

Friends,

This month we enter a season of Remembrance.

Remembrance Sunday is the 10 November and at 10.45am I will be leading a community service down at Kirklands, please do attend.

When we hear the news from across the world, and even within our own shores, of how violence still reigns in people's lives we would be forgiven for thinking that we have indeed forgotten.

Remembering is a practice, a discipline even – and it's one that we will commit to as we declare '*we will remember them*'. But it is a practice that I would argue does not come naturally to us in our society. We struggle especially to remember our failings and our hurts, at an individual and community level. Remembering can be painful, and remembering invites the hard work of reflecting on how we will live now, in light of the past. In other words, remembering involves slowing down – again, something that our society is not always good at. And yet, if we are to pursue change as we look forward, seeking a world that embraces peace and seeking to be a people of peace-makers, we need to embrace the practice of looking back. Reflecting and learning from history, but also taking up the call to remember what God has done and is doing in the world. Remembrance Sunday will be an opportunity to do just that, and so I invite you to join us along with the uniformed organisations to worship, remember and pray forwards in hope.

We will also be doing a different kind of remembering together on Sunday 10 November 4pm (3.15pm for refreshments beforehand), at our annual Remembering Together Service (All Souls) - remembering those we have loved, and who we have lost. Something that is more comfortable when we gather together in solidarity and support. So again, can I invite you to join us to remember your loved ones, and to know the peace and presence of God with us.

As we look forward to the festive season, knowing that this can be a difficult time of year for many, we will be holding a Longest Night Service on Thursday 19 December at 7pm. It is a reflective Christmas service with space to hear the hope of Christmas whilst accepting the difficult realities of life - knowing our Saviour was no stranger to our suffering, as we hear, even in the story his birth.

If this coming season is difficult for you for any reason, I invite you to dwell on the truth that God is working all things for good and will redeem all things, even death – this He showed and promised through Jesus Christ.

If it's not good, God's not finished with it yet. Hold on to that hope.

We will also have our usual Christmas Services this December and lots of opportunity for joy and delight – please see pages 10/11 for details.

So, I do hope to see you over the coming months, whether to cry or pray or to sing your favourite carol, you are so welcome at St John's this season. We are here for each other.

Blessings to you all,

Jo