a hatred towards those we once called ‘enemy’.

Re-remembering’ and living in a spirit of such hatred is not what Jesus tells us to strive for. Rather he tells us, even in the midst of darkness and death, ABIDE IN MY LOVE. IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, YOU WILL ABIDE IN MY LOVE... THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU. As difficult as it certainly is sometimes, there is no room for hatred in ‘re-remembering’. Today, we think of this as we remember.

Today we also give thanks for the many lives laid-down in love for friends, family, and country, and we remember them in love. We acknowledge the life we now have would not be possible if it were not for their sacrifice. We return to the image of the vine, pruned back to the bare, apparently dead gnarled trunk.

We return to the desolate fields from which it seems impossible that new life will ever come, and which offers little or no hope for the future. But a year or two later, in the Springtime, if you drive by those same fields, you will see the

beautiful green of a young crop, holding the potential of feeding thousands, fostered in a field that once looked barren and desolate and dead.

So, we remember those who lost their lives in the battle-fields of yesterday – and through to our present day, and we picture the stark, barren wastes of the killing-fields. Like those seen by a doctor in his field-hospital in Ypres during WW1. one morning he looked out to see a blanket of red poppies covering the land as far as he could see.

He recalled the Greek legend that said that the poppy was created by the Greek god of sleep. The poppy for this doctor – as for millions of people today – came to symbolize the ‘rest’ of those fallen in battle.

Today, WE REMEMBER THEM, with love and thanksgiving. Amen

**Prayers:** (written by Rev Marjory Macaskil)

Dear God, Where swords are turned to ploughshares and spears to pruning hooks where the guns fall silent and the rumours of war cease, We see the love of God written on the hearts of men and women And offer our thanksgiving to God.

Where man says ‘I am my brother’s keeper’ and the guardian of his days. Where mothers’ sons grow old in lands free from strife, We see the love of God written on the hearts of men and women And offer our thanksgiving to God Where enemies destroy the barriers that divide and no man’s land becomes home to each and all Where colour, creed and nation unite not stand apart. We see the love of God written on the hearts of men and women And offer our thanksgiving to God.

Where silent remembering inspires songs of freedom, justice, truth and the sacrifice of old shapes the passion for our future. Where those who gave their lives and youth, let us age in years and wisdom We see the love of God written on the hearts of men and women And offer our thanksgiving to God.

Where courage never fades in the battle for the right and power is given to the weak, the least, the last Where compassion finds a home, to root out fear, mistrust or pride We see the love of God written on the hearts of men and women And offer our thanksgiving to God.

We offer thanksgiving to God for our shut ins...

For the love of Father, Son and Spirit is the source of human love the fire of God within us shedding light upon our path write this love upon our hearts God as we offer you our thanks through Jesus Christ our saviour who offers life to us. Who taught us to pray....

Blessing: May the blessing of the God of peace and justice  
be with us; May the blessing of the Son  
who weeps the tears of the world’s suffering  
be with us;

And may the blessing of the Spirit  
who inspires us to reconciliation and hope  
be with us  
from now into eternity.  
Amen.