

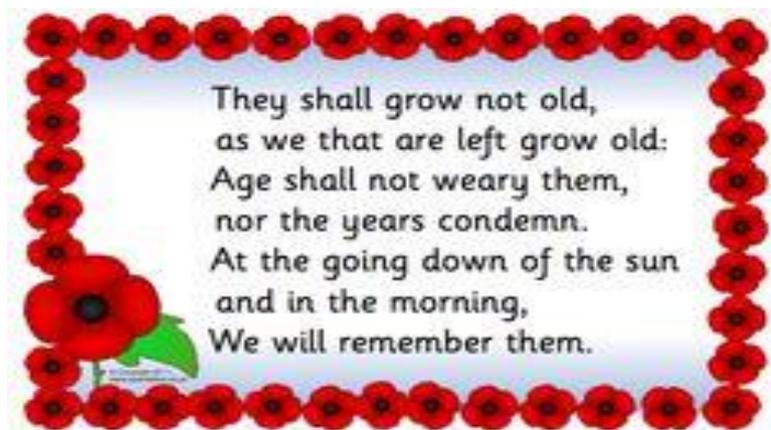
**Remembrance Sunday,
Sunday, 8th November 2020**



Dear Friends,

'Greater love has no one than this; that they lay down their life for their friends.' (John 15: 13)

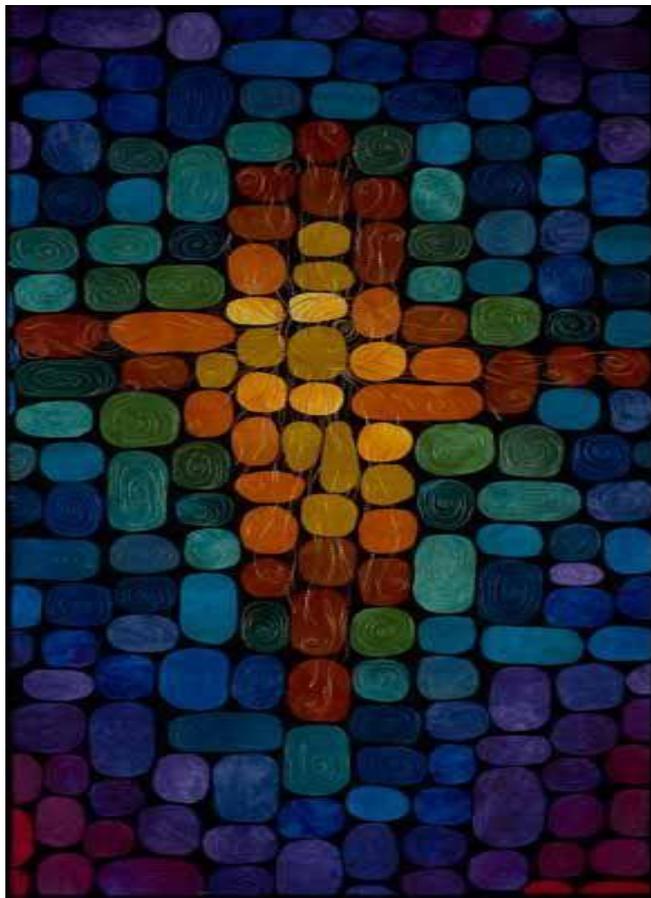
As our nation enters into a second Coronavirus Lockdown this week, my thoughts and prayers are with each of you and with your families. All restaurants, pubs, gyms, hairdressers and shops selling non-essential goods and services are now closed, along with restrictions on travel and limitations on households from mixing inside homes. All church services have been cancelled, with the exception of funerals which are allowed to continue with a maximum of 30 people in attendance. Even here, there are important qualifications to take into account: outside services, such as a Burial or Interment of Ashes are restricted to 15 people - even those burials which form part of a church-based funeral service. Weddings are only allowed in exceptional 'end of life' circumstances, and even these are restricted to 6 attendees, which include the bride and groom and minister. I ask you to pray for all families affected by these difficult circumstances at an already highly emotional time.



Remembrance Day services have been affected too. Church and Civic gatherings are only permitted on **Sunday, 8th November at 10.55am** and NOT on Wednesday, 11th November, and these services must be held outside at War Memorials or other suitable gathering points, such as at flag poles in churchyards.

