

Thoughts from the Manse 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, gunpowder, treason and plot. Yesterday was bonfire night, another victim of the pandemic, although there have still been too many local fireworks for the well being of pets, including our own dogs who hide cowering under the table at the first pop of a firework. It is the massive mortars that people buy these days that are so damaging, I remember the Catherine wheels, that spun round and round without too much of a bang; they were named after a saint. It has been interesting to see how adverts and articles have adapted their suggestions for Bonfire night and I wait with interest to see how they will deal with Christmas.



Remembering always seems to be the theme of November, with Bonfire night followed by Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day. These again are likely to be victims of the pandemic and our support for the poppy appeal is needed more than ever. I was reading about the ways that the Scottish Poppy Appeal have adapted their production of poppies, with folk working at home to make poppies, however they are also aware that working at home creates its own challenges of loneliness and isolation and so they have increased their phone call support for those who are in that position. Of course, it is likely that fewer poppies will be sold this year as there are fewer opportunities to buy a poppy, and people are dealing less in cash at the moment. This will all impact on the work the British Legion can do in the coming year and any ways that we can find to support their work have to be worthwhile.



This year many will remember loved ones they have lost during the pandemic, and whilst we are not at war with the virus, despite the rhetoric of some politicians, we are in a social battle and Remembrance Day always brings loss into sharp focus. I remember buying a poppy cross for my paternal gran who lived through two world wars, but we were very close and I missed her deeply. My paternal grandad served in the Royal Engineers in the first world war and I have some postcards he sent back to my gran from France. He was a bridgebuilder and sent postcards of bridges he had built and one of his company sitting on one of the bridges. He also sent some beautiful silk postcards. It is amazing that over a hundred years ago they could create such personal postcards, they are all properly printed on the reverse. I am not sure if he served in the second world war, it was never talked about and he died in 1958 so I have little recollection of him at all, just some photographs and a few mementos of the first world war.

There are many children and adults around the country who will have similar gaps in their memory of a parent or grandparent and so it is important to remember and build the story which they can pass on to the next generation. We should never glorify war, it is nearly always unnecessary and brings so much hurt, that is what Remembrance Day is about, remembering the hurt and pledging to work towards peaceful solutions to conflict. Modern warfare is very different from the face to face conflict of historical wars, we know that whole communities can be destroyed at the push of a button, and few world leaders will ever be in the firing line, therefore we have a duty to implore our elected leaders to uphold peace whilst seeking justice for all. This is the way of Jesus.

