

A few words from the Vicar

'He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' (Isaiah 2:4)

At the time of writing there is no real news to give you regarding the possibility of our forming a team with St Andrew's, St Thomas & St John's and St Mary's. The Steering Group established by the four parishes in order to take this initiative forward is unable to make further progress until feedback on the latest version of the Deanery Pastoral Plan is received from the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee (DMPC).

That is not to say we can do nothing for now; far from it! The most important thing any of us can do right now is to pray that the Holy Spirit will steer future discussions so that the eventual outcome best serves the building of God's kingdom in all four parishes.

What else is happening?

Well, 4th August marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War and we shall be marking the occasion with a short commemoration service at 7pm on that evening, during which the names of those local people listed on the Roll of Honour who gave their lives in the war will be read out. Then, at 10.15pm we shall be joining the other Radcliffe churches for a vigil at Trinity Baptist Church (Westminster Avenue, Radcliffe) to coincide with the declaration of war (which was at 11pm).

Please join us for one or both of these events.

It is likely we will hold further commemoration services over the next few years:

- In 2015 we have the centenary of the Gallipoli landings in which many men from this part of Lancashire participated whilst serving with the Lancashire Fusiliers.
- In 2016 we have the centenary of the Battle of the Somme; and
- In 2018 we have the centenary of the Armistice.

All of this is about commemoration rather than celebration. The First World War was one of the most cataclysmic events in world history during which millions died or were seriously wounded and which continued to affect the lives of millions long into the 20th Century. Indeed, its consequences continue to affect us today, long after all of the combatants have died.

So, whilst war is nothing to celebrate, we ought to commemorate and be thankful for (and must never forget) those from that previous generation who gave their all, their very lives



even, so that we might remain free. It is surely right that we remember before God the fallen and the dreadful impact of the First World War.

During the First World War the whole country became mobilised behind the war effort like no other war before it. It wasn't known as the Great War for nothing and it had a significant impact upon this country and the lives of ordinary people like, for example, my paternal grandparents. They married on Christmas Day 1914. There must have been a very good reason for their vicar to postpone his Christmas dinner so he could marry the couple. So it seems likely that my grandfather, by then in the Royal Horse Artillery, was shipping with his unit to France. Where he saw action, I don't know but I do know he spent four years in France with, I would expect the occasional home leave. He saw friends die and was himself wounded but survived to bring up a family after the war - only to lose one of his daughters to the Blitz in 1940.

Stories like this were repeated by the shedload up and down the country and there wasn't a family unaffected. From the Revd Ken Bullock's history of this area we know that it is thought more than 60 young men from the Ainsworth area enlisted and in July 1915 the first Ainsworth man was killed in action; Herbert Brooks.

Life on the home front wasn't unaffected either. Basic food was rationed and sometimes in short supply owing to the U Boat menace and in September 1916 there was a zeppelin raid on Bolton and Holcombe, with the zeppelin passing close to the village.

So, we commemorate one of the most cataclysmic events in our history. How could we not?

And as we commemorate we turn on the News only to see so many places in the world today where lives are still blighted by war. So, we do what we can to alleviate suffering and pray that swords will be beaten into ploughshares; we pray for peace and an end to the suffering brought on by war.

Every Blessing

Dave