



Remembrance Sunday: Services for Peace

a resource from
Fellowship of Reconciliation
and Peace Pledge Union

THE **PEACE PLEDGE UNION** has campaigned against war since the 1930s. Founded in the shadow of World War One with the threat of World War Two already looming, its basis has always been that each person has a choice, whether to accept war and war preparations as a fact of 'normal' life, or to renounce war and work actively for peace.

The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest secular pacifist organisation in the Britain. Today, we challenge systems, practices and policies that fuel war and militarism, and that contribute to the view that armed force is an effective agent of social change. Such systems and beliefs impede the emergence of nonviolent approaches to conflict. A more realistic approach to security would include promoting human rights by example, not by force; developing coherent programmes of education for peace; and reallocating military budgets to long-term peacebuilding, nonviolent diplomacy and tackling the root causes of war.

THE **FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION** was founded in 1914 following a meeting between Henry Hodgkin, a British Quaker, and Friedrich Sigmund Schültze, a German Lutheran pastor. On parting at Cologne station, they said to each other "We are one in Christ and can never be at war". A Basis for the Fellowship was agreed on in December that year, which is as follows:

- That love as revealed and interpreted in the life and death of Jesus Christ, involves more than we have yet seen, that is the only power by which evil can be overcome and the only sufficient basis of human society.
- That, in order to establish a world-order based on Love, it is incumbent upon those who believe in this principle to accept it fully, both for themselves and in relation to others and to take the risks involved in doing so in a world which does not yet accept it.
- That therefore, as Christians, we are forbidden to wage war, and that our loyalty to our country, to humanity, to the Church Universal, and to Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, calls us instead to a life-service for the enthronement of Love in personal, commercial and national life.
- That the Power, Wisdom and Love of God stretch far beyond the limits of our present experience, and that He is ever waiting to break forth into human life in new and larger ways.
- That since God manifests Himself in the world through men and women, we offer ourselves to His redemptive purpose to be used by Him in whatever way He may reveal to us.

Over the past century, the Fellowship of Reconciliation has established over 60 branches across the world, supported conscientious objectors refusing to serve in the military, trained people in practical nonviolence (used in the American Civil Rights movement and the Philippines People Power revolution, among other examples) and had six of its members awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Remembrance Sunday Services for Peace

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9)

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

This Remembrance guide aims to provide you with a Christ-centred and peace-focused service for Remembrance. It can be used in place of a traditional Remembrance Sunday service, though many churches like to hold a separate peace-themed service later in the day.

We recognise and celebrate the diversity in the Christian community and understand that each Church may have its own unique and beautiful forms of worship and service order. Therefore, this guide is designed so that each church can use parts which inspire it and adapt the order as suits their worship style. While the prayers, the hymns, the Bible readings and the sermon ideas are each clustered together, you are encouraged to make use of them at appropriate points through your service.

SIGNIFICANCE OF REMEMBRANCE DAY

These extracts detail why we believe that we must focus on peace at Remembrance. They are designed to be used, separately or together, as part of the service welcome or sermon.

Traditional Remembrance Day services focus on the sacrifice and suffering of British and allied armed forces personnel. This service remembers all those who have suffered and died in war, civilian and combatant, from all sides and none. It helps us to think about what it means to live as followers of the Prince of Peace and how we can respect the message of ‘Never Again’.

For 85 years, the white poppy has been worn as a symbol of remembrance for all victims of war, as a commitment to peace and as a challenge to attempts to glamorise or celebrate war. It is distributed by the Peace Pledge Union as an alternative to the red poppy, though some choose to wear both together. The white poppy is worn by people of all religions and none. For many Christians, it is an enduring reflection of Christ’s message that there is another way than war and that peace is the answer.

Throughout his ministry on Earth, Jesus consistently spoke against violence and in favour of peace. Whether it was his rejection of 'an eye for an eye' and call to love your enemy in the Sermon on the Mount, his rebuff of efforts to make him king by violence, or his refusal to permit violence even to save his own life, Jesus lived as a pacifist. He refused to allow violence to be done by others on his behalf ("Put down your sword... Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword").

Increasingly, the victims of war are not soldiers. Over 90% of casualties in modern-day conflicts are civilians. We need to remember them, as Jesus remembered and reached out to those who were ignored, forgotten or reviled by his society.

WELCOME

Welcome the congregation and explain that this is a special service focused on peace at the time of Remembrance. Explain that you will be looking at what it means to live as followers of the Prince of Peace and how we can respect the message of 'Never again'.

"Let us come together to give thanks to the creator of life, heaven and earth. Let us begin our prayer: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord God, you fashioned each of us in your divine image and likeness, to live in the communion you share as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Be with us as we reflect and pray this morning. May this gathering, together with Remembrance Day thoughts and prayers everywhere, help move our world one step closer to the peace of your Kingdom. We make this prayer to you through Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace and Lord. Amen. And now, let us be attentive to God's word."

