

Revd Michael Burns  
Christ Church West Wimbledon  
Sermon :  
November 11, 2018 ~ “Remembrance Sunday”  
“Twenty-Second Sunday of Trinity”

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**Remembrance Sunday 11 November 2018**

John Coleman, Edward Gledhill, James Kane-Smith, Guy Kernan, David Lewis, William Lewis, Pierce Lomax, Francis McLaren, Walter Parke, John Parke and Alec Warren – all killed on active service during the 1st World War. These are just some of the relatives of present members of Christ Church being remembered today. Today, services throughout the nation are taking on an added significance, for it was at 6am on Monday 11 November 1918 that the treaty known as the Armistice of Compiegne came into effect, ending hostilities between the Allies and their last opponent, Germany. The agreement ended four years of conflict which had mobilized 70 million military personnel worldwide, at a cost of more than 18 million lives and over 20 million casualties. These are numbers beyond our comprehension. In fact it was First World War memorials which were the first to contain the names of ordinary people because, up till then, it had only been officers who were specifically remembered by name. So alongside the names I have just read out are the 21 names of those from this congregation of the time who died in the 1st World War, commemorated on our war memorial. Nor should we forget those who died in the 2nd World War – again there are 26 names listed.

In an account written of the part that Christ Church played during the 2nd World War – when the Hall was used to serve hot snacks and drinks to the troops and a bomb damaged some windows – there is this sentence: “The War Memorial plaque near the Christie porch bears the names of those who never returned from the war, mostly Youth Club members”. Mostly Youth

Club members. That is such a chilling phrase – which brings home the stark reality of the cost of war, and particularly of the 1st and 2nd World Wars. If we delved into our family histories, many of us would have had relatives who served – and of course everyone would have been affected as daily life was significantly disrupted for millions during wartime. In my previous parish we once held a 1940's theme party – but we were stopped in our tracks by one lady who said she would certainly not attend as the war years she endured as a child were horrible and something she never wanted to experience again. The Bishop to the Forces has written this: 'Wars are never good, never noble, even if they may be just. People suffer and people die, whether the war is public or secret, fought with simple or sophisticated weapons, in the streets of our cities or in faraway places, in the depths of the ocean or the heights of our skies, with a gun or a computer'. Yet war goes on in all sorts of places in our world – not least as it is being played out on the streets of London as 119 young people have been shot or knifed to death, 5 in south London in the last 5 days alone.

Yet still we continue to ask young men and women and their families to risk everything in the military and civilian security services so that we can safely go about our daily lives. In all this we, for our part, know we have to play an active role in whatever way we can to the best of our abilities in making our world, our country a better place in which to live.

In our Gospel today, we hear the account of the call of the first disciples – their ready willingness to leave everything and follow this new teacher. As Christians, we know we must always be ready to give an account of our lives for there are no days off in Christian discipleship, no limited hours of service. We cannot rewrite the conditions of being a disciple of Christ just to suit ourselves. No, we have to be prepared to live each day ready for the adventure which is Christian discipleship.

November is the season when we remember all the saints – those ordinary men, and women, boys and girls, who, with the help of God, became

extraordinary. As we reflected last Sunday, we all have the potential to be saints, knowing that with the help of God who loves and suffers with and for us all, in the end all will be well.

Friday's Church Times had a poignant cartoon of a vicar standing before a 1914-1918 war memorial and underneath was the caption: 'He was too young to remember them; so he just said thank you'.

Thus it is that we say thank you for all those who have given their lives for our freedom and we pledge to continue to pursue peace, to pray for peace. And whilst we cannot affect the world as can our governments and leaders, we can all work in our community, amongst the neighbours we know and the strangers we don't know – for each of us is capable of making a difference because of how we live out our lives.