The annual Remembrance Sunday March Past the Cenotaph will not take place in London this year. However, a Government-led Remembrance Service will continue to go ahead as a closed ceremony. Despite these changes, people are being encouraged to take part in an act of Remembrance, either by watching the service on television, or pausing for the Two Minute Silence in their home or on their doorsteps.

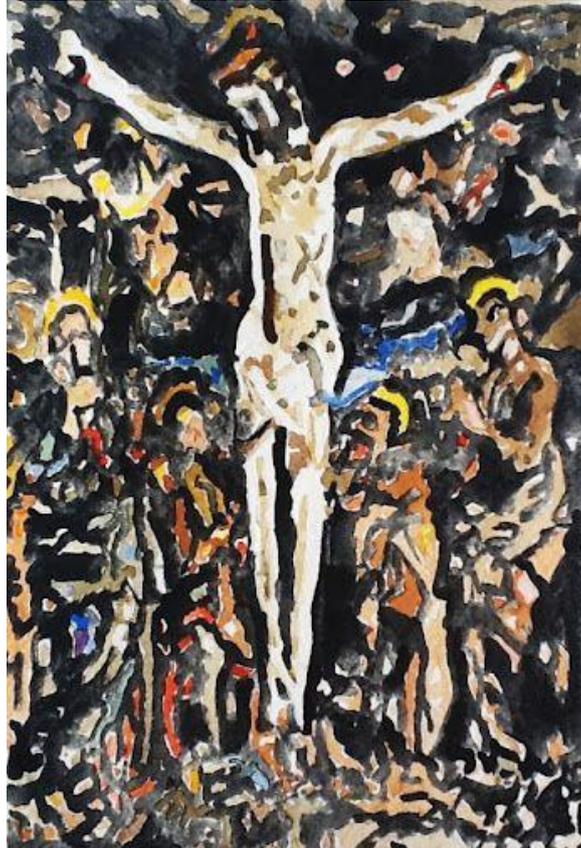
Hopefully, the new restrictions will end on 2 December, but I imagine this will only come to pass if the whole country joins together in observing strict adherence to the prescribed 'shut-down' measures. Each citizen has a responsibility to the other; and, just as it has been with wearing face-masks in public places, I pray we will look positively at the sacrifices we make in terms of our personal freedom during this time, and offer them up as acts of love and compassion for the health and well-being of our neighbours, our NHS and the vulnerable in our society.



'Shine a Little Light' by Larkin Jean Van Horn

During the last Lockdown, our parish communities set up excellent mechanisms of support for neighbours who needed to self-isolate or who were shielding a vulnerable member of their household. It is gratifying to know that these mechanisms are being revisited to help meet the needs of individuals and families in this second Lockdown. Overwhelmed by the kindness of local residents during this past year, the Mayor of Winchester, Cllr Patrick Cunningham, has initiated *'Local Hero'* Awards in recognition of those who have put others before themselves and selflessly supported others in need with acts of kindness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You will be thrilled to learn that the teams at Sparsholt Village Shop and Littleton Linkers are among those whose generosity of spirit in going the extra mile and helping those in need have been recognised by the Mayor's *'Local Heroes'* awards. It is important to say that our parishioners in the Test Valley area are also due to be recognised for similar awards! Whilst it is always difficult to name some folks and not others, I am sure I speak on behalf of all our communities in thanking every individual and group who have worked tirelessly for others during this difficult year.



'Meditation on the Holy Cross' by John Warren Oakes

These awards and the work of so many people in the selfless care of others reflect the message of John's Gospel this week, as he reveals Jesus' desire for us to know true joy by being in relationship with Him, and through the outpouring of that joy by the way we devote our lives to loving others.

I once read in a Christian commentary how *'true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance.'* This wisdom is the epitome of our faith in Jesus Christ! The joy of living our lives entwined with Love itself, means that whatever adversity we face, we remain in the security of Jesus' love. And through this, we not only find the spiritual capacity to weather the storms of our lives, but also find ourselves possessed of a truly selfless compassion and empathy for the predicaments and needs of others. The joy of helping our neighbour brings us full circle into the arms of love: the Servant King teaches us to love as He loves us, and then pours back upon us such an abundance of His grace as to inspire the action of love in us as the natural, daily reflex-action of our joyful being.