PRAYERS FOR PEACE

May the memory of wars strengthen our efforts for peace;
May the memory of those who died inspire our service to the living;
May the memory of past destruction move us to build for the future;
O God of peace, O companion of our souls,
O builder of Love and Justice in the world,
Hear our prayer.

Almighty God and Creator, you are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace.
Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war.
Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred.
Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war.
Lead us to find justice, peace and freedom.
Unite us in the making and creating of the tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression.
Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honour and praise.
Amen.

From an Orthodox Christian prayerbook, selected for A Collection of Prayers from Europe, International Day of Prayer for Peace 2007

THE COVENTRY LITANY OF RECONCILIATION

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,

Father, forgive.

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,

Father, forgive.

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,

Father, forgive.

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

Father, forgive.

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,

Father, forgive.

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,

Father, forgive.

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,

Father, forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

The Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of
your
peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow
love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is despair, hope;

and where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek

to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are

pardoned;

and in dying that we are born

again

to eternal life. Amen.

BIBLE READINGS (OLD TESTAMENT)

Psalm 103
Isaiah 2: 2-5
Isaiah 9: 2-7
Micah 4: 1-4

BIBLE READINGS (NEW TESTAMENT)

Matthew 5:1-12
Luke 22:47-53
John 20:19-23
Romans 12:15-21
Ephesians 2:13-22
Revelation 21:1-8

TALK/SERMON

Below are some reflections and examples of Christian peacemakers. Their words and deeds are intended to provide a starting point for sermons or phrases to build your talk around.

Vera Brittain (author of Testament of Youth, member of Fellowship of Reconciliation and Peace Pledge Union)

I want to try to explain more fully why thousands of people, some for religious and others for political reasons, have felt compelled to renounce war. This is not actually the negative position that it sounds, for you cannot renounce war without making positive endeavours to build up the kind of civilisation in which war will have no part.

Most of the religious war-resisters – those, that is, who call themselves ‘Christian pacifists’ – believe that war arises, not from the evil ambitions of any one man or the inherent wickedness of any one nation, but out of the collective sin of all mankind. To them, war is an inconceivable remedy for the evil from which it springs, since those who make war justify themselves by laying all the blame on the other side, whereas the first and most necessary step in the cure of sin is to acknowledge the extent to which we ourselves are at fault. Because Christ, instead of blaming human failure, took the sins of the world upon Himself and sought to atone for them with his own death, His Christian pacifist disciples believe that ‘suffering which may lead even to the Cross’ is a high road to redemption.

This type of suffering ennobles the individual, for its secret is a love that can be neither destroyed nor conquered, whatever penalty it may be called upon to bear. 'Not by power, nor by might, but by My spirit, says the Lord.'

from Humiliation with honour (1942)

Canon Dr Paul Oestreicher (Anglican priest & Quaker, member of Fellowship of Reconciliation)

As I struggled with the Gospel's radical vision of justice, on the one hand, radical because absolute love embraces but goes far beyond justice, and the Gospel's even more radical vision of a peace from which no fragment of creation is excluded, Mahatma Gandhi came to my rescue.

It was Gandhi's conviction that to recognise evil and not to oppose it was to deny one's humanity. To recognise evil and to oppose it with the weapons of the evil-doer was to affirm one's humanity. To recognise evil and to oppose it with the weapons of God was to affirm one's divinity.

Here is a holy Hindu recognising that human beings are capable of being less than human, of being human, and of being more than human. Most human beings and most Christians with them have, until now, expressed their humanity through Gandhi's middle way. Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others with them suggest that a third way is possible, that human beings are capable of transcending their humanity and entering into their divinity. What I am talking about are strategies of defeating evil with goodness.

Might it not be that the development of weapons technology is now bringing the human family rapidly to the point at which violent means will no longer be usable to achieve good ends? Might it not be that in the third millennium of the Christian era, weapons will have to become obsolete if the human race is to survive? Might it not be that only the pacifist who refuses to use lethal weapons is tomorrow's realist?

It may become true sooner than I have suggested that peace, meaning the absence of armed conflict, is a precondition for justice and not, as many still believe, the other way round.

from Peace Together (1987)

Gordon Wilson (Former chair of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship)

In theory, the church preaches the absolute victory of love on the Cross over all evil. In practice, the church seems to believe that without the protection of the weapons the Devil has made available we should be at the mercy of the forces of evil in the world.

In theory, the church believes in the power of unconditional forgiveness. In practice, the church believes in the deterrence of enemies.

In theory, the church believes in self-giving love, the way of the Cross, as the way to reconciliation in all relationships and conflicts. In practice, the church believes that conflict, for instance between justice and injustice, may sometimes have to be resolved by violent means, and that the creation of just relationships may have to depend upon the violent overthrow of tyranny.

Is, then, the Gospel believed to be for practical purposes ineffective in creating the conditions in which peace can flourish? Is the power of the Gospel alone, without the aid of violence, insufficient to transform the harsh realities of power and ambition?

