8th November 2026 Remembrance Sunday Rev. Yin-An Chen

"We will remember them."

Today we make that promise again. We remember those who died in war, those who served and returned, and families whose lives were permanently changed.

Here at St Luke's, the war graves and the war memorial remind us that these were individual people. They had names, relationships and futures they never lived to see.

We owe them gratitude. We also owe them careful thought about what our promise means.

What should remembering change in us?

Psalm 13 begins, "How long, O Lord?" Five times the author asks that question. Suffering has continued, and God seems absent. The author refuses to accept this quietly.

Remembrance gives us time to hear that grief: in bereaved families, in veterans living with trauma, and in communities still affected by wars that officially ended long ago.

Keeping silence today commits us to listening when people need to speak tomorrow.

Last Saturday, at "Remembering the Forgotten", we heard about Britain's black airmen. Black Caribbean volunteers served in the RAF during the Second World War. Some died. Some faced racial discrimination within the country they had volunteered to serve. Their contribution has too often been overlooked or pushed aside, as though their service mattered less. Even remembering them can meet resistance: "Why do we need to hear about them?"

That question should trouble us. Why should people who shared the dangers of war have to justify their place in our remembrance?

When we say, "We will remember them", who do we mean? If we remember only those who fit a familiar picture of Britain, we fail to honour others whose service helped shape this country.

Their stories require us to reconsider who belongs in our understanding of "us".

Remembering them means examining ourselves. Are there people whose contributions we welcome while treating them as though they do not fully belong?

That question belongs in our community as well as in our national life. Whose help do we gladly accept, but whose opinions do we dismiss? Who is invited to serve, but rarely invited to make decisions?

People should not have to prove their usefulness before we recognise their dignity. Every person is made in God's image.

Our promise to remember must affect how we treat people who are still asking to be recognised, heard and accepted today.

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"How long, O Lord?"

That question is still being asked by people whose suffering receives little attention. As we remember past wars, we must also listen to those living through war today.

We pray for people in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza and Israel, and places we rarely hear about. Our sympathy must reach beyond those we identify with most easily. A parent's grief matters wherever

their child was born. Civilians deserve protection regardless of which government or armed group claims to represent them.

The psalmist pleads, “Look at me, O Lord my God, and answer me.”

We join that prayer for protection, food, freedom and shelter. Those prayers also ask something of us: to support relief, welcome displaced people, care for veterans, and question decisions that prolong suffering.

Micah describes the peace for which we pray. Nations stop fighting. Weapons become tools for growing food. People live in their homes without fear.

Everyone is included in that promise. Peace remains unfinished while some families live safely and others face threats, displacement or exclusion.

The nations must also learn God’s ways and accept God’s judgement. That includes our own. We cannot assume that God approves of an action simply because our side carries it out.

Jesus challenges us in the same way.

“Blessed are those who mourn.” Their grief deserves our attention, including when their experience challenges our version of events.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” They want wrongs put right, including wrongs their own community has committed.

“Blessed are the merciful.” We can hold people accountable without treating an entire population as guilty.

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” Making peace may require us to admit a wrong, give up an advantage, or challenge people whose approval matters to us.

These blessings make remembrance demanding. We honour those who served by taking seriously the dignity and freedom for which we thank them.

And still we ask, “How long?”

There is a painful distance between the peace Micah describes and the world we know. Psalm 13 does not explain that distance away. Yet it ends with trust:

“But I trusted in your steadfast love.” (I rely on your constant love!)

We are not told that the danger has passed. The author still needs and demands an answer, yet continues to rely on God’s love.

Some days, we may struggle to share that trust. Then we need others to listen, pray with us, and stay beside us.

We see God’s faithful love in Jesus, who suffered violence and death, and whom God raised to life. His resurrection gives us reason to keep seeking justice and peace, even when change is slow.

Today we promise: “We will remember them.”

May we mean all those whose service and suffering deserve to be remembered. May we listen when their stories disturb us. And may our gratitude lead us to examine how we treat people now.

We cannot change how the dead were treated. We can change how we treat one another.

“How long, O Lord?”

Hear our prayer. Sustain our trust in your constant love.

Give us courage to make peace. Amen.