This Remembrance Sunday, however challenging our ability to come together, we must pledge to remember those who have given their lives in the service of our country. We owe them more than we can say. We remember them, their families and loved ones before God now, and commit ourselves to the continuing work of peace and reconciliation in the joy of Christ's holy name, the King of Peace.

The five parishes of The Downs Benefice hold the British Army HQ Andover, ATR Winchester, Middle Wallop and Worthy Down Barracks as our close neighbours. So let us not forget the poignant reality that Service Personnel continue to serve across the globe to ensure that we might live in peace. Now, as we remember the Fallen and those who returned, so we also lift up into God's safekeeping those who continue to risk their lives for our wellbeing - many of whom are our neighbours' children.



'Circle of Love' by Deborah Nell

We are also wise to remember that these selfless individuals are not the only heroes and heroines of war. WWII, for example, was also fought by many thousands of men, women and children on the Home Front: in reserved occupations and in voluntary roles such as the Police, Medical and Fire units, the Home Guard and ARP, as well as in Munitions factories, down mines, in the Land army, hospitals, schools and railways. Hours were long and conditions often treacherous. Many died in bombing campaigns and many live to this day with physical and psychological scars of war.

On this Remembrance Sunday, we acknowledge the lasting sacrifice of those who have been killed in action *and* those who have survived the horror of war. We remember those who are still in active service; risking their lives, their families and their future prospects for the defence of freedom not just of *our own* country but of countries across the world who struggle for freedom, for justice and for peace.

And we give thanks for the tireless work of countless poppy sellers, Hope for Heroes, the British Legion and its Earl Hague Poppy Fund; The War Memorials Trust, and all those who work so hard to keep today's world focussed on the message of remembrance and the terrible cost of war, especially in these troubling times of Coronavirus.

As we remember the ultimate sacrifice of life in order for us to live in peace, Jesus speaks: Though we might not be asked to sacrifice *our* lives for others, Jesus does ask us to give of ourselves sacrificially in the way we *live out* our lives. Jesus made the first choice, to love and die for us – inviting us to live with Him forever. We must now make the next choice – to accept or reject His offer of eternal life.



'Going to Work' by L S Lowry - commissioned by the War Artists' Advisory Committee in 1943

And in accepting it, may we who have received the gift of peace in our time repay our fallen brothers and sisters by standing alongside them steadfast, immovable: faithfully committed to the eternal Christian values of freedom, justice, peace and love. As poet Robert Laurence Binyon reminds us:

'They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old'

We *will* remember them – our eternal lives depend upon it!

Yours, in the peace of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Schedule of Services

Please find details of **Remembrance Sunday services** taking place across our Benefice this Sunday morning, beginning in each parish at **10.55am**.

Date	Service	Chilbolton	Crawley	Littleton	Sparsholt	Wherwell
8 Nov	<i>Remembrance Sunday</i>	10.55am - Remembrance Service				

Following Government guidelines, these services must take place outside and all who attend them must observe 2-metre social distancing

All other previously scheduled services are cancelled until further notice.



Churches Open for Private Prayer

Whilst Government guidelines prohibit our holding Sunday services, our churches are currently allowed to be open for individual prayer at the following times:

- St Mary the Less, Chilbolton 9 am – 4pm, Sundays
- St Mary's, Crawley 10am – 4pm, Wed and Sunday
- St Catherine's, Littleton 10am – 4pm, Wed and Saturday
- St Stephen's Sparsholt 10am – 4pm, Wed and Sunday
- St Peter & Holy Cross, Wherwell 10am – 4pm, Sundays

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued a call for a **Month of Prayer** in response to the Lockdown, and across the diocese we will be answering their call to pray for our nation and to serve our communities. You can find resources and information about the diocesan response to the call for prayer on our Benefice website.

Please also see our website for updates and more prayer and service resources at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

Collect Prayer for Remembrance Sunday

Almighty Father,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of all:
govern the hearts and minds of those in authority
and bring the families of the nations,
divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin,
to be subject to his just and gentle rule;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen



John 15: 9-17 – Jesus commands us to love one another

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

LEST WE FORGET

Prayers for private use this Remembrance Sunday

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace: for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God; May God give us peace. Amen.

For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss; May God give peace for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return; May God give us peace. Amen.

For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity; 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. May God give us peace. Amen.

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 grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. 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. May God give us peace. Amen.

A prayer for all those affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, Good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up those who are brought low; that we may find comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