These are crucial questions for all Christians. If the answer to both of them is 'No', then Christianity is a pacifist faith. If, on the other hand, the principles of the Gospel sometimes have to be suspended in an emergency in favour of the use of violence, where is the theological justification for this?

There is no doubt that on the evidence of the teaching and example of Jesus, the Gospel does claim to offer the power to overcome conflict and to reconcile enemies. What is lacking is simply faith in that power on the part of those who proclaim the Gospel.

from Christianity is a Pacifist Faith, APF leaflet

Not all soldiers fight with outward weapons. 11 November is the Saint's Day for St Martin of Tours, a 4th century Christian pacifist. Martin was compelled to join the army – his father had the legal duty to get his son enlisted and Martin apparently was brought in chains to be signed up. Famously, he cut his cloak in two to give half to a beggar and then had a vision of Christ coming to him in the same half cloak. When, in 356 CE, Martin was faced with a situation where he would have to fight, he declared to his sovereign: "Hitherto I have served you as a soldier. Allow me now to become a soldier of God. I am a soldier of Christ. It is not lawful for me to fight." He was accused of cowardice, so he demanded on

the following day he be placed without arms in front of the line of battle. But there was no battle – the enemy barbarians surrendered and Martin was set free to become a monk and then Bishop of Tours.

– SONGS AND HYMNS –

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

My Lord, you wore no royal crown

My Lord, you wore no royal crown,
you did not wield the powers of state,
nor did you need a scholar's gown
or priestly robe to make you great.

You never used a killer's sword
to end an unjust tyranny;
your only weapon was your word,
for truth alone could set us free.

You did not live a world away
in hermit's cell or desert cave,
but felt our pain, and shared each day
with those you came to seek and save.

You made no mean or cunning move,
chose no unworthy compromise,
but carved a track of burning love
through tangles of deceit and lies.

You came unequalled, undeserved,
to be what we were meant to be;
to serve instead of being served,
to pay for our perversity.

So when I stumble, set me right;
command my life as you require;
let all your gifts be my delight,
and you, my Lord, my one desire.

Revd Christopher Idle 1978 (Anglican Priest & Anglican Pacifist Fellowship
Member)

Metre: LM

Tune: Splendour or O waly waly

Published in Hymns for Today's Church and other hymnbooks

*Suggested Bible readings, sermon extracts and some hymns/songs
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Remembrance Resources for the Armistice Centenary 2018.*

White poppies in churches FAQ

This guide helps you to answer the questions people might ask if you are wanting to sell white poppies in church or hold a peace-focused Remembrance service. If you have other questions, or better ideas for answers, please contact us at campaigns@for.org.uk or mail@ppu.org.uk.

What are white poppies? What do they represent?

White poppies are an alternative to the red poppy. They represent three things: remembrance for all victims of war; a commitment to peace; and a challenge to attempts to glamorise or celebrate war.

What is a peace-focused Remembrance service? Aren't they all about peace?

Traditional Remembrance Sunday services have a particular focus on the service and sacrifice of British and Allied armed forces. A peace-focused service will remember all who suffered and lost lives in war, military and civilian. Sometimes, the promotion of peace can be lost in traditional services, because it can be seen as disloyal to currently serving British military personnel or to say that what they did was wrong.

Is a peace-focused Remembrance service disrespectful to the military/Royal British Legion?

No. A peace-focused service remembers all those who have died, including British military personnel. Moreover, no war is clearly positive for military personnel as it means they will not be risking their lives or being put in potentially traumatic battlefield situations.

The Royal British Legion provides a number of service guides for Remembrance, but does not demand that all services follow this pattern. Of course, some individual people may be offended, but that's not the intention.

Do you have to be pacifist to have white poppies and do peace-focused Remembrance services?

No. Many pacifists do support this, but they're not the only ones. Nor does holding these services and selling white poppies make you a pacifist. People who want a wider understanding of Remembrance and to reflect on all of God's children who have died in war reach out for these resources.

Lots of people in my church like the traditional Remembrance service. I don't want to go against that.

Many churches find this, and most have a traditional service in the morning and then a peace-focused service later in the day.

Where can I find how to hold a peace-focused Remembrance service?

Our service guide, available at the start of this booklet, gives an outline. If you want more options and resources, the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship has a detailed resource at <https://www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/remembrance-resources/> and Pax Christi, the Catholic peace organisation, has resources at <http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/prayer-and-seasonal/>.

Do you need to hold a peace-focused Remembrance service to have the white poppies in church?

No. If you just want to sell the poppies, or just hold a service, that's fine.

Can our church sell both white and red poppies?

As far as we're concerned, yes. Make sure it's clear that they are different and that donations need to be kept separate because they go to different places. The Peace Pledge Union (which makes white poppies) has no objections to selling red and white poppies together.

How can I find out more about white poppies?

The Peace Pledge Union has its own FAQ about white poppies, which is online at www.whitepoppy.org.uk

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